

An Exploration of Love and Language in the Select Poems of the Modern-Day Sonnet Sequence “*Rapture*” by Carol Ann Duffy.

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Abstract: The present paper tries to investigate modern diction, language, use of non-verbal communication and innovations in the poetry of Carol Ann Duffy’s poems; *Syntax* and *Love Poem*. These poems are the examples of uses of modern ways of writing poem and expressing ideas through communication as tool of language. Both verbal and non-verbal modes of communication are experimented in the poems of Carol Ann Duffy.

Introduction: Dame Carol Ann Duffy (Born 23rd December 1955) is well known British poet and playwright in the late 20th and 21st century. She is the professor of Contemporary Poetry at Manchester Metropolitan University. Scottish born, she is the first LGBTQ poet was appointed as a poet laureate in 2009 since last 400 years but resigned from the very post in 2019. After graduating in Philosophy in 1977 she set to work publishing several books and traveling to read and teach her poetry. She worked as a poetry critic for The Guardian from 1988 to 1989. Her collection 'Standing Female Nude' published in 1985 won her Scottish Arts Council Award. 'Selling Manhattan', (1987) won a Somerset Maugham Award. Her other collection 'Mean Time' (1993) won Whitbread Poetry Award. Her next collection is 'Feminine Gospels' published in 2002 and most famous 'Rapture' her seventh creation, published in 2005, is a series of intimate poems. In this collection there are 52 poems. For Rapture she won 10,000 Pounds' T. S. Eliot Prize. In 2007 she published her next collection for children 'The Hat'. Her poems generally address the issues of oppression, gender and violence. She plays with word in mischievous manner and playful style. She experiments with various old forms of poetry like sonnets. She can be considered as modern sonneteer. She is also considered as the follower of the Elizabethan poets like William Shakespeare, Philip Sidney, and other sonneteers. Some of her remarkable poems are *Valentine*, *Originally*, *Anne hatchway*, *Prayer*.

Keywords: Sonnets, love, loss, Syntax, Poem, Text,

Sonnet as a genre was developed in the hands of Elizabethan sonneteers. Sonnet is an Italian verse form consisting 14 lines and traditionally five feet iambics and has different rhyming by different sonneteers. The form Sonnet originated in the Court poets of Sicilian School in the 13th century, these poets were highly influenced by love poetry of Provençal troubadours, and then the form reached to the Italian region Tuscany and was practiced by the famous Italian sonneteer Petrarch in the 14th century. He wrote his Magnus opus *Canzoniere*, a sequence of sonnets having 317 sonnets which addressed to his

beloved Laura. From this the Petrarchan sonnet came to its own. Petrarchan sonnets generally treat their themes into two parts; first octave (eight lines) raises or resolves the problem or it can be an expression of emotional tension, and second sestet (six lines) gives solution or answer to the problem or relieves emotional tension. The octave and sestet are divided into two parts with *abbaabba* of octave and sestet's rhyme may be *cdecde*, *cdccdc* or *cdedce*. Petrarchan sonnets mostly influenced European poetry and soon it spread in Spain, Portugal, France and Slavic literature of Poland. Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey introduced Sonnet as poetry along with other Italian poetry form to England in the 16th century. It was the period when Sonnet was at its peak. Many Nesting birds in the Elizabethan age contributed to this genre by their sonnet sequence like William Shakespeare's 154 sonnets, Edmond Spenser's *Amoretti* (1591), Philip Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* (1591), Samuel Daniel's *Delia* (1592) Michael Drayton's *Idea's Mirror* (1594). English sonnets are also called Shakespearean sonnets or Spenserian Sonnets. Shakespearean sonnet is divided into four parts: three quatrains and one couplet and the rhyming scheme is *abab cdcd efef gg*, Spenserian Sonnet has only one difference to Shakespearean sonnet that is its rhyming scheme (*abab bcbc cdcd ee*). The theme of the sonnet sequences is basically love, and written for beloved. Shakespeare wrote some of sonnets for his friend Mr. W.H. and his said to be beloved, and last two sonnets on himself. After Elizabethan poet John Donne wrote sonnets on religion, John Milton handled political, religious and personal themes. In Romantic era poets like Wordsworth, Keats and in Victorian Period Elizabeth Browning continued to write sonnets, in 20th century Rainer Maria Rilke wrote his sequence *Sonnets an Orpheus* (1922).

The 21st Century Carol Ann Duffy is well known for her *Rapture* (2005). Duffy's *Rapture* makes her modern-day love poet; it encompasses the themes like love, loss, relationship, sexuality, contemporary culture, social inequality, oppression, religion, loneliness, gender issues, and death. *Rapture* is a map of real love, moving act of personal testimony, infatuation, longings, passion, commitment, rancour, separation and grief as simply destructive.

Love and Language of Love: Duffy's poems are simply an innovation of language of love. She talks about the language used in writing of poetry. She introduces her readers about Love's Language in the poem *Syntax*. The idea of expressing love is in a different manner. The speaker of the poem talks about it at the beginning, the choice of words that many poets have already used in traditional way of saying love you but Duffy here goes back to the old ways of saying it; she begins:

I want to call you thou, the sound

Of the shape of the start

Of a kiss- like this-thou-

And to say, after, I love,

Thou, I love, thou I love, not

I love you.

The title of the poem itself gives a hint to its reader about the central idea of the poem. The speaker of the poem tries to explain how the language of poem is different than the conventional way of speaking in our day to day life. It seems that Duffy likes the oldness of love. The use of the words Thou, Thy, Thee, shows that she is influenced by the old English and prefers to use it in her poems to make the expression of saying 'love you' is different from the present way. So, in the opinion of the poetic persona she likes to call her partner, *Thou* instead of you. It also clears the reader that Duffy is highly influenced by the 16th to 19th century sonneteers like Shakespeare, Sidney, Spencer, Mrs. Browning. In the fifth line, she highlights and gives more important to her partner than herself, because she does not say *I love you* or *I love thou*, she says *thou I love*. This shows that how she plays with the words in order to make her partner more important.

In the next sestet she gives reason of the use of such syntax:

*Because I so do-
As we say now- I want to say
Thee, I adore, I adore thee
And to know my lips
The syntax of love resides,
And to gaze in thine eyes.*

In these lines she talks about how one cannot ignore the signal of his/her body parts like Lips and Eyes, she is not ready to follow the convention. Now a day's people say *I adore you* but she revolts against the convention by using *thee*. The feelings which cannot be told verbally, so, she says the lips play an important role in expressing some feelings by kissing her partner's lips. She seems to say about the language of the human body in this sestet. How eyes speak their own language and express the feelings of love. Eyes express what words cannot express. She says Lips and Eyes are mirror of mind so let them use their syntax. How important her partner is for her that she repeats "*I adore thee*". To say about the arrangements of the feelings of love in one's hearts she mentions the phrase "Syntax of love". To conclude her use of syntax:

*Love's language starts, stops, starts;
The right words flowing or
Clotting in the heart.*

In these lines she makes an interesting statement about love's language how this language is different from all human languages; the language of the eyes starts and stops and again starts i.e. blinking of eyes. Like eyes, the kissing lips communicate through language and only lovers can understand it. In concluding line Duffy uses 'clotting' as a metaphor for one's inability to express love through words. Duffy emphasizes the subjective ideas of love which are varying from the convention.

In *Love poem* Duffy depicts how modern poet struggles to write love poem and also finds difficulty in conveying love in words. To interpret love poems and their use by the previous poets in the history of English literature, all Sonneteers, Metaphysical Poets, Romantic Poets, Pre-Raphaelites, Victorian, Modern, Post-modern and 21st century poets have excessively explored themselves in the theme of love in their love poems. Like *Syntax* Duffy in *Love poems* seek the difficulty of using language of love and love poetry. She opens -

Till love exhaust itself longs

For the sleep of words-

My mistress' eye-

To lie on a white sheet, at rest

In the language-

Let me count the ways-

Or shrink to the phrase like an epitaph-

come live

with me-

or fall from its own high cloud as syllable

in a pool of verse-

one hour with thee.

In the title of the poem Duffy uses the definite article 'The' for stating that one poem can encapsulate and *The Love Poem* can represent all poems. She inserted *intertextuality* in the first stanza to make her reader to complete the sense of the all love poems. Duffy includes lines or the phrases the following:

Sonnet 130 by Shakespeare, *Sonnet 43* by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *The Passionate Shepherd to his Love* by Christopher Marlow, *An hour with Thee* by Walter Scott, *They Flee From Me* by Sir Thomas Wyatt, *Loving in Truth* by Sir Philip Sidney, *There is Garden in her Face* by Thomas Campion, *To His Mistress Going to Bed* by John Donne etcetera for reader to complete the text anyway. She makes her reader to interpret the fragments from the above love poems. Yet the incompleteness in her opinion is significant and there will never be definitive love poem. Duffy separates the fragments by dash to interrupt the narration of each poem. Though her state of not getting proper expression to write love poem she tries to write it. Then she talks about her mental condition that thoughts come and leave like the dark cloud and her struggle to find proper word, she remains blank so, she ironically says in her case cloud does not have silver lining. From the tone of the poem she seems to be frustrated because she deals with the tradition of writing love poetry and the influence of traditional romantic poetry on present day love poems.

Carol Ann Duffy investigates the feeling of love loss, despair, Language of love, throughout her poems in her Sonnet sequence *Rapture*. Duffy's use of language and diction reflects the fact that she can articulate what ordinary people feel. Her lyrics articulate the sentiment in a memorable way but, the lyrics are not sentimental. She has made experimental diction with the use of modern ways of communication with the help of technology and its tools (Ex. *Text*)

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