

The Female Gaze in Carol Ann Duffy's *The World's Wife*

Sangeetha J¹, Dr.V.Vennila²

¹Research Scholar, Department of English, College of Science and Humanities, SRM IST, Kattankulathur, Chennai 603203 Sjs168@srmist.edu.in

²Assistant Professor, Department of English, College of Science and Humanities, SRM IST, Kattankulathur, Chennai 603203 dr.v.vennila@gmail.com

Article History: Received: 11 January 2021; Revised: 12 February 2021; Accepted: 27 March 2021; Published online: 10 May2021

Abstract

The World's Wife (1999) penned by Carol Ann Duffy; it is a collection of poems. Which discusses about marital rape, child abuse, domestic violence, verbal abuse, marginalizing of a particular sex, body shaming and the gaze are some of the major reasons why Duffy had to write this poem. There are many misconceptions about Feminism and its theories. The researcher has planned to give a clear view about feminism. By applying the concept of Female Gaze. This poetry is very unique because various characters in the poem has been extracted from Greek Mythology, adapted from various films, fairy tales and narrated from the counter parts of famous writers. The poet has chosen simple words and used it in a complicated way. This world is still a horrible place for a woman to live her own life. This work is so important because the poet herself depicts the entire woman society.

Keywords: *The World's Wife*, Carol Ann Duffy, Female Gaze, Domestic Violence, Greek Mythology

Introduction

Carol Ann Duffy the sole girl of a Roman catholic proletariat family started writing poems at the age of eleven and reveal her first pamphlet when she was nineteen. In 2009 she was the primary lady to be electoral poet laureate in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. When she had no recognition of her past allegedly. Thanks to her sexual orientation Duffy is overtly bi sexual and this has been the main target of every media across the globe and also critics over the years and has typically served because the basis of the interpretation of work nonetheless she is considered as one among the fore most widespread poets in UK and has managed to realize each quality and respect from the top to date peers. In her poem *The World's Wife* she states in one of her interviews: "Although the book has been called a Feminist Manifesto, and I am a Feminist and, my aim was larger than that" (wood).

Her works covers both about the daily experience and the fancying life of the aristocrats and also about the life of herself and others. She also adapted scenes from childhood, adolescence and adult hood; she also discovers solace through love, memory and language. Her poetry recognizes on well-known male figures or fabricated counterparts to familiar male figures. The major themes of the poems are about the intricacy of the gender relations, the depiction of women, and the often-rough handling of women through fanciful, religious, allegorical, and also in the factual context. Duffy also quotes about the modern world in her poem and she relates it with different settings. And together she makes it a collection and also depicts the miserable life of women through various situations. Deryn considers Duffy's poetry as "Intelligent without being exclusive ... humorous without being glib, direct without being reductive". (Deryn 4) "Pygmalion Bride", "Medusa", "Queen Kong", are taken for analysis.

The Female Gaze

The existentialist rationalist Jean- Paul Sartre stated the concept of le regard, the eye, in *Being and Nothing* (1943), in which the example of gazing at another person compares the emotional force that the gazer feels is seen as an object and not as an individual (9). In Women's activist hypothesis the male look is the demonstration of portraying ladies and the world, in the visual expressions and in writing, form a manly, hero point of view that presents ad speaks to ladies as a sexual item for the delight of the male viewer.

The film analyst Laura Mulvey introduced the term malelook, which appears differently in comparison to the look and is limited. Adult woman and the world, the braineries of the male look is essentially exact to the braineries of scopophilia, the satisfaction of looking; in this aspect the premises scopophilia and it

acknowledges both the fashionable joys and the sexual pleasure of taking a gander from someone or something(8). A matron being a male – looking inactive substance is the channel to scopophilia to the exquisite pleasure that someone has an object of beauty. As a declaration of sexuality, scopophilia alludes to the joy got from a gander at sexual fixations and photos, sexual entertainment and exposed body so on there are two kinds of joy seeing: (I) voyeurism wherein the watchers joy is in taking a gander at someone else from a separation, and the person ventures, dreams generally sexual, onto the looked upon individual and (II) narcissism, in which the enjoyment of the watchers is in self – recognition when they see someone else’s image. That so as to appreciate a film as an adult woman or an individual (26) of any sex other than male sex, ladies must figure out how to relate to the male hero and accept his perspective, the male look (8).

The female look is adroitly equivalent to the male look; that is when ladies outsource a person, they see each other and themselves from the viewpoint of man. The male look is an indication of inconsistent social force, between the looking man and they looked upon ladies; and further more is a conscious or intuitive social exertion to conceive profiteering intimate to endorse a man-centric sexual desire. From the either perspective, a lady invites the sexual externalization of the male look upon the ladies; or, she may be seen as an exhibitionist lady exploiting the several cases acquire to the male gaze, so as to control the chauvinist ideals of the male restrained society to her very own advantage.

Analysis and Discussion:

Voyeurism in poems:

Voyeurism is seemingly a most common thing found in men; however, its prevalence isn’t proverbial. The onset appears to count before the age of fifteen. In adolescence, an associate expression of sexual curiosity is being replaced by traditional sexuality.

In this poem Pygmalion’s Bride; the sculptor tries to make the sculpted woman and falls in love with her shape while sculpting her and he prays god to make her as his wife. And after that he kisses her and finds her to be a real woman. He didn’t ask her if she is ready to be her wife and have sex with him. He just forced her because of his Voyeurism and made her feel very bad about him and as she narrates “Cold, I was, like snow, like ivory” (51).

This is how the poem begins. The word ‘cold’ says that she did not feel any warmth when her man who created touches her. She didn’t have any feelings that women have during her sexual intercourse. Her cry was not considered and she was used a sexual object. Sex was the major thing for the sculpture and they also had children. And at the end of the poem, she faked her pleasure and gave up herself to the sculpture and he always wanted her to have a constant fear on him and always remain too close in relationship with him. If she is really interested on her man, she would have committed herself completely to her man she loves without any fear. Duffy has written this poem to show off how in this society women were treated according to their color, shape and size. And she also says that it’s normal for a man to want a woman and it’s also his own right that he wants his women. But he must also understand her emotions and must give space for her to explore.

Medusa was introduced by Roman author Ovid after the first century. She gave up her entire life to be as a priestess of Athena. When she saw Poseidon, she falls in love with him and broke all her vows and had sex with him and end up marrying him. And Athena, Goddess of Wisdom punished Medusa that she will turn as a filthy creature and her eyes will be turned into bloodshot. Her lovely golden hairs will be turned into poisonous snakes. And also, Athena’s curse to Medusa was that anyone who looks upon Medusa will turn into stone. But in this poem Duffy takes her turn to narrate it so that the readers reflect sympathy upon her character Medusa than considering her to be a strange and an evil creature. This poem is reflection of both the themes of Envy and Wrath of Medusa.

Duffy makes a first-person narration. She puts herself in the place of Medusa and starts the narration. This poem begins with a doubt which grows into Medusa’s mind, she says that these thoughts about the unclear doubt dwell into her mind and it made her hairs on her head to turn into ugly snakes and those thoughts about her doubt acted like snakes with a hissing sound. Duffy tries to portray the sufferings of Medusa. And then while narrating her romantic tale she begins with the line, “It’s you I love, perfect man, Greek God, my own;” (40). This makes her feel painful and brings pain into her heart. And these negative

thoughts got filled into Medusa's mind and slowly her head was fully occupied by negativity. This results all her hairs to turn into ugly and evil creature like snakes. Duffy in this poem states that Medusa makes a stare into the mirror and confesses that her "love had gone so bad" and this sentence signifies that positive act has changed into a negative one. In metaphorical terms, the idea about love and the idea about bad have mixed together and they symbolize a negative feeling.

"Wasn't I Beautiful?

Wasn't I fragrant and young?

Look at me now" (40).

Those were the last lines of the poem where she tries to confess that the couples care for each other all the times and both show their love to each other. But her man whom she knew as a perfect lover was not loyal to her. So, Duffy being a feminist and has a literary background tries to draw a connection between a man and his way of treating a woman normally and this relationship could affect her psyche and spoil her entire life and turn. In this poem Duffy tries to confess that all the men are same and bad and they do the same thing to a women's life. But she did not say this statement directly. But then, when a reader reads the poem, they could understand that true love doesn't need a prettyface but seeks a pure soul.

In this collection this is the only poem by Duffy which has been praised by men and also had portrayed women in a positive way. And at once, Queen Kong saw a man who explores the places where Queen Kong lives; she falls in love with him at the very first sight. This poem was written by the poet on a highly sexual perspective when Queen Kong comes to a realization, she started to praise her lover, stating that he was the only charming man in the world. She also had a huge heart to follow him even to the end of their life. She always had a thought about her man. She saw him drinking water at the nearby river and after that she spotted him taking bath in the river. This poem also reflects her strong love for her man and she gave all her importance to him and she was more desirous towards him. She was also as possessive as the poem reflects, she is more doubtlessly devoted to her bond with her man and all these were shown by the poet in her poem by using possessive pronouns and also by using many symbolisms in the text. She cares her man like a new born child and always pampers him with love and care. Her man will be with her and go everywhere she goes and also travels with her. And this what exactly Queen Kong also wants from her man she is so much pleased by him and fought for her love. And this made Queen Kong to spend the last twelve years of life being together. At the first stage the poem delves the erotic imagery. And she also talks about sex as it is also added to man and she gave all her importance to him and she was more desirous towards him. She was also as possessive as the poem reflects, she is more doubtlessly devoted to her bond with her man and all these were shown by the poet in her poem by using possessive pronouns and also by using many symbolisms in the text.

She cares her man like a new born child and always pampers him with love and care. Her man will be with her and go everywhere she goes and also travels with her. And this what exactly Queen Kong also wants from her man she is so much pleased by him and fought for her love. And this made Queen Kong to spend the last twelve years of life being together. At the first stage the poem delves the erotic imagery. And she also talks about sex as it is also added to be a part of love. Intertwining both the ideas it can be understood that Queen Kong is highly commencing about her emotions towards her man and portrays her love through plain and direct adjectives, sentences and cliché phrases.

Conclusion

The concept of 'Gaze' is a pivotal factor in any work of art. Approaches change with assumption and with sexuality also. Understanding the differences is necessary in a post-modern society. To understand the society Duffy has used her poetry to show the difference in the perception how men and women write. Through the monocle of female character, she has shown the frailty and the male centeredness of the society. Further researches close to view the way women writers look at society which considers them negligible and menial.

Works Cited

- Duffy, Carol A. *The World's Wife*. Picador, 1999.
- "Queen Kong." *The World's Wife*, 9 Feb. 2021,
- [Carolannduffy4lyf.wordpress.com/2016/08/18/blog-post-title-2/](https://carolannduffy4lyf.wordpress.com/2016/08/18/blog-post-title-2/).
- "Pygmalion's Bride Analysis." Bradleyidc, 5 Feb. 2021, 9/06/Pygmalions-bride-analysis/. Newton, Hannah Schofield. "GCSE
- Poem Analysis: Carol Ann Duffy's -Medusa." Tutor fair Blog, 10 Feb.2021,
- www.tutorfair.com/blog/gcse
- poetry-analysis-carol-anne-duffys-medusa. Accessed 10 Feb.2021
- Mulvey, Laura (Autumn 1975). "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema". Screen 16 <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/16.3.6>