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A Feminist Study of Carol Ann Duffy's Poetry and the Concept of Feminine

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Abstract

Women's critique has focused on exposing the marginalization of women authors, suppression of the feminine voice, purposeful exclusion of females mostly from literary works, including stereotyping of females within male fiction as angels in heaven or mythical creatures or living creatures born only for kitchen area business in the first place from its inception. Scholars in feminist studies have also been looking into the documents of female authors since the early 1960s. Women's critique has shown that literary sexism can no longer be tolerated or justified. There are presently several great female poets whose poetry deserves to be recognized and appreciated by the general public. However, the female liberation movement sparked the publication of multiple separatist anthologies. It is indeed also behind the painfully shallow and odd attempt to establish those female poems are inherently different. Several commentators regard female poets as much more than poets; they are not just women, and yet simply women poets, saying by doing the same things that men poets have been saying and doing for far longer, as well as having the added opportunity to understand about women. The texts of the poems will be analyzed

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using feminist methodologies for this research study. As a result, the results linked with these methodologies will serve as the conceptual framework for the present study.

Keywords: Feminine, Carol Ann Duffy, Feminism's Waves, marginalization, females

دراسة نسوية لشعر كارول آن دافي ومفهوم الأنوثة

م.م. صبا علي خلف

مديرة تربية بغداد

المستخلص

ركز نقد المرأة على فضح تهميش الكاتبات ، وقمع الصوت الأنثوي ، والاستبعاد المتعمد للإناث في الغالب من الأعمال الأدبية ، بما في ذلك الصور النمطية للإناث في الخيال الذكوري كملائكة في الجنة أو مخلوقات أسطورية أو كائنات حية ولدت فقط لأعمال المطبخ. في المقام الأول منذ إنشائها. كان الباحثون في الدراسات النسوية يبحثون أيضاً في وثائق الكاتبات منذ أوائل الستينيات. أظهر نقد النساء أنه لم يعد من الممكن التسامح مع التمييز الجنسي في الأدب أو تبريره. يوجد في الوقت الحاضر العديد من الشاعرات العظماء الذي يستحق شعرهن الاعتراف والتقدير من قبل عامة الناس. ومع ذلك ، أثارت حركة تحرير الإناث نشر مختارات انفصالية متعددة. إنه في الواقع أيضاً وراء المحاولة الضحلة والغريبة لإنشاء تلك القصائد الأنثوية بطبيعتها مختلفة. ينظر العديد من المعلقين إلى الشاعرات أكثر من كونهن شعراء. إنهن لسن مجرد نساء ، ومع ذلك فهن ببساطة شاعرات يقمن بالقول من خلال القيام بنفس الأشياء التي كان الشعراء الرجال يقولونها ويفعلونها لفترة أطول ، بالإضافة إلى الحصول على فرصة إضافية لفهم النساء. سيتم تحليل نصوص القصائد باستخدام المنهجيات النسوية لهذه الدراسة البحثية. ونتيجة لذلك ، فإن النتائج المرتبطة بهذه المنهجيات ستكون بمثابة الإطار المفاهيمي للدراسة الحالية.

1.1 The Problem

There are presently several great female poets whose poetry deserves to be recognized and appreciated by the general public. However, the female liberation movement sparked the publication of multiple separatist anthologies. It is indeed also

behind the painfully shallow and odd attempt to establish those female poems are inherently different. This study will be separated into main four paragraphs. 1- problem 2- hypothesis 3-findings 4- conclusion.

1.1.2 Introduction

A precise definition of feminist literary criticism is difficult to come up with. This is owing to the fact that feminist literary criticism has advanced tremendously since its inception in the 1960s. As just a result, a plethora of ways have emerged. Furthermore, Wilfred Guerin, points out in their *"A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature"*, that; "feminist criticism is a political attack on other modes of criticism and theory, and because of its social orientation it moves beyond traditional literary criticism" (Guerin et al, 2005, p.182). They continue by stating being one must; "refer to 'feminist approaches' rather than 'the' feminist approach as feminism is concerned with differences and marginalization of women" (Ibid.). Although the differences in techniques, all feminist approaches have several difficulties in common. *"A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Feminist Criticism's"* introduction by Maggie Humm explains to them in this way:

"First, the issue of a masculine literary history is addressed by reexamining male texts, noting their patriarchal assumptions, and showing the way women in these texts are often represented according to prevailing social, cultural, and ideological norms... Second, the invisibility of women writers has been addressed. Feminist critics have charted a new literary history that gives full weight to the texts of neglected women, and women's oral culture, previously regarded as extra-literary. Third, feminist criticism confronts problems of the 'feminist reader' by offering readers new methods and a fresh critical practice... Fourth, feminist criticism aims to make us act as feminist readers by creating new writing and reading collectives". (Humm, 1994, p. 8)

However, "Feminist literary criticism is concerned with issues" such as how "literature portrays women" and thus "defines gender relations", why "women writers have been" overlooked and undervalued through "the literary criticism tradition", how gender influences how "one perceives and interprets literary texts, and whether or not there is a feminine mode of writing". "Feminist literary criticism understands that literature both reflects and shapes culture to some extent", as the passage above indicates. As a result, literature is a critical medium that may either prolong or help to abolish women's oppression. That is in the same preface, Humm highlights the accomplishments of feminist critique, writing:

"The first and major achievement of feminist criticism was thus to highlight gender stereotyping as an important feature of literary form. The second and equally major achievement of feminist literary criticism was to give reasons for the persistent reproduction of such stereotypes. A third and triumphant success was the discovery of lost and ignored examples of women's literature and a hitherto unnumbered body of women's texts". (Humm, 1994, p. 9)

As a consequence, it's possible that uncovering patriarchal definitions and the "marginalization of women as a category" has become unique, of feminist literary criticism's greatest considerations.

There is no unified as well as static technique of feminist literary critique. Since 1960, a variety of techniques have been developed, which are often characterized as a succession of waves. However, as opponents have pointed out, there is little agreement on how these waves should be described. This is also because, as previously said, feminist critique is strongly associated with the Women's Rights Movement. As a result, it might be difficult to tell the difference between feminist political events and scholarly methods. However, these feminist ideas are grouped into three waves of feminism, according to the popular consensus, according to "Raman Selden's *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*"(2005), and Gill Plain and Susan Sellers' *A History of Feminist Literary Criticism* (2008). (Plain and Sellers, 2007, p. 117).

2.1-Hypothesis

In the immigration literature, the wave metaphor has been used to depict the rise in the number of individuals who move from one area to another within a specific historical time (Foner, 2000; Hathaway, 1999). In this example, "wave" refers to the movement of people from one region to another, as well as the impact this has on the "shore" or "island" where they land. Not only are the coasts and sites of destination transformed, but also the people that go there. Waves appear to be a metaphor for the displacement and relocation of not just individuals, but also theories, methodologies, and ways of knowing in the case of feminism. The wave metaphor and individual tales are placed into wider settings by looking widely at structural factors, just as waves are impacted by winds and currents in the fluid seascape of the ocean (Aikau et al, 2003, p.399).

Moreover, In their book *Third Wave Feminism: A Critical Exploration*, "Stacy Gillis, Gillian Howie, and Rebecca Munford" claim that; Julia Kristeva's well-known (1979) essay "Women's Time"; split "feminism into three attitudes", generations, or waves. The desire for equality is the primary attitude. The assertion of difference is the second attitude. The third attitude undercuts the type of set identity that the first two were built on" (Gillis, et al. 2007, p. 9; Moi, 1986, p. 187).

2.2 Feminism's First Wave

Western feminism before the 1960s fought for "equal rights for women, particularly in the fields of social, political, as well as economic equality". The suffragette movement dominated this epoch. Virginia Woolf & Simone de Beauvoir are two of numerous feminists who wrote and worked during this time.

On the other hand, *A Room of One's Own* (1929), "Professions for Women," (1931), and also "*Three Guineas* (1938)"; by Virginia Woolf primarily focused on female's financial disadvantages in comparison to males, emphasizing the historical and social background of women's literary works achievement, as well as male dominance and also the professional fields (law, education, medicine, etc). Her overall contribution to women's rights is her realization that "gender identity" is socially created and can also be challenged

or changed, but it appears that her main interest is the issues that women authors confront (Selden,1993, p.118).

Through an address to female authors of her time, she urges them to exorcise the specter of "The Angel in the House," the actually inherited victorian times' ideal model of femininity that hides inside them, as mandated by patriarchal societies. "The Angel in the House," according to Woolf's "Professions for Women," causes women to really be blindly "sympathetic" toward all men works; "she is pure", as well as "charming", excels in the "difficult arts of family life"; self-sacrifice; "with no mind and wishes of her own"; and therefore should "use all the arts and wiles of [her] sex" in "self-defense". To reveal "the truth about human relations and morality", the female author should slay this angel; the woman should "rid herself of falsehood, that young woman had only to be herself" (Woolf, 1931, p. 2).

However, "Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949)"; is without a doubt the first essential book to argue for women's marginalization; as a result, she is appropriately referred to as "the architect of the second wave feminism" (Humm, 1994, p.36). Despite the fact that "De Beauvoir's seminal work *The Second Sex*"; was written, and published more than half a century ago, the issues and arguments she highlighted in it are still relevant and pertinent. "De Beauvoir expresses the subject position of women in a patriarchal world as follows" in the opening to her wonderful book:

"A man would never set out to write a book on the peculiar situation of the human male. But if I wish to define myself, I must, first of all, say: 'I am a woman; on this truth must be based all further discussion. A man never begins by presenting himself as an individual of a certain sex; it goes without saying that he is a man'. (p. 15)

Additionally, *The Second Sex* is a comprehensive examination of the origins and persistence of "patriarchal oppression" of females. Gender, for "De Beauvoir", remains a fabrication. She claims that, "gender construction" began early in history within Western culture. She traces the subjugation of women back to the development of tools, which became the sole domain of males. According to her, males were better equipped to do hard manual labor, such as fishing, hunting, and fighting, in the early phases of history since they were physically stronger individuals. Moreover, Women were restricted to the house at this time, according to De Beauvoir, to care for their children and also do housekeeping. De Beauvoir writes that: "Pregnancy, childbirth, and menstruation reduced their capacity to work and made them wholly dependent on men for protection and food" (De Beauvoir, p. 94).

Nevertheless, "De Beauvoir also points out that Western civilization" is built to maintain a patriarchal system, keeping women in a submissive place (p.113-171). Because the patriarchal system has persisted throughout history, males have assumed that they have the right to keep females in a subservient position, and many women have absorbed this stance. As a result, both men and women maintained patriarchy, which, according to "De Beauvoir, is the main reason why patriarchy" has survived as an ideology to this day; patriarchy has become apparent and natural as it has been universalized by men and internalized by females.

However, "De Beauvoir" states that there really is no pre-determined female nature or even essence in her famous statement, "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman" (p.295). De Beauvoir admits that men and women have biological sexual differences; however, she is opposed to appreciating these differences and using value judgments to justify women's subjugation.

Though, De Beauvoir also asserts in *The Second Sex*, how females have been estranged from their bodies and bound to conventional roles of wife and mother. Marriage & motherhood became artificially marketed as the most essential tasks for females in the community, according to "De Beauvoir, and this has been inscribed in patriarchal society's laws, practices, beliefs, and culture" (p. 445-568). According to "De Beauvoir", there really is no such thing as intrinsic femininity, and hence no maternal instinct. However, these two conceptions, according to Beauvoir, are patriarchal fabrications designed to marginalize women in society.

De Beauvoir is also interested in how femininity has been understood and how females as an ontological category have become the Other. She points out:

"For him [man] she [woman] is the sex- absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her, she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject, he is the Absolute- she is the Other". (p. 8)

Additionally, "De Beauvoir" claims that; males have subjugated women throughout history in order to "justify their own existence". "No group ever set itself up as the One without at once setting up the Other against itself," she argues (p. 9). According to de Beauvoir; females are thereby characterized as the ultimate "Other to males who present themselves as universal objects". "De Beauvoir" also says that women were unable to form a minority group identity in order to raise awareness as well as fight for equal opportunities. Women are treated as if they were a biological group with no distinguishing individuality. She claims that:

"They [women] have no past, no history, no religion of their own. They live dispersed among the males, attached through residence, homework, economic condition, and social standing to certain men- fathers or husbands- more firmly than they are to other women. If they belong to the bourgeoisie, they feel solidarity with men of that class, not with proletarian women, if they are white, their allegiance is to white men, not negro women... The bond that unites her [woman] to her oppressor, is not comparable to any other. The division of sexes is a biological fact, not an event in human history". (p. 14-15)

Moreover, Gender, according to De Beauvoir, is a social construct. Furthermore, patriarchal conventions, she claims, have shaped a woman's relationship to her body. She argues patriarchy creates a passive female body image, which is amplified by gender myths and stereotypes; "they did invent her," she asserts (p. 218). Man, therefore, objectifies a woman's body. As a consequence, women are unable to have a unique "experience and perception of their bodies"; instead, "they experience and define their bodies in reference

to patriarchal" representations of the female body. Women internalize these ideas and meanings, according to De Beauvoir, because "all cultural representations – myth, religion, literature, and popular culture – are the product of men". As a result, women begin to "dream the dreams of men" (p. 290).

Finally, "*The Second Sex*" is a foundational text in any critique of patriarchy. Within her book Feminist different interpretations of Mary Daly. Thus, Mary Daly is reported as describing the importance of "De Beauvoir's writing", which she cites as an instance of befriending:

"In the late 1940s the publication of Simone de Beauvoir's great feminist work, *The Second Sex*, made possible dialogue among women about their lives. For many years this work functioned as an almost solitary beacon for women seeking to understand the connections among the oppressive evils they experienced, for they came to understand the fact of otherness within patriarchal society...Most important was the fact that de Beauvoir, by breaking the silence, partially broke the Terrible Taboo. Women were Touched, physically and emotionally. Many women, thus re-awakened, began to have conversations, take actions, write articles- even during the dreary fifties". (qtd. In Hoagland and Frye, 2000, p.104)

Furthermore, through her extensive study of women as "The Other", De Beauvoir cleared the ground for consideration of women's marginalization and the persistence of patriarchy through cultural representations and myths. The role of women in crafting centuries of repressive ideology is possibly the most crucial of the numerous topics addressed in De Beauvoir's work. "De Beauvoir" argues that; women have been used throughout history, but that they have also allowed themselves to be exploited, which is in line with her existentialist worldview. Accepting patriarchy as the naturally given order, that according to De Beauvoir, is an act of "bad faith". Thus, she then urges women to take charge of their own lives rather than blaming males and patriarchy as the sole perpetrators of their abuse and exploitation (p. 189-190).

2.3 Feminism's Second Wave

"The Second Wave" or "Radical Feminism of the 1970s and 1980s"; has been concerned with "women's otherness, the definition, and analysis of patriarchy and women's oppression, and finally, the literary representation of women". "Second Wave Feminism" focused on how women were portrayed in the context of "prevailing social, cultural, and ideological norms". As a result, "radical feminists" maintained that; cultural and literary representations, reflected a social and economic structure. This movement moreover states that; gender is a socially manufactured concept rather than a biologically determined trait. For Radical Feminists, gender is the socially constructed traits of masculinity and femininity, according to Raman Selden. They also claimed that; "women's oppression is the most basic and universal type of dominance" (Selden, p.17). Several themes dominated this period of feminism, according to Selden:

"The omnipresence of patriarchy; the inadequacy for women of existing political organization; and the celebration of women's difference as central to the cultural politics of liberation" (Selden, p.122).

Though, Kate Millett is a well-known person in the field of feminist literary criticism & theory. One of the important texts of radical feminism is her controversial book "*Sexual Politics*", wherein she combines feminist cultural critique with literary criticism. Millett's primary contribution to the feminist movement was that her work was the first to systematize the feminist idea of patriarchy (Bryson, 1992, p.185). Her work analyzed patriarchy from a historical, social, political, and cultural perspective. As a result, it would not be inaccurate to state that; "*Sexual Politics*" formed a radical feminism agenda.

Millett claims that; in "*Sexual Politics* that patriarchy is a universal philosophy" that is so pervasive that it looks natural and clear. Regardless of geographical, ethnic, or religious diversity, Millett believes that the world is patriarchal. She claims:

"Our society, like all other historical civilizations, is patriarchy...every avenue of power within the society, including the coercive force of the police, is entirely in male hands. As the essence of politics is power, such realization cannot fail to carry impact". (Millett, 1970, p. 25-26)

Furthermore, men's and women's intimate connections are ultimately political; the sexes' relationship is built on power ownership. As a result, patriarchal beliefs underpin these personal encounters. Gender roles were formed by patriarchy, according to Millett, and their maintenance is likewise perpetuated through this ideology. Then she really observes that patriarchy consistently degrades women to second-class status in order to legitimize men's superior status, and patriarchy maintains this ideological oppression via a variety of tactics (Millett, 1970, p. 23-26).

However, Millett thinks that patriarchy and racism are inextricably linked, citing Nazi Germany as an example. Millett goes on to say that; patriarchy, above all else, is a "kind of racism", since, under every "racist regime, the interrelationship between groups is inherently hierarchical, with the oppressor as well as the oppressed at the top" (Millett, 1970, p. 159-161).

Further, the sexes' hierarchical order is a cultural construct. She emphasizes that womanhood is related to motherhood, as well as obedience. As a result, women are reduced to their reproductive capabilities and stripped of their other identities. While males are linked with "aggression, intelligence, force, and efficacy"; according to Millett women are connected with "passivity, ignorance, docility, 'virtue,' and ineffectuality" (Millett, 1970, p.26). Millett, like "De Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*", believes that; males are taught to be aggressive and active early in life, while girls are trained to be brides as well as mothers. However, Gender roles are taught early in life and are later reinforced mostly in social and educational systems. further the family, according to Millett, seems to be patriarchy's most important institution (Millett, 1970, p.33). So the family, as the primary socializing agency, is where children are initially exposed to patriarchal society's expectations and ideals.

2.4 Feminism's Third Wave

Throughout the late 1980s, the third wave of feminism, often known as postfeminism, emerged. This movement utilized postmodernist and poststructuralist theories, as the name implies. Thus the "Third Wave of feminism" dismissed gender as a fixed identity, in contrast to the Second Wave feminists who saw gender as a cultural construct. Thus, the chapter "Feminist Dissonance: The Logic of Late Feminism" by "Gillian Howie and Ashley Tauchert in Stacy Gillis, Gillian Howie, and Rebecca Munford's book *Third Wave: A Critical Exploration*" claims that; the second wave of feminism is a rebellion as well as a wish for liberty. The belief that they might make the world a better place drove women. Additionally:

"Third-wave feminism, today, wakes up in a context of recession, in a period of self-questioning and doubt as to whether anything can be changed. Yes, in Western countries at least there have been substantial gains in legal terms and in the workplace. Indeed, many young women think that there is no need for feminism any longer. But there are still pay differentials, violence against women, demeaning or exploitative forms of advertising, pornography and prostitution, and only a minority of women make it to the various Parliaments, multinational boards or circles of power". (Gillis et al, p. 2007, p. 199-200)

In all of these aspects, third-wave feminism can and does carry on the struggle of previous generations while incorporating new patterns that emerge. For example, the enormous leap in internet communication and information technology has created "global" new forums for feminist exchange, political protest, and debate. However, ironically, these trends have aided the pornography business (Gillis et al, 2007, p. 200).

Furthermore, Kristeva's relationship to feminism has been mixed, even though many feminist thinkers and literary critics considered her ideas valuable and interesting. In her article "Women's Time," she expresses her feminism well. Kristeva claims that there are three phases of feminism in this article, which was first published in 1979. She opposes the first step because it aims for global equality while ignoring gender disparities. Kristeva subtly attacks "Simone De Beauvoir's rejection of motherhood; rather than rejecting motherhood", she demands a new maternity discourse. Moreover, Kristeva proposes in "A New Type of Intellectual: The Dissident" that "real female innovation (in whatever field) will only come about when maternity, female creation and the link between them are better understood" (Moi, 1986, p. 298).

Kristeva additionally dismisses the second phase of feminism, which she believes is difficult to achieve since it wants a particularly feminine vocabulary. Kristeva disagrees with feminists who argue that culture and language are fundamentally patriarchal and should be abandoned in some way. She contends, on the contrary, that culture and language belong to speaking beings, and that women are predominantly speaking creatures. She supports the third phase of feminism, which aims to rethink identity and diversity, as well as their connection. This iteration of feminism rejects to choose between identity and difference, or vice versa; instead, it investigates various identities, especially multiple sexual identities.

Furthermore, women have been relegated to the role of mother in patriarchal countries. One method to account for women's subjugation and degradation in patriarchal civilizations is to use this misguided abjection. As a result, the abject both threatens and promises the destruction of such symbolic systems. The masculine is challenged under a patriarchal society by the feminine's asymmetrical, illogical, cunning, and incalculable strength. The deconstruction of the system may always forecast the instability and asymmetry of the male symbolic system, and the unpredictable becoming can always challenge it. The masculine suppresses and demonizes the feminine as the Other, the abjection, in order to gain dominion. In Western Christianity, women are described as the human embodiment of abjection: the inappropriate, transgressive, filthy, wicked, and evil (among other things). While mostly Anglo-American critics seek for women throughout history, French critics seek out females in the subconscious, or in language.

3.1 Findings: Feminism and Carol Ann Duffy

Duffy considered feminism to be elective rather than necessary to the philosophy of life that drives her writing in the 1980s. She commented as late as 1989: "I don't mind being called a feminist poet, but I wouldn't mind if I wasn't. I think the concerns of art can go beyond that", she said (*Bête Noire*, p.71), adding that while her poems are inspired by her "attitudes in a certain manner," she does not "feel any need to use those labels" (*Bête Noire*, p.71), Duffy saw herself at the time as doing what feminism couldn't, meaning that she felt it was feasible to separate art from modern society's patriarchal discourse and the impact of that discourse on people's behavior patterns. She claims she would have felt differently if she had been ten or fifteen years older. Duffy obviously feels that feminism has already served its purpose.

Duffy, on the other hand, has published a lot of poetry concerning relationships after 1989. And many of those feature sexually active couples who have built their relationships on a marital-style commitment and/or a lifestyle that involves monogamy as well as cohabitation, even when they're not always interested in formal marriage. Such poems frequently deal with patriarchy, power, and one partner's dominance over the other. Duffy uncovers many of the exploitative societal processes that led women to wish to reform the institutions that control their life while working on these issues. Undoubtedly, feminist philosophy and attitudes have evolved over time, but it is a testament to Duffy's artistic grandeur and integrity that she said openly in 1993, "I'm a feminist and I think men should be encouraged to be feminists" (Armstrong A., 1993, p. 4).

According to Eavan Boland; "Carol Ann Duffy is one of the freshest and bravest talents to emerge in British poetry - any poetry- in years" (Duffy, 1995, blurb). Duffy's capacity and willingness to rewrite masculinist portrayals of female identity, as well as her engagement with feminine discourse, exemplifies this bravery, as Sara Mills points out in her book *Discourse*. Duffy

"has moved away from viewing women as simply an oppressed group, as victims of male domination, and has tried to formulate ways of analyzing power as it manifests itself and as it is resisted in the relations of everyday life" (Mills S. 1997,p.78).

Such elements of "Duffy's work" are examined by looking at how she "subverts masculinist assumptions as well as discourses in the following ways: giving voice to previously marginalized or silenced figures, representing stereotypes and power relations, the comic reappropriation of myth, and rewriting the canonical love poem" (www.state.ac.uk.com).

Duffy's poetry is often structured as a theatrical monologue, which attempts to reveal language's basic incapacity to represent by undercutting readers' assumptions of established discourses. Duffy identifies with the speaker and puts power on a voice that would otherwise be quiet by adopting the voices of the characters instead of her own. The prominence of this voice serves as a demonstration of language's inability to convey certain dimensions of experience, especially the female experience. This monologue disrupts masculinist constructions of female identity by providing a voice to the previously oppressed female inside conventional discourse: the woman is granted her own identity. Gregson speaks on this when he argues that:

"Duffy explores how masculinist ways of seeing determine how women are regarded, even by themselves, and how language determines the experiences it is supposed merely to describe, how representation makes dummies of us all". (Gregson, 1996, p.101)

A common issue in Duffy's poetry is the concept of feminine identity being established through masculine discourse yet accepted by everybody. She uses stereotypes to highlight the incongruity of many of her characters' roles in contemporary society. that she almost also emphasizes the limitations of language as a means of expression. Duffy deconstructs language by representing communication through monologues instead of written forms.

The following collection of Duffy's poetry has already been chosen to be investigated in order to discuss feminist themes relevant to the subject of this study: *Standing Female Nude*.

3.2 The Female Voice: *Standing Female Nude*

Duffy has been quickly praised for her excellent abilities in characterization, timing, and language, notably in her use of the monologue, whenever *Standing Female Nude* (1985) was first released. She is extremely sensitive as well as empathic as she immerses herself within every character's psyche and articulates their distinct points of view in the characters' own language. Carol Ann Duffy typically combines humor mostly with serious observations and social critique(www.literature.britishcouncil.org.com).

Duffy gives a platform for the unrepresented to articulate their experiences in poems like "A Clear Note" (Duffy, 2009, p. 27), articulating methods of comprehending their reality through historical links and bargaining dialogically with the reader for approval. Three ladies, Agatha, Moll, and Bernadette, speak in the poem "A Clear Note." The fundamental issue of Duffy's poem "A Clear Note" is "woman writing woman," according to Margery Palmer McCulloch in her essay "Women and Scottish Poetry, 1972-

1999." The poem depicts three generations of women, including a mother, a daughter, as well as a granddaughter (McCulloch, 1986, p. 65).

Mother-daughter connections bind the three ladies together. Instead of dominating patriarchal beliefs, the poem analyses the notions of woman, marriage, and motherhood from the individual viewpoints of their actual experience. The representations presented are "a clear note," or even a truer general understanding of what it means to be a woman, mother, and daughter based on experience and knowledge rather than the homogenized ideals perpetuated by institutions of authority like art, religion, and history, as the title indicates. Agatha is a mother and grandmother who teaches her daughter, Moll, about herself and her reality as a woman, wife, and mother:

Eight children to feed, I worked as a nurse
tending the dying. Four kids to each breast.
You can see from the photographs
"my long auburn hair". (ll.1-4)

However, Agatha reveals her identity to her daughter in this scene. As Agatha's experience is expressed and contextualized, the universal notion of women as mothers and nurturers is undermined. Her identity is made up of several places, such as mother and worker; it is not set. Agatha further modifies her methods of knowing by establishing a link to her history through "the images". She used to have "length auburn hair" and had a life outside of parenthood and caregiving. Agatha's long hair is a socially manufactured feminine hallmark of gender and maturity, which is the chopping off of her long hair. When Agatha became a wife, societal conventions rendered her former history quiet. Agatha shares her dissatisfaction with marriage as an institution. Marriage, she believes, is about love and happiness because she "wanted...a man to delight in me" (ll.9-10); a knight "who'd never be finished with kisses and say/ Look at the moon. My darling. The moon" (ll.11-12). All of this is overshadowed by her own personal experience.

Instead...
... "long years of loathing
with the devil I'd married. I felt love freeze
to a fine splinter in my heart". (ll.13-16).

She's come to realize that she's being treated like a commodity within the institution:

Again and again, throwing life from my loins
like a spider with enough rope
spinning and wringing its own neck. And he
wouldn't so much as hold me after the act. (ll.17-20)

Additionally, She believes she is silenced and imprisoned by the patriarchal frame of womanhood. "I had a voice once, but it's broken" (l.25). Within her methods of knowing, Agatha's call to "look at the moon" takes on a new meaning. The moon becomes a maternal symbol uttered to her daughter as a connection to herself and her heritage, no more a plaintive whisper to an unloving spouse. Agatha employs terms to describe her

experiences, which she then passes on to her daughter and granddaughter as distinct methods of knowing:

What laughs, Moll, for you and me
to swim in impossible seas. You have a daughter
yourself now to talk through the night.
.....
... one day
you must tell them I wanted the moon. *Yes.* (ll.37-39, ll.47-48)

On the other hand, Agatha has asked her daughter and granddaughter to consent to her understanding of herself as expressed via her experiences. The trilogy continues with Moll, who has acted out her mother's life story: marriage, children, and regret over her loss of voice. Moll speaks to her daughter, Bernadette, as well as her experiences are defined by a stronger effort than Agatha's to discover everything she is and can be:

... "I roam inside myself, have
such visions you'd not credit. The best times
are daydreams with a cigarette". (ll.73-76)

Moreover, Moll's perspective of the world and her place in it, like her mother's, is based on personal experience. Still fighting the dominant ideals of her time, she passes on her knowledge to her daughter, along with a more subversive plea:

"There was that night, drunk. I told you
*Never have kids. Give birth to yourself,
I wish I did.* And your dad, looking daggers
stormed off to bed. Laugh? I cried".
.....
"Here's me blethering on. What laughs,
Bernadette, for us to swim in impossible seas
under the moon. Let's away, my darling,
for a good long walk. And I'll tell you a secret".
(ll.77-80, ll.93-96)

Furthermore, Invoking the linkages and relationships of "swimming impossible seas" as well as the maternal "moon" which binds their long histories, Moll simply continues Agatha's tale while also passing on even her own story to her daughter. Bernadette's narrative concludes or figuratively begins, the trilogy. This poem's similarities with the feminist movement grow clearer as she speaks. Bernadette uses her grandmother's as well as mother's knowledge to depict her own world. She is able to resist being objectified and reclaims her past through her ties to previous generations of women. She overhears her grandmother's words:

"Can't see the moon now, Moll.
Listen. The hopes of your thousand mothers
sing with a clear note inside you.
Away, while you can, and travel the world.

I can almost hear her saying it now.
Who will remember me? Bleak decades of silence
and lovelessness placing her years away
From the things that seem natural to us.
For we swim with ease in all
possible seas and do not forget them".

.....
... "For Moll,
the life goes streaming back in tune.
For Agatha, from Bernadette, the moon".

(ll.121-30, ll.142-44)

The ways of knowing Agatha, Moll, and Bernadette are contextual, historically located, and gendered.

4.1 Conclusion

Feminist literary criticism encompasses a variety of critical methods, but it focuses on applying feminist theory to the study of texts in order to better understand and criticize women's representations. Feminist critics have long been fascinated by how these images correspond to stereotypes about what it means to be a woman. They regard stereotypes as socially, culturally, and psychologically created when they challenge them, which are many and sometimes contradictory. They are firmly held beliefs, as though they inherited feminine characteristics that have resulted in gender disparities and inflexible gender norms.

The use of indoor environments, primarily residential interiors, is a recurring theme in women's poetry. Women poets focus on the self rather than the country or the people of the land, as male poets do. Women's household experiences have traditionally been shunned as worthless themes in literature. Domestic experiences are important, according to Duffy, and should not be ignored. She is deserving of public recognition. Being a mother, a wife, or a woman is a source of empowerment for women rather than a source of constraint. Women cleaning, cooking, nursing their newborns, and so on are all shown in her poems. Motherhood is a recurring theme in the work of female poets discussing their personal and domestic experiences. These women's poetry puts a strong focus on the mother-child bond. Duffy sees motherhood as a transformative and healing force.

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