

GIVING VOICE TO THE VOICELESS: A FEMINIST APPROACH TO CAROL ANN DUFFY'S POETRY

Kaniz Fatema Tisha

M A in English, Comilla University, Cumilla, Bangladesh

Md. Habibur Rahman (*Corresponding Author*)

Associate Professor

Department of English, Comilla University, Cumilla, Bangladesh

ABSTRACT: *Carol Ann Duffy, the foremost Contemporary British poet Laureate, presents gender issues in her own distinguishable way and this distinctiveness comes from her individual confidence. She explores everyday experience in her poetry and this article is especially based on Carol Ann Duffy's collection of poems The World's Wife (1999) which reflects her own feminist view of the world and recalls historical, mythical and religious figures. The collection acts as an arena for formerly voiceless woman who have been marginalised to a subservient role under the guise of men and repudiated their own story and their own voice. Duffy's characters abdicate all feminine gender norms; they have casual sex, discard marriage, smoke, drink, swear, and rebel against society's expectations in order to subvert feminine archetypes. That is to say, in this collection of poetry, Duffy gives voice to the voiceless women, looks for what it is like to be a woman and uses dramatic monologue to convey her thoughts through these characters. . The speakers of the poems are dominant, bold, colourful and unapologetically female; but there is also male voice, be it mediated through the female voice. The aim of this article is to anatomize male-female relationship dynamic, subversion of gender stereotypes; and to analyze the wishes, dreams and the ability of the woman to change her position in the world not just as a daughter, a wife or a mother but rather as an individual with full access to human rights and duties.*

KEY-WORDS: duffy, feminism, stereotype, subservient

INTRODUCTION

Gender discrimination is a much discussed issue all over the world today. Carol Ann Duffy, a British feminist writer presents this issue very distinctly in her oeuvre and challenges the deep rooted concept of patriarchal ideologies. She not only rejects the dominance of the male over the life and all activities of the female but also refuses all aspects dominance even if it is a dominance of the female. She says "Feminist poetry did play a very useful role in the seventies, but we've moved beyond that" (Dowsen 1999:15). The damage produced by the male subjugation over the female is reflected in the themes and forms of her poetry. Carol Ann Duffy's collection of poetry *The World's Wife* is a momentous poetical work that represents the modern women who are dominant and colourful, and Duffy illustrates the diverse roles of women from several perspectives

with a comparison to the traditional version that is mainly focused on the male characters. The collection retells the stories of famous men from the eyes of their wives and lovers by giving voice to the traditionally voiceless women based on myth, fairy tales and well known historical figures. Each poem is concentrated on a female character that either played a marginal role or no role at all in the main story-; the characters have traditionally never been given voice and that is why Duffy presents them anew to subvert the traditional roles assigned to women. Actually, in this collection, Duffy deconstructs renowned figures in history, literatures, mythologies, and fairytales to construct female-dominated voice and the long-ignored voices that simultaneously challenge the courageous, manly and extraordinary images of those renowned husbands. *The World's Wife*, as the title of the poetry collection suggests, assimilates the wives as an exhaustive integrity. Therefore, the women who were once hidden, subordinate and obscure in an unseen world, Duffy creates them anew by giving voices to them.

Duffy includes a range of themes, which are portrayed artistically within the collection *The World's Wife*, and giving voice to the voiceless is one of these themes. "Little Red Cap" is the opening poem from the collection which can be described as a feminist retelling of "Little Red Riding Hood". Duffy observes that the original story "The Little Red Cap" by Brothers Grimm is a representation of male dominion over women and its symbolism indicates sexual oppression towards its protagonist. But the poem by Carol Ann Duffy completely alters the original story to concentrate on the issues of female empowerment contrasting it with female subjugation. In this poem, in fact, Duffy can present her female characters as momentous thus defying male authority in the patriarchal society.

There is no doubt that the protagonist of Carol Ann Duffy's "Little Red-Cap" is a feminist character. But the protagonist of "The Little Red Cap" by Grimm is not entirely portrayed as an independent character and it is the wolf who dominates the protagonist, and afterwards in the story, the protagonist's life relies on the character of huntsman. In her version Duffy is able to make a feminist edge in her poem by changing the roles of the characters. The Wolf is no longer described as a villain, rather a warm-hearted character. Little Red Cap (the girl) transforms herself from an empty-headed young girl to a more distinguished, intelligent, and juvenile adult. Through these modification Little Red Cap becomes the leader while the Wolf is noticed as a passive character. So, Duffy is able to create a story focused on the success of the female protagonist, rather than her flaws.

We find that the protagonist who has her own view is independent on her journey to 'the woods' – the adulthood and determines to follow the wolf. During that time, we get insight into the thoughts of the protagonist and she even gives a description for her acts. This implies that she independently intends to pursue the wolf into the woods which are a parable for adult life, while the protagonist is manipulated in the original story and enticed into remaining away from the path. In the fourth stanza, we also find another indication of her independence in which the protagonist says:

“Then I slid from between his heavy matted paws
And went in search of a living bird – white dove” (Line:23-4).

This action portrays that the protagonist is content to pass some time singly, even after she enjoyed the companion of a man. It also implies that she is not consenting to obey the man with whom she engaged sexually. Here the word ‘slid’ has an implication of concealment, it tells us that this is not what the wolf would like to ensue but the protagonist chooses to do so in spite of the fact that he might disapprove. This depiction of the action also reveals more about the character of the wolf. It can be gathered that the wolf, even if he is not described as the traditional predator of the original version, has controlling and possessive tendencies. As we see in the sixth stanza, the story is being spoken in retrospective. The protagonist states:

“But then I was young – and it took ten years
in the woods...” (Line:31-2)

It means that what had happened did not end after the one night spent together but it lasted ten long years. It is clear, towards the end of the poem, that the protagonist is no longer contented with her relationship with the wolf and that the discontent has lasted for a longer period of time. This raises questions regarding the reasons the protagonist decided to stay with the wolf despite her dissatisfaction. It must also be taken in consideration that the protagonist is fascinated by the ‘poetry’ of the man she lives with. When we go back to the beginning of the poem, we learn that “he stood clearing, reading his verse out loud” (Line:7). This depiction suggests that even though he was unwilling to enrich the protagonists’ life consciously, he was still a sophisticated and educated man and perhaps the protagonist had stayed in hopes to convince him to satisfy her hunger for enrichment. After ten years, the protagonist loses her patience and realizes that the relationship is a dead end and there is no reason to keep it alive.

In the Duffy’s version of the story, the protagonist does not require the help of a male to liberate herself from the wolf. She decides it is time to disintegrate the circle in which she presently lives in. She is able to free herself by taking an axe and slaughtering the wolf:

“As he slept, one chop, scrotum to throat, and saw
The glistening, virgin white of my grandmother’s bones...” (Line:39-40)

This way of describing the wolf’s bones signifies a reference to the previous generations of women that the protagonist thinks of when she is killing the wolf and she feels strong connection to the women of similar destiny and perhaps thinks that the act of killing the wolf was not only for herself but for all women. It expresses female solidarity and also empathy. The protagonist realizes that she is not the only woman who wasted a great portion of her life with a man who was not worth it. She feels motivated enough to kill the wolf because she realizes how many women before her had suffered in similar unsatisfying relationship. The act of killing him might be interpreted as the act of killing the patriarchy itself. This action is most likely a metaphor for either divorcing or breaking up with the man the protagonist spent ten long years with. The absence of any help during

her action indicates the strength of the protagonist and her ability to be self-reliant and to be capable to save herself from a destiny which would not make her happy. It is the greatest metaphor of the protagonist's independence in the entire poem. So, the protagonist is described as a woman, who has her own voice, knows herself, her own desires and needs and she does not allow the man to become the center of her universe.

Another poem taken from the collection of poetry *The World's Wife* is "Mrs Midas" which presents a revised version of the story of King Midas narrated from the female viewpoint. Traditionally, this was the ancient Greek myth about a person who could transform everything to gold with a touch. This poem analyses the sadness of Mrs Midas who is not able to touch her husband and calls attention to the misery, annoyance, and phobia she meditates for him concerning his covetousness. Especially this poem is entrancing for feminist critics, as it is probable that Mrs Midas is a strong-willed person who does not permit him to spoil her life, as she breaks away and leads a life without him. Nevertheless, another reading indicates that her emotions and feelings are controlled by her husband and she desires a loving husband rather than a typical one.

From the very beginning, Duffy prioritizes the voice of Mrs Midas, who retells the awaited story from her perspective. Feminist reviewers also view that in literature women are now and then voiceless or merely subjugated by their male counterparts. However, it is apparent that Mrs Midas has power and is narrating her own story with a dimension of autonomy. In this poem Duffy uses various metaphors and humour, through which we can understand the disruption of Mrs Midas's marriage as well as the concept that 'wealth is not everything' in a distinct manner than the way in which the story of King Midas presents this idea. It may also be observed that the character of Mrs Midas challenges the norms of the society that searches for 'feminine behavior'. This act reveals deficiency of interest in the notion that women are not intended to be guzzlers. The poet says:

"It was late September. I'd just poured a glass of wine..." (Line:1)

Mrs Midas admits that her mate has 'lack of thought' for her and is 'pure[ly] selfish' but dreams of 'bearing his child'. Mrs Midas represents numerous women who are not treated equally or kindly by their husbands but yet desire to have a child, as they only perform the roles what society has decided or involved themselves with so-called societal 'happiness' and a 'good relationship'. Duffy has shown Mr Midas as a villainous character by presenting Mrs Midas' dream of having a child. Requiring a child is something that a couple usually agrees upon in a respectful manner, and so when Mrs Midas describes that they were 'passionate then' it can be thought that Mr Midas would have known of this dream. To Midas, money is more important than his lover's wish.

However, we finally see that Mrs Midas takes decision to leave her husband. The entire aspect of wife leaving husband places females into a different light, substantiating that Midas does not control everything Mrs Midas does,

“So he had to move out” (Line:49)

So Mrs Midas made the final decision and he listened to her, he also ‘sat in the back’ of car which proves his decline in status from setting on a ‘burnished throne’. She leaves him, “I sold the contents of the house and came down here” (Line:62-3)

It shows that she has taken a stand and even made money from it, the only attainment it appears that Mrs Midas has achieved, is as a result of breaking up with her husband. This follows how women are capable of being independent and earning a living for themselves.

In fact, a feminist poem, “Mrs Midas” highlights the discrimination or inequalities that women face in real life or literature. Duffy here portrays a character who takes her own decision to leave her husband. Actually, Mrs Midas is an intellectual and strong-willed woman who has her own voice to speak against the discriminatory social norms.

Another poem, “From Mrs Tiresias” portrays the images of female characters and criticises the male characters by using humour and parody. In this poem, Mrs Tiresias grumbles about the abominable incidence where Mr Tiresias “went out for his walk a man and came home female” (Line:2). Here the gender transformation of Mr Tiresias is an allusion used by Duffy to the Geek mythology where in the same way Tiresias was gone out for a walk, and was converted into a woman, as he killed a female serpent or he injured a female snake after observing her copulating with another snake.

In the poem, “From Mrs Tiresias”, Duffy deconstructs the matter of gender based on masculinity and femininity, and body. Here Duffy clarifies that, Mrs Tiresias, however, understands the connection between gender and the body, discovering the performances which make up gender and possibly deconstructing them. At first, Tiresias is a man, thereafter becomes a woman, but holds his masculine features, incapable to admit his new self. This oppression is obvious in incompatible relationship with his body and his uneasiness with sexuality and sex. Though he dwells a woman’s physique, he is a man ‘in drag’.

Mrs Tiresias amplifies redundant facts, such as “the first cuckoo of spring” (Line:10), to such a great extent that he inscribes it ‘to The Times’. Additionally, she gives emphasis to his ‘whistling’, which Mrs Tiresias discovers very haughty. Thereafter, Mrs Tiresias designates the peculiar events she observes where, “a faint sneer of thunder up in the woods” (Line:19). As he was late, she became nervous and upon his arrival she notices the similar eyes, nonetheless women breast. She says, “When he uttered my name in his women’s voice I passed out” (Line:30). The transformation of gender is exceptionally awkward for Mrs Tiresias, but there is nothing to be done, thus life has to be continued. Mrs Tiresias attempts to keep on her life usually, as she supports her female transmuted husband in regular deeds which are undeniably new to him.

One significant feature is menstrual period which makes men different from women. Mrs Tiresias considers her husband is ludicrously faint hearted. She has dealt with menstrual period throughout her lifetime without excessively worry, but he is accepting the situation of the period in additional

way. He is residing in bed for “one week”, invoking the doctors, taking “three pain killers four times a day” (Line:44), and also having excessive mood swings. Duffy attempts to make an essential prominence on the aching a woman undergoes in her life on account of menstrual period by overstating the condition of Mr Tiresias. Even if she is endeavoring to surpass hatred and once again she wants to love him alike the beginning of their relationship, it appears as it has departed away from the fact of control.

The World's Wife displays no compassion for men. With the usage of “his selfish pale face peering at the moon” (Line:50) in this poem, Duffy can be able to use the dramatic form not only to demonstrate the power of women with the help of the feminine symbol ‘moon’ but also the reality that Duffy applies the verb ‘peering’ to define Tiresias activities presenting him in an envious light towards women, additionally by using the word ‘selfish’, Duffy feels no sympathy for men as they have never shown any sympathy for women.

Because of the fact, the reader gropes no sympathy for Tiresias as he has already lost his sense of masculinity, and even if this is a heinous situation, the reality that Duffy presents Tiresias to be taking benefits of this female look to turn into a celebrity, and Duffy is able to represent men in a negative way mentioning that nothing will cease them hankering after power and position, even transforming into a woman. This is exhibited in the poem through the line, “On the arms of powerful men” and the using of ‘on’ in lieu of ‘in’ shows that how he is conducting them for his own advantages.

So, “From Mrs Tiresias” is a tremendous portion of art which relates Greek myth with English literature that challenges the concept of women as the ‘weaker’ sex and the gender stereotypes of female faintness and allegiance are also challenged when Duffy states female sexuality which has usually been described from a phallogentric and heterosexual point of view. In the poem, “From Mrs Tiresias” we acquire something amusing about Carol Ann Duffy, as she continuously supports her own feministic perspectives. By the example of menstrual period, Duffy designates no matter how physically capable men are or how challenging their lives are, they cannot associate themselves with women, who clearly face several challenges too. The poem is very skillfully written, as Duffy highlights on how mentally strong women are, not physically, as Mrs Tiresias takes an end to her relationship with Mr Tiresias is a justly comfortable way.

In the poem “Anne Hathaway”, Duffy uses various quotations and allusions to represent Anne Hathaway’s point of view. The poem “Anne Hathaway” is described in sonnet form that is Shakespeare’s famous style; however, his wife, Anne Hathaway uses it in order to present her disappointment at being married to the renowned poet. Duffy observes the deeper relationship between Shakespeare and his wife and tries to give her a voice. Many people perhaps believe that it is really astonishing to marry a person who is famous for his writings and wrote many love stories. Nevertheless, the poem “Anne Hathaway” provides a glimpse of what it is like in reality. She appears second to her husband where his first love is his writing. Even in their bedstead she realizes that she is second best, she says:

“The bed we loved in was a spinning world
of forests, castles, torchlight, cliff tops, seas” (Line:1-2)

It seems that in place of being with his wife, Shakespeare writes his plays and poems in their bed. The bed has turned into all places in which his writings are fixed and he has no time for his wife.

It is an allusion highlighted by Duffy to indicate the fact that women have been unnoticed, silenced or neglected for a long time, and to represent stories, fairy tales and characters from the viewpoint of women. Duffy shares her own interpretation on the second best bed by giving Anne the power to speak in this poem. There is alteration in power towards female in the relationship and present the male in a different way. In her poem, Carol Ann Duffy expresses her thoughts in the voice of Anne Hathaway herself.

The poem, “Mrs Darwin” is written from the viewpoint of the wife of Charles Darwin who is renowned for his theory of evolution. The poem contains four lines and at the beginning the poem is narrated in the form of a diary as directed by the date, month and year in a summarized way imitates Charles Darwin’s practice of writing a diary that was also his scientific interpretation and accounts of his investigation and consequent arrangement of anybody and plant species. In this poem, Mrs Darwin visits a zoo with her husband and remarks that there is resemblance between her husband and a monkey and however it concluded up in Darwin becoming familiar for enunciating that all types of species evolve from one another. Besides, the observation could be taken as Mrs Darwin humiliating her husband by mentioning that he and the chimpanzee appear very akin to each other. The comparison of the chimpanzee with Darwin ridicules the prominent Victorian natural scientist which creates the poem a four-liner jest as well as an insult-poem that makes fun of Darwin through his wife’s statement, “something about that Chimpanzee over there reminds me of you” (Line:4).

Duffy has prepared Mrs Darwin contributory in Darwin’s theory of evolution offered by him in his chief works *The Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871). The central theme of his theory was that human beings had evolved from faunas, namely apes, and owing to natural choice. Duffy has represented Mrs Darwin as the actual strength behind the evolution theory in this poem for the reason that it is she (Mrs Darwin) who notices the resemblance between the chimpanzee (an ape) and her husband (the man). The poem suggests that it is Mrs Darwin who provides her husband the clue of evolution. Actually, in the very beginning of the poem, we find the date, month and year which demonstrate that she predicted the theory years before her husband inaugurated it, and that is why Duffy says that Mrs Darwin should be given admiration for this theory and not her husband. Through her poems, Duffy challenges the faith and assumption that women remain in the background and are not capable to express their thoughts against their husbands if they think that they want to. Actually she is giving voice to the female characters who have never had a voice.

The poem “Delilah” taken from the Biblical story of “Samson and Delilah” represents the character Delilah from different point of view. The theme of betrayal is found in the original version of the

story as well as in this poem. In original version Delilah questions Samson about the secrets of his power, but as an alternative Duffy prepares the story where Samson is asking Delilah for exhortation how to be polite or more tender and affectionate. Duffy creates Delilah as an innocent and adoring character in the poem suggesting that the women have achieved power both mentally and physically.

The poem begins with a “Teach me, he said - /we were lying in bed - /how to care” (Line:1-3). Samson was described to be someone who is exhausted of being powerful continually, and is interrogating Delilah to advise him to be more affectionate and gentle. Then, Delilah answers through act, she “nibbled the pulse of his ear” (Line:4) whereas all Samson completely neglected it and “he sat up and reached for his beer” (Line:7). Samson carries on his talk about how courageous he is, and how sturdy he can be. He asserts it by cataloging the things that he can do. He takes the hands of Delilah to his heart, displaying his side of debilitation. Nevertheless, he asserts that he cannot be gentle or caring and as a man he thinks that he has to be strong. It is said that:

“Put your hand here-
he guided my fingers over the scar
over his heart,
a four-medal wound from the war-
but I cannot be gentle, or loving, or tender.
I have to be strong.” (Line:16-21)

However, we can see in the next stanza, the transformation of Samson’s power from strong to weak and his voice begins to soften. Here, the word ‘soften’ is used as a symbol of losing his strength and then he falls asleep, the point that he is really falling asleep is a sign that his power is diminishing. Delilah allows Samson to slip on the floor, and she says:

“I let him slip and slide and sprawl, handsome and huge,
on the floor,
And before I fetched and sharpened my scissors-
snipping first at the black and biblical air-” (Line:36-9)

Here Carol Ann Duffy explains how Delilah is preparing herself through sharpening the scissors, and shearing it in air to check it permits the environment to tense up, while the readers realize what will ensue.

In “Delilah”, Carol Ann Duffy uses alliteration to highlight how Samson is becoming weaker, before his hair is being chopped by Delilah. He fights to stand up, but to sit, slide and sprawl onto the floor. This allows the reader to be acquainted with what is occurring to the character, the reader can also predict what would happen rapidly according to the Bible, that Delilah is ready to cut off Samson’s hair.

This poem is actually isolated from the original Biblical story, although toward the end Delilah cuts off Samson's hair, the purpose is different. In place of cutting it so he can be seized by her countrymen but she does it for the reason that she wants to aid Samson to become an adoring person. In the poem "Delilah", Duffy portrays Delilah as a prevailing female character, since Samson asks her to assist him, even if he is a strong person. The fact that somebody who is powerful asks for somebody weaker to assist already strengthens the dominion between the strong and the weak.

In "Fra Freud", Duffy uses the voice of Freud's wife to create fun of this idea by providing thirty different terms for the penis. Frau Freud is outwardly accosting a female assembly and providing her opinions on her husband's theories, notwithstanding using less scientific language and with an efficient reference to 'Ms M Lewinsky' which she verses with 'winky'. Here the rhymes used to create the fun, conclude with these lines,

"I suppose what I mean is,
ladies, dear ladies, the average penis – not pretty . . .
the squint of its envious solitary eye ... one's feeling of pity ..." (Line:12-4)

Which fairly turns the concept of 'penis envy' on its head, with the female's sense of superiority and the penis itself sensing envious, in spite of the large number of names it has been bestowed which recommending a miserably mislaid arrogance on the portion of those who hold one. The structure of the poem is itself satiric, as it is a sonnet, using a conventional rhyming couplet to conclude, but is an alternative of the typical love poem.

Carol Ann Duffy's poem "Salome" shares a common feature: a historically marginalized storyteller retelling the story from personal standpoint. Duffy took the character from the original Biblical story in a very intrinsic way. Salome, the daughter of King Herod in the Bible claimed John the Baptist's head on a plate. In lieu of the absorption of women Salome takes a role reversal and uses the men she encounters to fulfil her addiction of slaying men. Duffy takes the character with the least power and deficiency of opinion and provides her a voice. As a result, Carol Ann Duffy reconstructs the original story of John the Baptist, shaping it into the story of Salome. Duffy provides power and freedom to Salome, encouraged by Oscar Wilde's vision. In the poem "Salome", Duffy challenges the traditional stereotypes of women through her portrayal as Salome takes an influential role in the short relationships she becomes involved in. In the poem, Salome is presented as an autonomous character, which can be observed through the selected form of an internal dramatic monologue. An abundance of first face singular pronouns pursued by action verbs, for example "I'll do it again", "I needed" and "I flung" etc. indicate the character's assertiveness.

Duffy's observation aids to expose her intentions for the poem. For example, she uses lists of words that rhyme or sound good together, such as bitter, butter, batter, etc. with the obvious intention of making a poem that streams well. She begins the poem with the name Peter, and then

slowly adds in John and Simon, followed by Andrew. The beginning of the poem is noticeable by confusion, as she interrogates the name of the head following to her on the pillow,

“What was his name? Peter?
Simon? Andrew? John?” (Line:13-4).

Salome also states that she should “turf out the blighter” presenting she is in control, showing the power she has over the man she has slumbered with, in contrast to the stereotypical women who would be given the orders not giving them. Duffy also uses Salome to demote men and indicate they are not very intellectual going against female stereotypes. The simile “like a lamb to the slaughter” (Line:30) irradiates to the idea men are stupid and are easily seduced and do not think about the consequences of their activities. It goes against the ‘dumb blonde stereotype’ of women and men possibly are guilty of this as well. The predacious nature of Salome is also uncharacteristic of women, who are usually seen as the weaker and thinner of the two sexes. Duffy concludes the sarcastic and understated tone of the poem by using the phrase “and ain’t life a bitch” (Line:34) when Salome discovers that the man she thinks she slept with was truly just a severed head.

Salome observes masculine behaviour throughout the poem-- from the beginning the reader accepts that a male is conveying his feelings after having sex. But we learn from line seven forwards that it is in fact a woman awakening up. It can be said that Salome represents masculine behavior as she attempts to control men in the same way men controlled woman. Carol Ann Duffy discovers Salome as a modern character, in doing so the entire poem becomes modern; words such as booze, fags, sex, etc. are slang words which provide the poem a modern feel as these words connect to the user as most people use them in everyday life.

Another poem, “Thetis” also represents the authorizing of a woman as the poem evolves. In this poem, Duffy once again reiterates ‘I’ seventeen times in order to portray the growing voice and women’s confidence, furthermore Duffy describes the character, Thetis as a woman who turns into a stronger animal as the poem progresses-- ,for example, she changes from a ‘Dolphin’ to a “Whale, the ocean’s opera singer” (Line:28). Her voice becomes strong through this metamorphosis, the animals she changes into are all known for their capability to live, like how Penelope lives without her husband.

Carol Ann Duffy’s poetry collection *The World’s Wife* expresses the on-going gender struggle of women against the oppressive rule of men, a view to be expected of a feminist such as Duffy. *The World’s Wife* tells the stories of different women throughout time as they fight to overcome this oppression. “Demeter” shows a fitting conclusion to *The World’s Wife*, portraying the finale of womanhood’s fight against men with the manifestation of a mother’s over-riding affection for her daughter. So, the poem “Demeter” represents the females as a unity that are no longer defined by males, but rather those belongings they have produced for themselves.

One way in which “Demeter” can be observed as an appropriate end to *The World’s Wife* is the way in which the poem does not have any indication of men. This suggests a sense of liberation

and independence. Furthermore, Demeter's suffering is not a result of the actions of men, but rather the fact that she is separated from her daughter,

"My broken heart . . .
but I saw her at last, walking,
my daughter, my girl, across the field" (Line:4-9)

This in turn would suggest that Demeter's daughter, Persephone, has a greater influence on her than any man. Moreover, the repetition of 'my' suggests that Demeter needs possession of her daughter in order to live, she is independent. The change from 'my daughter' to 'my girl' also has maternal connotations and this suggests that the maternal love shared between mother and daughter is stronger than the bond between women and men. Her sadness and happiness rely on the loss and then gain of Persephone.

"the air softened and warmed as she moved" (Line:12)

Duffy's use of kinesthetic imagery emphasizes the metaphorical hold Persephone has over Demeter. The use of 'cold stone room' is particularly significant because it represents infertility and desolation, also seen with the 'frozen lake', this imagery is the antithesis of Demeter, believed to be the Goddess of the earth and fertility. Therefore, this concept of women being reliant on men and the power of maternal love would indicate that Demeter is a fitting conclusion to *The World's Wife*, revealing women's emancipation from men coming at the end of the collection.

Duffy in her collection of poetry, *The World's Wife*, challenges male power and the notion of male dominance in society by consciously proclaiming the female emancipation. She establishes numerous ways of subverting gender roles like through the formation of the female literary voice and the invasive actions taken by them, and they result in the subversion of male domination and power. Duffy intentionally intends to study women who are unnoticed or despised by their husbands or lovers, creating it easier to present women as victims. However, the victimization of the women within poetry is not essentially all down to men, Duffy represents different types of victims, ones who are self-destructive and those isolated and ignored by their partners. By giving these unheard of women a voice, Duffy provides us with a view and illuminates struggles which symbolize those that average women face. Duffy is impressible to the oppressed and places the marginalised on the centre in her poems, and in this way she gives voice to the hitherto voiceless. This privileged feminist perspective in Duffy's aesthetics is remarked on by Woods as the following: "Through making individual women's often either forgotten or disregarded voices heard, [Duffy] builds up what amounts to an orchestra of individual women's voices resulting in a collective female chorus" (Woods 2005: 68).

Indeed, through the dramatic monologue, Duffy has actually given a chance for marginalized voices of women in order to express their thoughts while, most of the time, hiding behind male historical, Biblical and mythological figures. By this arrangement, Duffy's criticism shrouds almost all male stereotypes as she sees them. Each poem obviously exposes two inevitably

opposing images of men and women from a female perspective. As Horner argues, Duffy “engages the central tenets of western philosophy and culture, wittingly exposing their subversive nature and the often ‘ludicrous views’ in which they result” (Michelis and Rowland 2002:99) In *The World’s Wife*, Duffy successfully deconstructs the well-known men’s sketches by shrewdly taunting, mocking and parodying those established norms and her technique of inter textuality in *The World’s Wife* is an effort to rewrite the traditional patriarchal culture that Duffy subverts. In doing so, Duffy tries to produce a new “Her-story” to defend “His-(s)tory”, and to make a communication between feminism and patriarchal society. Thus Reis asserts that Duffy creates “a kind of democratic forum for the ‘unrepresented’ and the ‘unvoiced’ in the society” (Reis 2004:136) for women self-identification. So, we can affirm that Duffy’s version of feminism as explored in *The World’s Wife* could be an effective solution to the twenty first century patriarchy.

References

- Barry, Peter, *Beginning Theory*, Manchester University Press, 2002
- Butler, Judith, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York, Routledge, 1990.
- De Beauvoir, Simon, *The Second Sex*, New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1952.
- Dowsen, Jane. “‘Older Sisters Are Very Sobering Things’: Contemporary Women Poets and the Female Affiliation Complex”. *Feminist Review*, vol. 62, no.2, 1999.
- Duffy, Carol Ann. *The World’s Wife*. London: Picador, 1999.
- Duffy, Carol Ann. *Selected Poems*, London: Penguin, 1994.
- Michelis, Angelica and Rowland, Antony, Eds. *The Poetry of Carol Ann Duffy: Choosing Tough Words*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002.
- Reis, Huriye. “‘Presenting it, as It Is’: Poetics of Realism and Politics of Representation in Carol Ann Duff’s Poetry.” *Edebiyat Fakultesi Dergisi*, vol. 21, no.2, 2004.
- Ryan, Michael. *Literary Theory: A Practical Introduction*. Blackwell, 2001.
- Tyson, Lois, *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*, New York, Routledge, 2006.
- Woods, J. Michael. *Carol Ann Duffy: Selected Poems*. London: York P, 2005.