



THE BLUE BOOK OF NEBO

Poetry Comparisons

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The Hare

(page 482 – 484 *Poetry 1900 – 2000*, edited by Meic Stephens, Parthian, 2007)

i.m. Frances Horovitz 1938-1983

That March night I remember how we heard
a baby crying in a neighbouring room
but found him sleeping quietly in his cot.

The others went to bed and we sat late
talking of children and the men we loved.
You thought you'd like another child. 'Too late.'

you said. And we fell silent, thought a while
of yours with his copper hair and mine,
a grown daughter and sons.

Then, that joke we shared, our phases of the moon.
'Sisterly lunacy' I said. You liked
the phrase. It became ours. Different

as earth and air, yet in one trace that week
we towed the calends like boats reining
the oceans of the world at the full moon.

Suddenly from the fields we heard again
a baby cry, and standing at the door
listened for minutes, eyes and ears soon used

to the night. It was cold. In the east
the river made a breath of shining sound.
The cattle in the field were shadow black.



A cow coughed. Some slept, and some pulled
grass. I could smell blossom from the blackthorn
and see their thorny crowns against the sky.

And then again, a sharp cry from the hill.
'A hare' we said together, not speaking
of fox or trap that held it in a lock

of terrible darkness. Both admitted
next day to lying guilty hours awake
at the crying of the hare. You told me

of sleeping at last in the jaws of a bad dream.
'I saw all the suffering of the world
in a single moment. Then I heard

a voice say "But this is nothing, nothing
to the mental pain"' I couldn't speak of it.
I thought about your dream as you lay ill.

In the last heavy nights before full moon,
when its face seems sorrowful and broken,
I look through binoculars. Its seas flower

like cloud over water, it wears its crater:
like silver rings. Even in dying you
menstruated as a woman in health

considering to have a child or no.
When they hand me insults or little hurts
and I'm on fire with my arguments

at your great distance you can calm me still.
Your dream, my sleeplessness, the cattle
asleep under a full moon,

and out there
the dumb and stiffening body of the hare.

– **Gillian Clarke** - first published in 1985 by
Carcenet Press



This poem is about the relationship between two friends. How is their closeness conveyed by Gillian Clarke?

What do you think the hare signifies in the poem?

What senses are evoked in the description of the landscape?

What elements within the poem recall episodes that took part in *The Blue Book of Nebo*?

Jugged Hare

(page 126-127 *Poetry 1900 – 2000*, edited by Meic Stephens, Parthian, 2007)

She mourned the long-ears
Hung in the pantry, his shot fur
Softly disheveled. She smoothed that,
Before gutting – yet she would rather
Sicken herself, than cheat my father
Of his jugged hare.

A tender lady, freakish as the creature –
But resolute. She peeled it to its tail.
Oh, fortitude! Her rings sparked in and out
Of newspaper wipes. Blood in a bowl,
Sacrificial gravy. A rarely afforded
Bottle of port.

She sustained marriage
On high events, as a child plays house.
Dramas, conciliations –
Today, the hare. She sent me out
To bury the skin,
Tossed the heart to the cat.

She was in full spate.

Fragrance of wine and herbs
Blessed our kitchen; like the hare's dessert
Of wild thyme; or like his thighs
As though braised by God. She smiled
And dished up on willow,
Having a nice touch in framing
One-off scenarios.

After the feast, my father was a lover
Deeply enhanced.
I heard them go to bed,
Kissing – still inside her picture.



Later, I heard her sob
And guessed it was the hare
Troubled her. My father slept,
Stunned with tribute. She lay now
Outside her frame, in the hare's dark

Hating her marital skills
And her lady-hands, that could flense a hare
Because she wooed a man.
In years to come,
I understood.

– Jean Earle

Jean Earle's poem, *Jugged Hare* is also about the relationship of two people. Compare and contrast the way in which the women in the two poems react to the death of the hares.

What do you think the hare signifies in the second poem?

What similarities and differences are there between the mother in *Jugged Hare* and Rowenna?

In *The Jugged Hare*, a child remembers her mother years later, with greater clarity and understanding of her qualities and personality. How do you think Dylan would feel about his mother if he were to find out years later what she had done to Pwyll?

GCSE notes on *The Hare*

<https://resource.download.wjec.co.uk/vtc/2018-19/English%20Poetry%20All/PoetryInWales2017/Teacher%20Notes/teacher-notes-The-Hare.pdf>

GCSE notes on *Jugged Hare*

<https://www.literaturewales.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Jean-Earle-Jugged-Hare.pdf>

