Annotations: **‘Bed’**

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| Line | Annotations |
| 1-2 | Patterns and inflections of real speech – ‘so she is … I know Am ur’ |
| 3 | **Alliteration** – plosive ‘b’: her frustration, ‘big blastit bed’ |
| 4 | **Repetition** suggests the length of time; **word choice** suggests a sense of her martyrdom |
| 5-6 | Humiliations/indignities of being cared for; these are conspicuous. She is very aware of her situation. Body is weakened but mind is not. |
| 7 | Role reversal; **metaphor** – the size of the nappy suggested |
| 8 | Typical food of an invalid/baby food; bland, unexciting, mundane |
| 9 | Idea of role reversal continued. |
| 9-10 | **Enjambment** emphasises the change in roles. Persona has lost control/agency – bewilderment at this change |
| 11 | * Lack of communication – loss of intimacy? |
| 12 | **Word choice** – ‘blethers’ – small talk; intimacy of the relationship has gone. **Word choice** – connection to feathers; the violence of the removal of communication – suggests it is gone forever, irretrievable. |
| 13 | Image extended into a **simile** – ‘like some skinny chicken’ – vulnerability; ugly, unnatural, being prepared for the end |
| 14 | **List** – suggests illness/disease |
| 16 | Contrast with the indignity she is now experiencing. ‘guid’ – comment on way society sees old age as bad – youth is ‘good’ |
| 17 | ‘Aw’ – everything, the only thing she has; passivity: trapped behind the window, can see but not communicate. |
| 18 | Time passing – whole generations coming and going |
| 19 | Suggests youth is impetuous/vibrant. As you age, you go off the boil. Contrasts with ‘same windae’ – monotony and sameness/predictable. |
| 20 | Length of time suggested again. **Symbolism** – the window frame is also aging and uncared for; lacking attention |
| 21 | Whole generations/families moving on; ‘last’ – **enjambment** to focus on the end of the family line |
| 22 | ‘so Am telt’ – doesn’t know herself; second hand information |
| 23 | Feeling as though she is being misled |
| 24 | Her limited view/perspective: reinforces looking for remnants of the past, things she recognises |
| 25 | Daughter’s question has no real meaning; dark irony; not seeking an answer as the answer is clear. |
| 26 | Broth is weak and insubstantial; turnip like baby food again. Lack of investment in preparation? |
| 27 | Mother’s reply is equally meaningless |
| 28 | **Long vowels** suggest the sigh/her despair and hopelessness. **Enjambment** across the two quatrains replicates the sigh. |
| 29 | ‘ ma crabbit tut’ – **shortness of vowels/jagged consonants** suggest the disapproval; irritation in the **consonance** |
| 30 | Suggests fear and vulnerability |
| 31 | Age/ oncoming darkness |
| 32 | Waiting for bed/waiting to die |
|  | SHIFT IN STANCE. SENSE OF REFLECTION. MORE PHILOSOPHICAL. |
| 33-34 | Tenuous grip, not much left – gossamer thin. |
| 35 | Flesh has gone; what’s left is simply bones. Death is waiting. |
| 36 | ‘the glaring selfish moon’ – **personification** – the daughter? (1) the passing of time literally – she has been there all day (2) connotations of death |
| 37 | Her bed and her body like a prison – mind is still obviously active. ‘lights up’ – brings a small amount of cheer/joy/relief? |
| 39 | ‘guilty’ – how the daughter feels. Exactly how she DOES want her to feel. |
| 40 | Repetition of ‘no’ – this IS what she is saying. ‘grateful’ – the mother does not feel this |
|  | Sense that these feelings are unavoidable – like ‘ah canny help’ in line 27. A natural product of being in this situation. |

**Overview notes**

* Written in 10 quatrains and in a Scots dialect. Offers a ‘Talking Heads’ type voice to the reader. The speaker is someone we sympathise with we can also detect what seems to be her bitterness and anger.
* The speaker is marginalised – demonstrated clearly in her position at the window. She has access and no access to the world outside; an invisible barrier. She is both aged and invalided, a double marginalisation.
* Ideas about communication. She can communicate her feelings quite clearly – the poem evidences this. But with the daughter, there is only the pretence of communication.
* Although a very narrowly focused domestic piece – even the title firmly positions it not just in the home but in a bed – it is vast in its scope, and offers and almost Shakespearean lament on the destruction of beauty by time.
* Shift in tone between stanza 7 and 8. Before, we read about the negatives, the difficulties, the fragilities of such a life. After, seems more about wisdom and insight; an idea that this is the point of clearest understanding of her predicament and future.

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| 1 | Explain how the speaker’s sense of frustration is conveyed in lines 1-6. | 4 |
| 2 | What is the speaker’s attitude about herself (line 7-16) and how is it suggested? | 4 |
| 3 | What impression do we get of the daughter’s feelings towards her mother and how is this portrayed (lines 25-8) | 4 |
| 4 | Choose an image from lines 33-6 and explain how it is effective. | 2 |
| 5 | What do you think the old woman is trying to say in the last two lines? | 2 |
| 6 | This poem is about a first person experience. Think of another Kay poem which uses this style and show how it compares and contrasts with this poem in its use of techniques. | 4 |

1. Explain how the speaker’s sense of defeat is conveyed in lines 1-6.
2. What is the speaker’s attitude about herself (line 7-16) and how is it suggested?
3. What impression do we get of the daughter’s feelings towards her mother and how is this portrayed (lines 25-8)
4. Choose an image from lines 33-6 and explain how it is effective.
5. What do you think the old woman is trying to say in the final couplet?
6. This poem is about a first person experience. Think of another Kay poem which uses this style and show how it compares and contrasts with this poem in its use of techniques.
7. Many of the main ideas of the poem are highlighted in the opening two stanzas. identify two of the poem’s main ideas or concerns from the first two stanzas.
8. Show how two examples of the poet’s use of language in these stanzas help to clarify or highlight these main ideas.
9. Show how any two examples of the poet’s use of language in stanzas three, four or five effectively contribute to your understanding of the main ideas or concerns of the poem.
10. How effective do you find any aspect of the final three stanzas as a conclusion to the poem? Your answer might deal with ideas and / or language techniques.