**Component 1 Section B: Balancing AOs**

**Consider how this effectively candidate has addressed and balanced all five AOs in this response:**

* Coherence of expression, organisation of material and quality of creative engagement with question: AO1
* Depth of analysis and critical appreciation of writers’ use of language and poetic technique to create meaning: AO2 (double weighting)
* Use of relevant contextual knowledge to support analysis and critical appreciation: AO3
* Relevant, developed connections between poems selected: AO4
* Engagement with range of perspectives and readings, including critical view in question: AO5

***‘For both poets, relationships seem to be exclusively about pain rather than pleasure or fulfilment.****’*

Explore connections between the ways in which Larkin and Duffy present human relationships, showing how far you agree with this comment. You must analyse in detail at least two poems from each of your set texts.

**CANDIDATE F** (*\* See end for opening paragraph)*

Engages with view in title. Sensible focus.

Some purposeful detail in close reading of text linked to meaning

Carol Ann Duffy’s ‘Havisham’ supports the idea that relationships revolve around pain. The oxymoronic opening to the poem “*Beloved sweetheart bastard*” indicates the persona’s negative association with their past lover. Plosive sounds are used to suggest the anger the persona feels, to portray their feelings of sorrow and pain. The juxtaposition between the nouns ‘beloved’ and ‘bastard’ signify the attitudes of the persona towards their lover; it suggests how their emotions have dramatically altered. The poem is based on Dicken’s character Miss Havisham from his novel ‘Great Expectations’; it portrays the perspective of the woman - this supports the poetry foundations claim that Duffy’s work has a “strong feminist edge”. Despite Duffy’s feministic outlook to the poem, it is titled ‘Havisham’, removing her title. This suggests how the characters relationship with her past lover, who abandoned her on her wedding day in the novel, has dehumanised her. The pain she has suffered from this relationship is also suggested by the adjective “*puce*”, which creates imagery of a brown and red colour. This contradicts with the stereotypical white imagery of a wedding and instead demonstrates the anger Miss Havisham feels. The poem is written in a dramatic monologue, this supports O’Reilly’s claim that Duffy “uses dramatic monologue in her exploration of different voices”. Duffy’s poems are usually optimistic, therefore, her exploration of pain suggests how not all human relationships seem to be exclusively about pleasure.

Clear and appropriate use of alternative critical view.

Clear use of view in question

Clear reference to literary context

Sound analysis of language

Clearly organised

Attempts link but only at superficial level of broad ideas here. Asserts poems are similar.

The idea that pain and unfulfillment overrules pleasure in human relationships can also be observed in Larkin’s ‘Wild Oats’. The persona suggests how he is restricted to the “*friend in specs”,* as he is unable to pursue a pleasurable relationship with the “*bosomy English rose”*. The contrast between the colloquial language of “specs” and the use of descriptive adjectives such as “bosomy” suggests the persona’s unfulfillment with his choice. The persona describes the unreachable woman as a “*rose*”. The noun is often associated with romantic notions, along with the flower suggesting life and hope. This contrasts with the lack of description and dehumanisation of the other woman, as she is merely described as a “*friend”.* This dehumanisation can be compared with Miss Havisham not referring to her lover by name - she refers to him with personal pronouns such as *“him”.* It can also be observed how colour imagery is used in both poems to express how pleasure isn’t achieved in either relationship. In ‘Havisham’ the persona has ‘*dark green pebbles for eyes’*, suggesting their negative feelings towards their relationship. This can be compared to the imagery of the ‘rose’, and how red represents the romance and pleasure the persona is never able to achieve. The “friend in specs” represents Larkin’s past lover Ruth Bowman, whom he came close to marriage with. However, due to Larkin’s pessimistic view on all concepts of domestic life (including marriage), he expresses his hatred through the poem. Larkin valued the physical aspects of love, as suggested by his attraction towards the “bosomy” rose. This was Ruth’s friend Jane, who Larkin felt he could never approach. Despite this, he had many affairs throughout his life, such as Ruth and his secretary Betty Mackeneth. His pessimistic outlook on marriage and human relationships can be seen throughout the poem, supporting Appleyard’s claim that Larkin is “a hopeless and inflexible pessimist”.

Sound analysis

Sound link of poets’ **presentation** of pain/lack of fulfilment with some development

Some sound use of biographical context linked to poem

Clear and appropriate use of critical view

In contrast with the previous poems that suggest the pain and unfulfilment of relationships, Duffy’s ‘First Love’ suggests the pleasure and optimism of human relationships. Firstly, a sense of closeness between two people is demonstrated. The imagery of being “*close to my lips as lipstick*” suggests a sense of oneness. Romantic associations are also made with the noun ‘lips’, similarly to the imagery of a ‘rose’ in ‘Wild Oats’. Additionally, the noun ‘lipstick’ has feminine imagery. Duffy could be describing her relationships with women, due to her homosexuality. Duffy had a relationship with Jackie Kay for around fifteen years, therefore, she could be describing the intimate nature of their homosexual relationship. The idea that relationships are exclusively about pleasure can be supported by Dufy’s use of the imagery of flowers. The noun ‘*flowers*’ can be associated with female genitalia, again supporting that the poem is about her relationship with Jackie Kay. The imagery that the flowers ‘*pierce’* and *‘sweeten’* the air perhaps suggests a sense of pleasure that Duffy associates with the relationship.

Sound application of literary terminology

Sound analysis and secure, apt support

Clear use of biographical context becomes more sound when linked directly to shed light on poet’s choice of words/meaning

Sound connection between imagery

Some would argue the structure of the poem suggests the positivity of the relationship. It consists of three stanzas each with five lines, suggesting a sense of stability. This contrasts with the instability of structure in ‘Wild Oats’, as enjambment is used throughout stanzas. This suggests the stability of Duffy’s relationships in comparison to the fragmentation of Larkin’s. Duffy’s exploration and expression of her homosexuality supports O’Riordan’s claim that she “examines love in many forms”. Furthermore, this poem opposes the statement that relationships are exclusively about pain.

Purposeful use of critical reading and engagement with view in question

Purposeful link between form and structure

Larkin’s ‘Talking in Bed’ opposes with the suggestions made by Duffy’s ‘First Love’. Although both compare sexual relationships, as the imagery of the noun ‘*bed*’ has sexual connotations, like the bed imagery in ‘First Love’. However, Larkin’s imagery of the “*wind’s incomplete unrest*” suggests his unfulfilment with this relationship with his lover. The verb ‘unrest’ signifies how the persona is unable to commit to a relationship, much like Larkin himself, who was unable to live a domesticated life. This idea of unrest and dissatisfaction contrasts with the peaceful imagery of the noun “*garden*” in ‘First Love’. The fact that Duffy reminiscing about her love brings her to the garden suggests how she associates it with paradise; this, perhaps, is a link to the Garden of Eden in Genesis, as that too is an emblem of paradise. This suggests how Duffy, according to Allen Randolph, has an “optimistic” outlook on relationships, whereas, Larkin has a pessimistic view that relationships cannot be pleasurable, unless they are physical.

Appropriate link

Clearly informed.

Accurate, clear expression

Evidence of academic register

Sound analysis with clear use of biograhical context and relevant, purposeful connection between language use

Sound context

Some sound engagement with view in question. Sums up argument

To conclude, Duffy’s ‘Havisham’ and Larkin’s ‘Wild Oats’ and ‘Talking in Bed’ all support the claim that relationships are exclusively about pain and unfulfilment. However, they all express this through different perspectives and outlooks, with Duffy having her stereotypical feminine outlook. Therefore, as only one of the four compared poems suggests the pleasurable aspect of human relationships, I would argue that the statement is agreeable.

Clear, generalised link between poets’ ideas and relevant critical view in support

*(\*opening paragraph added at end of response)* Both poets will likely differ in their approaches to human relationships, as Larkin has a “pessimistic” view towards the concept of domestic life, including relationships. He has a cynical outlook on remaining committed, a view which is often reflected through his poetry. Duffy, on the other hand, expresses a more optimistic outlook on romance in her poetry, yet she has been described (by O’Riordan) to “examine love in many forms”, such as her expression of her homosexuality.

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| **AO1**  **Band 4** | *Clearly informed, engaged and well-structured. Clear knowledge of poems.*  *Sound, apt use of terminology.*  *Clear, accurate expression. Some awkward phrasing at times. Evidence of academic register.* |
| **AO2**  **Band 4** | *Sound, accurate analysis. Some detailed development and evaluation of writers’ choice of language and poetic devices and how these create meaning.*  *Generally secure and apt textual support.*  *Sound grasp of implicit meaning.* |
| **AO3**  **Low Band 4** | *Some sound appreciation of influence of relevant contexts linked to discussion of poems and poets’ choices.*  *Some secure understanding of connections between texts and contexts.* |
| **AO4**  **Low Band 4** | *Quality of links improves as moves from appropriate but broad connections of poets’ generalised ideas/views to some purposeful comparison/contrast of language choices and poetic devices linked to meaning.* |
| **AO5**  **Low Band 4** | *Makes generally sound use of view in question and introduces some relevant, purposeful critical opinions to support own broad interpretation.* |

*(Online Exam Review Component 1, Section B, Candidate 4)*