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Nonfiction Creative Writing Workshop

For the Irish Writing program, in addition to working with Irish professors and content, our final course was a workshop for creative nonfiction with our Iowa faculty. Led by Professor Blaine Greteman, students worked daily for two hours, for four days a week, for six weeks on developing an original piece of writing for a final 8-page essay. The first few weeks were an accumulation of 500-word essays from a variety of prompts from museum writing, to traveling sensory pieces, and observation pieces while traveling. However, a few weeks into the program, our prompt was to write 500 words on a given personal memory. From then on, the piece was extended into a larger work for our final project, focusing on many elements of nonfiction writing technique and drafting. The following piece, *Heaven's Eyes*, is that final essay for the nonfiction writing workshop.

Heaven's Eyes

Tomorrow, Dad will attempt to run down my sister with his pick-up truck. But today, years after at 23 years old, I close my eyes and remember. I remember the lyrics of that song, the smells of him, and the memories as I wish they were. We were riding down the mountain in his truck in an unraveling of sorts, twists and turns transitioning us from the peaks of mountaintops to the bottom abyss of flat land. I remember the feeling of the breeze against my skin as the sun's warm kiss washed out from my body and the summer evening faded into twilight. When the chirping of the birds disappeared, and the greeting of the grasshoppers spread like wildfire from the woods, as the day disappeared from existence.

Now, though, I think back to Dad. Above all else, I remember his voice. His voice as he used his deep range to sing along to the Prince of Egypt's "Heaven's eyes." We are in the mountains of Montana in Glacier National Park. Montana translates from the Spanish meaning, "a mountainous forest region, especially that extends over the eastern foothills of the Peruvian Andes." However, unlike Peru, the peaks stand above us in the north, and here the cold turns as quick as the heat in the summertime. Dad is singing alongside the CD as the lyrics begin to emerge. "You can never see through the eyes of man, you must look at your life, look at your life through heaven's eyes, look at your life through heaven's eyes...". I feel the words as he sings them. To my 13-year-old ears my father matched Brian Stokes Mitchell's voice impeccably. Just as he matched my image of God; untouchable, unwavering, and mysterious. Dad's voice, like the grasshoppers and birds hidden in the trees, is larger than me, and yet I trust it in its mystery more than I care to admit.

I remember nostalgia more than I like to remember the true memory of Martin. I remember him as we went winding, twirling, and gliding down roads which weave thoughts of

wonder in my mind; cascading into what I can only describe as a dream. He is my father. I remind myself of this as I think of him. Dictionaries describe father as, “a man in relation to his child or children.” However, a father is also considered an “important male figure in the origin and early history of something.” and of course, in the context of the Christian faith, “the first person of the Trinity; God.” Yet, now as I think back, I don’t know what I see.

Dad looks like me, only male and twenty-seven years older. He can fit five fingers on his forehead from his hairline to his eyebrows. His hair is as dark as dark chocolate, like the shade of wet brown bark, but his eyes are a rich navy blue. In the right light, you could argue that they were turquoise. Sometimes, however, in certain settings, hues of hazel overpower the rim around his pupils. His smile was deceptively inviting. His eyes remained brutally honest, often unfaithfully so, against his smile and himself.

“Heaven’s eyes” was a lesson I carried with me for years since he sang it. Amongst critics, the film scored a 79 percent positive rating, alongside its strong popularity since its release in 1998. I was 2 when the movie came out. This does not stop him from singing it like the song comes from deep inside him. The film is loosely based on the biblical stories of Moses. Who finds his destiny as a deliverer of his people through God. The soundtrack is transcending. It transports the listener into the spiritual impact the film embarks on which continues to transcend in me now as I think back to how he sang, taking a breath in to prepare for the next note. If only he could follow the lyrics himself. Instead, he is distracted by the sound of his own voice. With each impending lengthy lyric, I take a deep breath in and dive into the smells of winter fresh gum, Old Spice deodorant, sawdust, and the smoky burnt wood of his clothes.

“The answer will come to him who tries, to look at your life through heaven’s eyes,” dad sings to me boastfully. The mountains that surround us are part of the Rocky Mountains. There

are at least one hundred and fifty named mountain peaks, from Lewis and Clark ranges, to the peaks with anglicized versions of Native American origin names. However, all I see are blue skies and mountain water dripping down the cultivated cliffs of the mountain ranges, the gorgeous sunsets and pine trees of forest green. My perception of place feels endless, never completely fizzling out from either left or right of my own view. Up here, I feel tall, but we keep descending back down.

Dad was not a particularly tall man at five feet ten inches, but to me, he was easily six feet in height. His legs like tree trunks, his calves' devices to ride and wrap my limbs around more so than a tool for his posture or ability to walk. He was hairy like the brown bears that populate these mountains. His hands the size of my entire youthful face. He often left scruff of five o'clock shadow on his chin to signify the illusion that he could grow a full beard if he wanted, without ever growing it past a goatee during the memories of my childhood. His eyebrows, as thick as bushes by the forest side. His nose is Dutch and big like a clown and symmetrical to his face. He was a big man. Yet, his eyes remain brutally honest.

Montana's nickname is "Big Sky Country" and I see why as I look through to the mountain peaks and winding roads below us through my memories, driving father and farther from one curved edge to the next in what feels like an eternal transcendence. With its snowcapped mountains, prairies, valleys, lakes, and wide-open spaces, it's no surprise that many others are drawn to this place too. People come for the beauty, for the wilderness. Most importantly though, people come for something more. The oxford english dictionary defines a state not only as a place, but as a mental and physical being, "a particular mode, phase, or form of (spiritual) existence." There is a spirit here, in this state, and I heard that spirit in dad's voice,

or at least, I thought I did once. I used to think dad was brave, unafraid of whatever adventure was ahead of him. Come to think of it, I used to believe in a great deal of things.

He was an independent contractor, sort of like how Jesus was a carpenter, and it made me proud as a child. As a self-employed contractor, it means he was in an independent trade, business, or profession in which he offered his services to the general public. But dad was living in his childhood home with my grandparents in a town no larger than one thousand people in Chester, Montana. Actually, not unlike the rest of the state, the town had less people even, with exactly eight hundred and forty-seven residents who lived with one main street. There was one grocery store which also acted as the only gas station and the entire town was half of a square mile. So very independent Martin was, I think back now, living with his parents in their basement, working for the two people who still remained in the middle of nowhere.

He said he was building houses back home, or rather, that is what he told people. But I was not little anymore and I knew there was much more to it than that. He was running away from his problems and the law back home. Now as I close my eyes, I think back to my twin sister as we rode in the back of dad's white pickup truck down the mountain as we did so many summers ago. Only a few miles away from this place he once called home. It is the same truck we jumped into in preschool and the same one we rode to his job sites, a small F150 from the 90's with an equally white trailer and black frame for loading materials attached to the back. The trailer would only come with the truck on big projects. He never got around to putting your logo on it, the white empty space on the sides where one should be, just a reminder of dad never being able to follow through with his promises.

Despite its plainness, its whiteness, the truck and trailer never looked white to my young eyes; remaining a musky mush brown and a constant greyish hue with dirt always glittering the

edges of the wheels, the doors, and highlighting the rust that came over time. The windows were tinted black, so no one could see into where my sister and I were so often seated, but we could still see out. I remember looking out and trying to see the world, but it hurt as I strained to see through the darkness of the tinted windows, to something clear, and not hazy with sawdust in my line of view.

The darkness has completely overtaken over the mountainside now, the way I remember it, the trees of forest green blending into the shadows black like a wet watercolor painting. The only light is the beams from the front of the truck which shows where the road is. The edge only inches from the mountainous cliffs, which keep me tense with anxiety towards our safe destination to the bottom, where there is flat ground for us to drive to Dad's oldest home. As we fall, I feel the temperature drop to a brisk wind chill, the kind that leaves a sense of lingering rain in the atmosphere on a crisp summer night. The window is down a crack on the passenger side next to Dad too, and he rolls it up as he completes the song he so desperately wished for us to hear. When he finishes, it is too quiet.

That song, those trees, the depth of the mountains reminds me of Dad. I felt so close to the world when we were here, Melanie and me. I felt close to the idea of being his daughter when I think to this moment. It is July and my twin sister, and I are here, in the park, just as he had been so many times before. Glacier National Park was designed as a World Heritage Site. It is a place built for nostalgic remembrance. John Muir once said, "the mountains are calling, and I must go". I too share this nostalgic embrace of this place, repeatedly marveling in its beauty. I am a sucker for romance, for a taste of peace. The forest, lakes, rivers, waterfalls, and seven hundred miles of trails seeming to call from every corner of the world. The Glacier Park Lodge where Dad and Mom spent their college summers. The views as we travel down the notorious going-to-

the-sun road. A beautiful path which stretches across the mountainside that hits the sun just right from the day in the mornings and at dusk. Now, however, the sunset has long past, and the sky is dipped into the night, and it is dark.

The memories of Martin are beginning to feel so faint to me now. They almost don't feel real. Now when I think back to that time, as we ride down this mountain, I remember we too ride like a dream. A dream that was once real but can never be real again. This will be one of my last memories with my father. The last positive one for that I am sure. As I continue to peer out the window, with tinted glass, I see we are reaching the bottom at last. I see the mountains drawing farther from view and I call to them in a whisper, hoping they won't forget about me just as I later hoped dad wouldn't. Despite his incredible singing voice, the smells of winter fresh gum and nature, Martin was still a man. A man that had failed me, for which no dreams can undo, no wandering thought of wonder can unwind.

Two days after the unwinding twirling drive down the mountain pass roads of the mountainside, you took Melanie and I onto a gravel road half a mile out of Chester. It was about to break into a thunderstorm, but the rain had just begun to fall. So, you told us that it would be better practice. You told us today would be the day you would give us our first driving lesson. I took my turn with little confidence in the driver's seat, which I only had a few minutes of success making a straight line with the pick-up onto the road ahead. Then it was Melanie's turn. She got in and immediately lost control, unable to determine the balance between break and gas pedal and when or how much to use each. Her hands, although on ten and two, did not know how to stay steady. We would drift the minute she got control of the gas. You began to get agitated, then that agitation turned immediately to fury.

"Get out," You told her.

“What?” she asked, obviously flustered and surprised.

“I said get out of the truck. I want you to walk in front. Watch me take control. And follow my directions when I give them to you.”

We could tell by the sudden calmness in dad’s voice that he was doing everything in his power to keep his hands from us, to keep his voice down. As soon as my sister began walking in front of the vehicle he let himself go. His voice let loose and echoed into the Big Sky Country air. He kept pushing the gas farther and farther down making Melanie race into a sprint, clipping her heels with the front of the pick-up in the rain. I remained frozen with fear. Wanting everything in my power to make this stop, take my twin sister’s place, pull the emergency break, anything but what I was doing which was nothing at all. But nothing it seemed, could tell my brain to tell my body to move, let alone how to. I was angry, I was scared, I was terrified. Despite my better instincts I had convinced myself up until this point that hurting us was the one thing you could never do. Mom, yes. Our step-mom, Karen, yes. But us? Never. I was wrong. Right as the thunder began to crackle and my sister’s lungs began to get heavy, the tears drying only to be stained again by the heavy rain drops of the thunderstorm that pounded on Melanie, Dad had a change of heart. He put the car in park and let her back in, not saying a word. As if it had never happened at all. We drove home in silence. The only sound, the sound of thunder booming in the distance of the mountain backdrop.

We took the last day of our summer visit with you and went to a movie; I can’t even remember what it was about, but you tried to take us to the only grocery store for some candy after, letting us have any candy of our choice. As much as we wanted. I noticed this was your attempt at forgiveness, the silence of an apology that never came still ringing in my ears, but it was over and that was all that mattered to me at the moment. I tried to hold down the anger and

insult of your attempt at grooming us as I picked a Reese's cup family pack for the road. You were abusive as much as you could sing. You were hateful as much as you could pretend to care or be kind. You never loved me and that I will always remember. Like the cold breeze against my skin at the tip of twilights dimly lit light, I remember you Dad. Despite myself, I will always remember. Only now I try desperately, even still, to see you through heaven's eyes.

Irish Fiction

For Irish fiction, the final assignment was to develop a short set of flash fiction pieces, otherwise known as drabbles. The prompt asked students to write a total of three pieces in exactly 100 words with a common thread connecting them. For class over the course of the program, students met once a week for five weeks where students discussed readings of Irish fiction and short stories. The following drabble, *Friend*, is the complete final assignment for Irish fiction.

Friend

Sitting surrounded by familiar strangers, a friendship still in its infancy, I sit on a bench in Edinburgh. I have hot scotch breath and around me are clanking cups and long-awaited stories which propel in whispers and soft-spoken sentences as neat as ice in August. As always, I am lifted in motion moving miraculously from my lips to the companions around me, breaking boundaries with our intimacy with one another. Our lovely boundaries move boundless more so than imaginary lines, the contours of life stark and deliberate, harsh and kind, compassionate and careless, careful words spread with more careful actions.

...

My friend says, what does it mean to touch anyways. We are in my basement in sleeping bags. I think on it, to touch. Is it touching to the soul or cancerous, gnawing at my bones. I take a sip of water; it is hot in July. The water, it feels so cold, my teeth hurt, waiting for ice to break the mundaneness of today, shards sharpening mountains that swallow us in our quiet truths. What is life but a constant discovery of what it means to exist? I hug my friend, I tell her, this is what it means.

...

I see familiar faces here. Dried tears drip down dropping to the floor like puddles, as I ponder the unwanted attention of these burning eyes. It is June, and I sit stuck to IV poles and blood bags. Transfusing the inevitable transformation forced upon me, upon all of us. My friend feels my hands fondly. I tell them not to fear with fearlessness. Grounding them, cascading into clarity for a future no one knows for sure. The deep heart rumbles inside me, reminding me of my morality through these memories. My friend says with irony, thank god we all die.

Irish Drama

For Irish Drama, the final assignment was to develop a short one act. The prompt asked students to write a piece in 800 words or less, with 3 or less characters, in one particular setting. Then to follow, the class was assigned to analyze their piece in a few paragraphs of reflection. In the course of the class within the Dublin program, students met once a week for five weeks, discussing readings of Irish dramatic works and current plays that had been attended throughout the trip while in Dublin. In total as a class, five plays were seen, and an additional musical (*Hamilton*, in London at the Victoria Theater) by Melissa on her own time. The productions attended for the course included, *The Glass Menagerie* at the Gate Theatre, *City Song* at the Abbey theatre, *Quicksand* at the New Theatre, *God has No Country* at the Smock Alley Theatre, and *The Snapper* at the Gate Theatre in Dublin. The following piece is from the final assignment for the course. The following script is the final assignment for the Irish Drama course, including a follow-up reflection.

Drunken Truths

By Melissa Trepá

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

Lights fade to dim on stage. A bench sits center stage, a few flowerbeds lay nearby. The curtain opens on CELIA. CELIA is sitting just beyond the hotel on the bench alongside the seafront view of Leeanne in Connemara. There is what appears to be a flower garden behind her, she stares intently at the water and mountains in her vantage point towards the audience. MIA enters stage left and notices Celia at the bench. She waits a moment then takes a seat down next to CELIA.

MIA

Hey, what are you doing out here, you okay?

CELIA

Yeah, I'm okay, you doing okay?

MIA

Yeah, I think so, we're in paradise here, aren't we?

CELIA

Yeah, I'd say we are, I mean I was just speechless looking at this view a minute ago. It's so touching.

MIA

Yeah, very touching. I can see why, I don't have anything like this back home... just cornfields.

CELIA

You can say that again.

CELIA points up and out above the audience slightly.

CELIA

You see that mountain up there, the tall one straight ahead?

MIA

Yeah, I mean ...it's hard to miss Celia

CELIA

Yeah, well, I hear it's called the Devil's Mother. Apparently, there's some Irish folk legends or something about it.

MIA

Wow, well, that's kinda cool.

CELIA

Yeah, I mean it looks more like the Heaven's Mother mountains to me by the looks of it.

MIA

Indeed, it does. Very grand I'd say. I like the water here too, I can smell the sea salt. I feel like I can feel and taste the smells here as much as I can see them, if that makes any sense.

CELIA

No, it makes total sense, I totally agree.

A moment passes in silence between them, CELIA stands up from the bench and begins to make a move towards stage left.

MIA

Hey, where ya going?

CELIA

I think I want to try a vodka lemonade; want anything?

MIA

Sure, make it two.

CELIA goes off stage left and comes back with two Vodka Lemonades. She is slightly tipsy but barely noticeably so. Some time has passed indicated by MIA who appears bored. She is throwing rocks into the water.

MIA

There you are, I almost went inside to see what happened to you.

CELIA

Sorry girlie... I just got carried away trying a few gin and tonics with the bartender. You know the one with the beard named Paul?

MIA

Oh really? And how did that go?

CELIA

As expected, he tried to grab my ass...so I got these lemonades and left. It's nice now though, getting fresh air out here. Sorry I took so long.

MIA

That's alright, I mean I get it. I'm sorry though he was being an ass...for grabbing your ass.

CELIA and MIA look at each other a moment then laugh. CELIA notices MIA picking up the rocks and begins throwing them while MIA downs both drinks, setting the second one partly finished on the bench afterwards for a moment.

CELIA

I take it you liked the drinks there, friend?

MIA

Oh yeah, sorry, I didn't mean to get so carried away. I figured I could have two. I can get us some more if you'd like.

CELIA

No that's alright, I'm pretty warm right now anyways. Hey why don't you throw these rocks with me?

MIA

Okay, I guess I could. I don't know how you always get me to do the silliest things.

CELIA

I don't think throwing rocks is silly. You were the one doing it earlier.

MIA

Yeah, I guess not. I was just thinking while you were gone about how I have done some pretty dumb stuff, you know. Following whoever was around to follow.

CELIA

Yeah, no, I get that. I used to be that way.

MIA

Yeah, in what way?

CELIA

Well, for starters I used to think I was straight.

MIA

Oh, aren't you though? I'm sorry I had just assumed, and with Paul and everything...

CELIA

That's alright it's a common misconception, I'm actually not sure...to be honest. I think I'm asexual actually.

MIA

Asexual? Wow I really didn't know. Can I ask you how that works, or is that offensive?

CELIA

No, not at all, I'm the one who brought it up. Basically, I like relationships, but I don't seek them out from any source of desire, if that makes sense. Like I wouldn't mind if my last boyfriend and I never touched at all in that way. I mean I did sleep with him, but I didn't do it for the same reasons.

MIA

Wow, I can't imagine that. I love being touched!

MIA blushes and takes another swig of what's left of her vodka.

CELIA notices her embarrassment and gives MIA another rock to throw, nudging her shoulder kindly as she passes her the rock.

CELIA

I know what you meant. It's alright. It's touching actually to see what it's like for other people. How nice it must be to be sexual that way. You're allowed to be human you know.

MIA

Well so do you. And you are...by the way.

CELIA

Thanks.

Lights fade to black. End of Play.

One Act Reflection

For my short piece, *Drunken Truths*, I wanted to explore a female relationship dynamic as a naturalistic play. I chose a foreign setting to the ones I typically write in, which is usually in the United States, to add depth to the piece and a sense of wonder, which is often found in the Irish landscape. This piece was based off a real night in LEEANNE in Connemara with our Study Abroad program for our writer's retreat, so I tried to hone in on this while it also remained loosely related to the experience. While out one night, I got close to a friend of mine in the program, who shared with me her experience with asexuality. I had never met anyone asexual before, and we got into a deep conversation about it, while also sharing many other personal secrets. I intended this piece to take a step into that conversation and dissect what it means to be connected to something else, to be touched by something or someone. Whether that be physically or emotionally, I wanted to explore the larger understanding on connection.

I tried to incorporate the techniques we've seen in class of saying less while having what is mentioned say a lot to more for the audience, similarly to the way our material did this that was given to us, like from the piece, *Broken* for instance. I also wanted it to be female focused, because we talked about interesting perspectives about women characters in the *Woman and Scarecrow* play, for example. I also noted the complex characterization of *Maz* in *Maz and Bricks* as well which inspired the work.

I chose Celia and Mia as names because they were different names from the real people that they're based off of, while also having deeper meanings. Celia means "Heaven" in certain translations while "Mia" means "dear" or "mine". I wanted to explore the spiritual touch to nature and other people in this way. Having Mia mean a sense of possession as "mine" was also interesting to me, while contrasting that with a friend that has a name that means "heaven" is all encompassing and not singular. I wanted Mia to encapsulate a sense of naivety while also being

self-aware of external sources around her as a complex character, while Celia, although more self-aware, was less so externally, so that the two characters would foil but complement each other in this way.

I chose to discuss the Devil's Mountain because of its reference to the devil, which I found ironic since the views in Leeanne are quite heavenly in appearance to the common tourist, which made me wonder about the nature of how nature plays an impact to overall connection and experiences, and how a sense of context alters that understanding on connection. The reason I chose to have the two throw rocks, is because it happened in real life, and also punctuates literally the surface of water, which is often associated with something calm, a rebirthing, and by tapping into that, the two friends tap into their own transformation through various forms of touch. In this piece, I found the word count limit challenging but effective in helping me practice important skills as we have discussed in class about larger truths in playwrighting and how to evoke more without sharing too much. It was exciting to explore this work, and I look forward to future feedback.

Final Poetry Portfolio

For Irish Poetry, the final assignment was to put together the research and writing materials about the poets and material which the students studied during the course of the program. The prompt asked students to write several reflections from week to week or to choose to write a poem as well as provide a final research essay on a specific Irish poet in addition to an assigned poet to study. Over the course of the program, students met once a week for five weeks where students discussed readings of Irish poetic works and authors. The following portfolio is the complete written material from the course following the reading materials for Irish Poetry.

Myth Poem

Fairies Free Verse

Fairies

Fairies felt like fair angels to my young eyes
Elevating elegance with wings whimsical and whispering in quiet winds
Tooth fairies, Thumbelina, Tinkerbell
Tinker at the twinkle in my eye which goes
Wandering into my spirit for something more
Over breaking my sense of truth

Irish folk tales call these fairies Sheerie;
Fearful of falling to their foundation
Blaming and building walls from fairy to the Celtic crusader
But I have no sheer will to build boundaries for
I only wish to let go of their construction

Their freeing dainty delicate curiosity
Forever forgiving their devils heart in hope of everlasting elegance
But what is a fairy but a hopeful glance
At what it means to feel magic
A magic for a magnificent life

Reflections and Poems

Reflection 1

After meeting Nell Regan and beginning my education on Irish Poetry I began to open my eyes to the world of Irish literature to which I realized I knew very little about. When learning about famous Irish writers in class very few came to mind, until we began discussing them and then the names began to appear more and more as class continued along. I immensely enjoyed our chance to read some of the iconic writers on our first day and learn a significant amount of Irish history which made an important impact and influence on poets works. I was a part of the group who read *No Second Troy* which was extremely informative. I did not know much about the politics at that time and once we discussed it, I found a stronger appreciation for the poem as we dove into it. My favorite poetry we read in class was the most lyrical and romantic, as I tend to be drawn to the lyric and nostalgic forms myself in my own style. I appreciate how much we are tackling in such a short time already. For our next class I have prepared some background knowledge on early Yeats which I knew very little about before, but now see his impeccable impact. I am looking forward to finding more discoveries not only of these iconic poets but in their techniques so that I may develop my own techniques in my own

work too. Irish literature has opened my eyes to why I have become more and more drawn to poetry and I can't wait to explore it and try it out myself as we continue alone.

Reflection 2

After reading out of the *Anthology of Modern Irish Poetry* and the handouts we were provided, I felt I had gained a great sense of the Irish word and its larger themes. From the poem *Spraying the Potatoes*, to *The Great Hunger*, to *the Address to an Old Wooden Gate*, there was more than just beautiful lines that stuck out to me. I felt that poetry of this genre and region of the world really had a grasp on not only speaking about hard truths that their people were facing but the impact of it. I like the line in *The Great Hunger* when it is stated, "Which of these men/Loved the light and the queen/Too long a virgin? Yesterday was summer. Who was promised marriage/ to himself" (Kavanagh 70). Which brings up tensions and political moves of this time that these poems address fearlessly it seems with such a proud but honest voice. The Irish have a complicated relationship with the United Kingdom and this is sensed in these poems as well as just the experience of being Irish as well. Of the poems we read for this week, I found myself most compelled by the poem *Irish Poets Open Your Eyes*, especially the last stanza which states, "...And the god of Literature/Will touch a moment to endure" when speaking about how boredom is really the most enriching moments to write about truths, or at least that is what I took away from that poem. Literature is also capitalized but not God which is an interesting spin seeing how dominantly religious and catholic the country is, although I know less about the poet to confirm that specific choice. It was a great week to read and I look forward to learning more and more about these poets and this country.

Poem 3

The Poem below is from the weekend in Galway as a form of reflection for this week. I based this poem from the Mountains of Leanne from our Saturday morning hike, based on the style and structure of the *Song of Amergin* that we had discussed. I hope you enjoy.

Mountain Memory

I am the bold breeze
I am the mushy liken on the surface of rocks
I am light beams between the shade of clouds
I am sharp stones between spongy grass of landscape
I am an unending road of famines past
I am the fate of tomorrow between the peaks of today
I am cold
I am the sea salt mist sprays tickling skin
I am the hope of color in the mute of greens and greys
I am the exhausted cries of mountain sheep
I am the scent of lingering manure of living life

I am the mundaneness of everyday
I am the goosebumps of raised skin cells and tall arm hairs
I am the memory in your mind

Who lights the sun patches of mountain spaces from the shadows from the day?
Who announces the sunrise or sunset of the skies that gloom?
Who tells this place to live so secretively, according to the meek?
Who has authority to hide a place so mystifying, a part of God's creation?
On whom do these fences belong?
Which person, which God has allowed to exist, used to walk these paths?
Penalties in a spear-enchancements of wind

Poem 4

This poem below was inspired by our visit to see the Heaney exhibit for poetry at the end of the previous class. This includes the Blueberry-Picking poem for its description, although mine is free verse. I enjoyed our final essay project and all the opportunities to learn more about not only Irish writers, but poets in general. Poetry has become a fonder form for me as time passes and I appreciate it even more after this program.

Death Impending

Late June, given heavy rain and sun
For a full day, the day exists, ripe with life.
Among others, men, women, children, breath is heavy.
You took in that first note of air and it was fresh and savory
Like strawberries; summer's sunburn, sweaty and sweet
Leaving stains upon the skin and lust for
Devouring. Then heart beats link up and that hunger
Sent us out for more; walking shoes, swimsuits, sunscreen
Where barriers scratch against the wet sidewalks against warmed streets from the sun.
Roundabouts, green valleys, sea salted seas
We trekked and swam and ran into the light of day
Until the tickling of our throats grew soar from laughter and were silenced
With blue water, filling eyes and on top of dark blobs of clouds crisped
Like paper in fire pits. Our hands are peppered
With age, our palms sticky with rosey sunburns ruining our barrier of skin.
We hoard into the safety of houses and hotels to avoid the growing darkness.
But when the bath of thunderstorms pours we are filled with truth,
Like an angry fairy waiting to make its move from the darkness.
The burns seep down too. Cutting down into our blood,
The hearts too, beating us into darker realities
The fruit of life molding, the sweet flesh seeps away and turns sour.
I always felt like lying
It wasn't fair

That all lovely longing tastes of mold
Each year I hoped I would live, but knew I could not
Not forever

Senses poem

The Five Senses of Leeanne

The steady hum of electric cars in the near distance
The sharp whistling calls of song birds;
The crunching of spongy grass under my heels;

Sea salt simmering
Humid rain lingering

The tangy lemon of fresh salmon by the sea
The creamy butter from warm seasoned carrots
Creamy and silky still slipping down my tongue from lunchtime

Beaming surges of light interrupt the shadow from the mountain
Grey clouds fading from creamy white to crisp stone grey in the motion of clouds

And sea salt
In the sea mist
Still lives on.

Presentation Assignment

Early W.B. Yeats 5 min. Presentation
Melissa Trepá
Irish Poetry Dublin 2019

Who is W.B. Yeats, Biography:

William Butler Yeats was born June 1865 and died in January of 1939. Born in Sandymount, Ireland he moved around with his parents and siblings around Ireland and London since his father was an aspiring painter and studied here as well as London as he got older. His father studied to be a lawyer but became a painter after his first son was born. Mary, his mother, taught Yeats and his siblings at home for a while, while the family followed in his father's aspiring artistic pursuits, which influenced his own take on London and Ireland when he eventually studied art himself.

Yeats first studied to be an artist, where he went to the Metropolitan School of Art in Dublin but gave it up to literary pursuits instead. He fell in love with Maud Gonne who notoriously continued to deny his proposal requests throughout their lifetime, even after she was widowed from the Easter rising, and he eventually gave up but used this relationship to inspire and impact his work. He was married later in 1917 to Georgie Hyde-Lees they had two children together Anne and William Michael.

Alongside his poetry, Yeats was heavily involved with theater and helped found the Abbey Theater in Dublin, Ireland.

Later in life he used his influence in Dublin and served two terms as a Senator of the Irish Free State for six years. In this time period was a force for the Irish Literary Revival of the time which brought back literature's value into the culture and community of Irish writers and figures where they had begun to disappear under British colonization and control.

His early phased work from the 1880's- 1890's focuses on his fascination with Irish Legends and myths, which is seen in his work up until the turn of the 20th century.

After his long career in the arts and in politics, he won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1923.

He continued to write until his death in 1939, Some of his important later works include *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1917), *A Vision* (1925), *The Tower* (1928) and *Words for Music Perhaps and Other Poems* (1932). Yeats passed away on January 28, 1939, in Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, France. The publication of *Last Poems and Two Plays* shortly after his death further cemented his legacy as a leading poet and playwright.

Influences and themes of Yeats:

Yeats had many phases to his writing as he aged which made him such an iconic writer of his earliest work, he focused on his skill with poetry and fascination with Irish Folklore and Myths. Many influences included dance, musicality, performance, Celtic and Gaelic origins, nationalist ideals, and magical themes of Irish folklore and myth.

Yeats calls the oral verse, "The Music of Speech" and focuses on oral intentions, sound, and presentation on the stage more so than even on the written page, both plays and poetry were considered with this intention in mind from his work.

His early work was more lyrical, magical, mythic, and mysterious in nature as well as slower paced with every word paying close attention to sound and symbols.

He was considered the "master of traditional form" in his early poetry and called a symbolist poet, with allusive imagery, and symbolic structures.

A sense of spirituality also was a large factor of influence and addition to his theme in his work, he was impacted by Buddhism, Hinduism, Mysticism, and magic especially throughout time.

Collection overview:

Yeats wrote from all genres from fiction, nonfiction, to plays and poetry. He is best known for his Poetry and outstanding Plays which were impacted by his influence of the Abbey Theater as he became an iconic character in the Irish history and society. Works of his include;

Fiction:

The Celtic Twilight

Non-fiction:

Four Years

Plays:

The Countess Cathleen

The Hour Glass

The Land of Heart's Desire

Short Stories:

Rosa Alchemica

The Stories of Red Hanrahan

Synge and the Ireland of His Time

Out of the Rose

The Heart of the Spring

The Curse of the Fires and of the Shadows

The Old Men of the Twilight

Where there is nothing there is God

Of Costello the Proud

Poetry:

A Prayer For My Daughter

Aedh Wishes For The Clothes Of Heaven

Swift's Epitaph

The Arrow

The Black Tower

The Crucifixion Of The Outcast

The Dolls

The Everlasting Voices

The Fish

The Harp of Aengus

The Host Of The Air

The Hosting Of The Sidhe

The Lake Isle Of Innisfree

The Lover Tells Of The Rose In His Heart

The Mask

The Moods

Against Unworthy Praise

Baile And Aillinn

Broken Dreams

Easter, 1916

He Wishes For The Cloths Of Heaven

Her Praise

In the Seven Woods

King And No King

Lapis Lazuli

Leda And The Swan

No Second Troy

O Do Not Love Too Long

Politics

Sailing to Byzantium

The Old Age Of Queen Maeve

The Rose Tree

The Second Coming

The Secret Rose

The Seven Sages

The Shadowy Waters

The Song of the Happy Shepherd

The Stolen Child

The Three Beggars

The Tower

The Two Trees

The Wheel

The Wild Swans At Coole

The Wisdom Of The King

To A Young Beauty

To A Young Girl

To The Rose Up

on The Rood Of Time

Towards Break Of Day

What Was Lost

When You Are Old

Most well-known of Yeats work:

Of some of his most iconic work, some of his best known include his first major poetic work, *The Wanderings of Oisín* which he first wrote at the age of 17. Other works were influenced by his pursued love interest Maud Gonne who inspired his play, *The Countess Cathleen*. Of his folk stories, *The Celtic Twilight* and *The Secret Rose* influenced his most prominently well-known works. *The Second Coming* and *Easter 1916* were some of his most famous poems especially after his career had been established.

A Key Work of influence in early era:

Influential writers and colleges in his early work included Edmund Spenser, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Standish O'Grady, John O'Leary to name a few. From the Abbey Theater, Lady Gregory and Irish Literary Renaissance friends, George Russell and Katharine Tyan were among his assisting contenders of inspiration.

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Author Anthology

Author Anthology Melissa Trepá Enda Wyley (1966-Present)

According to the Poetry Anthology (p.844) Enda Wyley was born in Dublin in 1966. She lived in a sea fisher suburb near Dublin called Dalke, which has 19th century architecture and dramatic coastlines that early on influenced Enda Wyley's desire to write. Wyley began to write her first poems which were published while she was still in high school. She received a degree at Carysfort College to become a teacher and decided to focus on poetry full time at the University of Lancaster where she received an M.A. in creative writing. The collections she's written at the University have set the tone for her writing known today.

Eating baby Jesus published in 1994, for example, impacted her writing, where most of her work focuses on failed love. Wyley's next collection, *Socrates in the Garden*, begin to return her poems attention to the subject, working between private and public lenses. This technique as a result caught every angle of content, to discuss the ways in which we love and lose and as a result, redefined what it means to have lost or have loved. Other poems she's written continue this theme towards aspects of love with both humor, curiosity, and profound thought. She has a voice with imaginative range, poetic influences, and ties her private life into her work, which all elevates her as a writer. During her years as a poet, she also worked with Peter Sirr, who is also a writer, whom she later married. One of her well-known early poetry for example, was a poem called *Love Goes Home*. This grapples with failed love, the narrator being left and beautifully articulates the experience of love and loss.

In addition to her poetry, Enda is also a children's author. Of her various works and collections, she has been published everywhere. For instance, she has published her five collections of poetry, with Dedalus Press, *Borrowed Space: New and Selected Poems* (2014), *To Wake to This* (2009), *Poems for Breakfast* (2004), *Socrates in the Garden* (1998), and *Eating Baby Jesus* (1993). She has won numerous awards in her career in the course of her lifetime, for instance she was the inaugural winner of the Vincent Buckley Poetry Prize and has received many Arts Council Literature Bursaries. In 2014 she was the recipient of a Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship for her poetry. Her poetry has been widely broadcast, translated and anthologized as well, including in *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Women's Writing and Tradition*, Volumes 4 & 5, (2002) *The Harvard Anthology of Modern Irish Poetry* (2010), *Femmes d'Irlande en Poésie, 1973-2013*, and *Lines of Vision* (2014).

She has been the poet-in-residence for many arts projects and institutions, including The Coombe Maternity Hospital, Dublin, The Marino Institute of Education, Dublin, Dearthán na nDaoine/ The People's Acorn, 2016 -2017 for Áras an Uachtaráin, Dublin's Culture Connects, Dublin South East, 2017-2018 and The Bealtaine Poetry and Film Project 2018. Enda Wyley's children's books were published with O'Brien Press and include *Boo and Bear*, *I Won't Go to China!* and *The Silver Notebook*. Her poetry for children has been included in anthologies such as *Something Beginning with P* and *Once Upon A Place* as well. Today, Enda lives in Dublin, where in March of 2015 she also was elected to Aosdána.

In an interview with *Islands Edge Poetry*, she talks about her work. Saying, “I have found that as I’ve matured as a reader I’ve become more watchful of the grace and skill, the intelligence and empathy of the finest of writers. I love to observe how they write, the way they make language interesting. Their unwavering gaze at people and the way we live and think inspires me to keep writing.” She goes on to discuss her skill as a writer and how love as a central theme remains an impact to her work. She goes on to say, “...Love plays a central part in my poems. Not just in the many love poems I have written but in my general approach to making a poem and the emotional undercurrents that flow there. I am a huge advocate for celebrating the world and the people in it and though I draw on personal experiences, I reinvent these experiences, fictionalize them in away, and aim for the final piece to be universal, so that others can relate to it too”

When asked about her main impulse behind her writing that vitalizes and impulses her pages, she responds with an elegant sense of honesty.

“For me, poetry begins where ordinary conversation stops. And so, the initial impulse for me is to say what I find difficult to articulate – and to say it in a way which makes language interesting and goes beyond the everyday, while also reflecting it. The beginning stages of the making of a poem can be challenging. I am far braver in my life of poetry than I am in my normal life! As Elizabeth Jennings has said of poetry, it is "a discovery, the gradual building of a world." You may not know where you are going but you are determined to get there! I also abide by Robert Frost’s belief that poetry begins with "a lump in the throat.

I am usually kick-started into writing a new poem by a rush of feeling, an immediate response to an experience, a place, something someone says, the look of a landscape, a memory, or a piece of art, a book, an article, or a poem I have read.... I could go on! I am always surprised by the way a poem can suddenly come upon me when I least expect it. Then I know I have to go with that feeling, that ‘here-and-nowness’ that you refer to. Loyalty to the poem itself plays a huge part in writing it. Beyond my writing it, I feel it will have its own life, find its own readers and almost be independent of me. As a person, I am energized by being alive and I hope that vitality does transfer into the poems. When I write, I write quickly. But sometimes poems have been growing inside of me for years, so that when they finally fall on the page, they have been maturing for quite a while.

I am never in any rush to complete the poem – if a poem ever is really completed! – and am happy to tinker with it for quite a while, before I feel it has reached a level that I can go with. Similarly, I don’t feel pressurized to publish books frequently. I like the poems to have the time to develop and also, I like to have time to read more and be inspired more. Although, I do very much enjoy the final stages of a manuscript when you are gathering all the poems and ordering them, seeing how they all play off each other – little creatures vying for attention!”

Additional source material:

<https://www.islandsedgepoetry.net/poets-a-z/enda-wyley/>

Final Essay Project

Enda Wyley (1966-Present)

According to the *Poetry Anthology* (p.844) Enda Wyley was born in Dublin in 1966. She lived in a sea fisher suburb near Dublin called Dalke, which has 19th century architecture and dramatic coastlines that early on influenced Enda Wyley's desire to write. Wyley began to write early, when her first poems were published while she was still in high school. She received a degree at Carysfort College to become a teacher and decided to focus on poetry full time at the University of Lancaster where she received an M.A. in creative writing. The collections she's written at the University have set the tone for her writing known today.

Eating baby Jesus published in 1994, for example, impacted her writing, where most of her work focuses on failed love. Wyley's next collection, *Socrates in the Garden*, begins to return her poems attention to the subject, working between private and public lenses. This technique as a result caught every angle of content, to discuss the ways in which we love and lose and as a result, redefined what it means to have lost or have loved. Other poems she's written continue this theme towards aspects of love with both humor, curiosity, and profound thought. She has a voice with imaginative range, poetic influences, and ties her private life into her work, which all elevates her as a writer. During her years as a poet, she also worked with Peter Sirr, who is also a writer, whom she later married. She later had one daughter. One of her well-known early poetry for example, was a poem called *Love Goes Home*. This grapples with failed love, the narrator being left and beautifully articulates the experience of love and loss. Of all of the poetry Enda Wyley has written, she has accumulated over five poetry collections, an impressive feat, as she also tackled children's literature, writing two books, as well as continuing to write for side projects alongside her teaching at the University level.

Of Wyley's various works and collections, she has been published everywhere. For instance, she has had her five collections published with Dedalus Press, including; *Borrowed Space: New and Selected Poems* (2014), *To Wake to This* (2009), *Poems for Breakfast* (2004), *Socrates in the Garden* (1998), and *Eating Baby Jesus* (1993). She has won numerous awards in her career in the course of her lifetime for these such works. For instance, she was the inaugural winner of the Vincent Buckley Poetry Prize and has received many Arts Council Literature Bursaries. In 2014 she was the recipient of a Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship for her poetry. Her poetry has been widely broadcast, translated and anthologized as well, including in *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Women's Writing and Tradition*, Volumes 4 & 5, (2002) *The Harvard Anthology of Modern Irish Poetry* (2010), *Femmes d'Irlande en Poésie, 1973-2013*, and *Lines of Vision* (2014).

With such a prestigious background, Enda Wyley has also accumulated a large review from fellow writers and readers in the field. According to the *Trustees of the Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship in 2014*, Enda Wyley's poetry is "remarkable for the way they communicate warm feeling through their lightness of touch and clarity of colour". According to *the Irish Times*, "Enda Wyley is a true poet. *To Wake to This* articulates a subtle, dreamy apprehension through a diction and an imagery all the writer's own". The times also mentions Wyley's work as, "intimate and celebratory...she celebrates love and poetry itself with

tenderness and grace.” *The Poetry Ireland Review* calls her work as a beautiful nod to poetry, saying, “Her imagery, honesty, and insight make this a first-rate work.” All of which is to note the value that poetry has on readers and literary communities alike. Her work has transcended to the value of the form itself, which speaks to her talent and skill.

Wyley, as mentioned, is also a Professional in her field. Where she has been the poet-in-residence for many arts projects and institutions, including The Coombe Maternity Hospital, Dublin, The Marino Institute of Education, Dublin, Dearcán na nDaoine/ The People’s Acorn, 2016 -2017 for Áras an Uachtaráin, Dublin’s Culture Connects, Dublin South East, 2017-2018 and The Bealtaine Poetry and Film Project 2018. Enda Wyley’s children’s books were published with O’Brien Press and include *Boo and Bear*, *I Won’t Go to China!* and *The Silver Notebook*. Her poetry for children has been included in anthologies such as *Something Beginning with P* and *Once Upon A Place* as well. Today, Enda lives in Dublin, where in March of 2015 she also was elected to Aosdána, one of the most elite and prestigious writing accolades a writer can receive.

Enda Wyley’s inspirations go alongside her tendency towards themes on love poems and the dissection of love, loss, and complex relationships. She also has written a few politically charged poems, *Two Women in Kosovo* and *War* for instance being some of them. Enda mentions in an interview with *Islands Edge Poetry*, that Wyley felt the political is “always at play” in poetry, and that she just sometimes intends to bring this out. Another key aspect of her poetry is its vitality and use of color. Enda responded to this observation in the interview, saying that “poetry begins where ordinary conversation stops” which is how she characterizes her own material. Inspirations include poets like Elizabeth Jennings, and Robert Frost. She says that her writing is inspired by an unending supply of influences from an “experience, to a place, something someone said, the look of a landscape, a memory, a landscape, a piece of art, book, article, or poem I have read.” She says Thomas Hardy, Edward Thomas, Sylvia Plath, Maxine Kumin, Anne Sexton, Eavan Boland, W.S. Graham, Heaney are among other inspirations as well.

One of Enda Wyley’s most famous works includes one of her earliest poems in her first collection, *Love Goes Home*. In it, Wyley describes a woman faced by adultery and how she attempts to confront it and the meaning of love. One of the most distinct aspects of this poem, in particular, is that alongside being free verse, with aspects of enjambment, the poem has an indented stanza. This stanza works because it emulates the list mentioned in the poem on how the narrator tried to be a good partner while her partner was away with another woman. In the last stanza she goes on to describe love and how it operates in a moment of truth saying, “But love, in the early hours of our last day;/do not ask me to call goodbye...” She goes on to end the piece, “you nestling somewhere else/into a waiting bed, finding the home you left/ for a while, in her warm stirring pulse” (846). What makes this work so profoundly moving, beautiful, and engaging is all the techniques that are being operated at once in this piece. Not only does Wyley attempt to define a concept of betrayal which is a hard-enough concept to identify let alone write on, but she does so through the eyes of a woman still in love despite her pain. In the middle stanza, she lists the things the female narrator does for her partner while he is away, which only adds to the heartache. For instance, she says in the first line of the list, “I will try to emulate you”. As if to articulate her high praise for her partner, while also revealing a larger loss that remains within herself as she has molded for the needs of her partner. It is a telling piece and attempts to take back a part of the pain that was inevitable in the affair, my personally favorite line being, “do not ask me to call goodbye” (846).

From what has been dissected and read from Enda Wyley’s poetry, I as a writer and reader have concluded that Wyley is a sharp writer with a keen sense of what a poem can do, and of its intrinsic

power. The way it is honing emotions and reflecting life, Wyley appears professional and well versed in her craft. In the interview with *Islands Edge Poetry*, Wyley articulates her passion with profound honesty and excitement. When asked about her intension for her writing, she says, “the initial impulse for me is to say what I find difficult to articulate – and to say it in a way which makes language interesting and goes beyond the everyday, while also reflecting it” She is often surprised by the way a poem can suddenly come to her. And when it does, Wyley says she knows when to go with the feeling she has to write it. Saying, “I feel it will have its own life, find its own readers and almost be independent of me” But of all she commented about her own writing what spoke out to me most of all was the honesty of Wyley saying, no poem is ever truly complete. That is when I knew I have met a true writer. Enda Wyley is one of the greats today, and will continue to be to come.

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