

أصوات الألم وتمثيل المعاناة الإنسانية في شعر كارول آن دافي

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المخلص

تبحث هذه الدراسة في كيفية تمثيل كارول آن دافي للمعاناة الإنسانية من خلال ما يمكن تسميته «أصوات الألم»، وهي أصوات شعرية ذات أبعاد أخلاقية واجتماعية وسياسية، وليست مجرد تعبيرات ذاتية أو عاطفية. وتنطلق الدراسة من نظريات المونولوج الدرامي، وسياسات التمثيل، والنقد النسوي، ودراسات الصدمة، والواقعية النقدية، لتؤكد أن الألم في شعر دافي لا يُقدّم كحالة شخصية خاصة، بل كظاهرة اجتماعية تُنتج عبر الخطاب والمؤسسات وعلاقات السلطة. ومن خلال تحليل نصوص تتناول الحرب، وتشويه الجسد الأنثوي، والفقد الأسري، والاعتراب اللغوي، والمعاناة اليومية، تُظهر الدراسة كيف يتحول الألم إلى شهادة ومقاومة ومسؤولية أخلاقية. كما تكشف أن تقنيات دافي الشكلية، خاصة المونولوج الدرامي والواقعية الوسيطة، لا تعرض المعاناة بصورة مباشرة، بل تضع القارئ في موقع الشاهد المتورط أخلاقياً. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن شعر دافي يرفض العاطفية السطحية، ويجعل من الألم قضية أخلاقية تتعلق بالروية والإصغاء والمسؤولية الإنسانية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المعاناة الإنسانية، الألم، المونولوج الدرامي، المسافة الأخلاقية، الصوت

Voices of Pain and the Representation of Human Suffering in Carol Ann Duffy's Poetry

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Abstract

This study examines how Carol Ann Duffy represents human suffering through the construction of what may be termed “voices of pain” — poetic voices that are ethically complex, socially mediated, and politically charged rather than purely confessional. Drawing on dramatic monologue theory, the politics of representation, feminist criticism, trauma studies, and realist poetics, the research argues that suffering in Duffy's poetry is not presented as private emotion but as a public condition shaped by discourse, institutions, and power relations. Through close textual analysis of poems concerned with war witnessing, gendered objectification, domestic grief, linguistic displacement, and everyday marginality, the study demonstrates how pain is transformed into testimony, resistance, and ethical encounter. Duffy's formal strategies—particularly mediated realism and persona-driven monologue—expose the limits of representation while implicating readers as auditors of suffering. The findings reveal that Duffy's poetry refuses sentimental closure and instead positions suffering as a moral problem of seeing, listening, and responsibility within contemporary culture.

Keywords: human suffering ; pain; dramatic monologue; ethical distance; voice

1. Introduction

Carol Ann Duffy holds a midpoint significance in British poetry in the present time due to her constant involvement with human suffering as a phenomenon produced socially and ethically charged. Hers are poems that continually raise the question of how pain can be made speakable, by whom it can be spoken, and by what language forms of speech can make suffering become visible or invisible. Duffy does not consider pain as a personal emotional experience but places it in cultural, political, and institutional contexts that define experience and perception. The systems of war, gender inequality, class structures, migration and language authority are the systems that create and control suffering, and pain is a mediated social reality instead of a personal sensation (Reis, 2004, p. 140; McGuirk, 2021, p. 91).

One of the key characteristics of the poetic practice of Duffy is the manipulation of voice, in this case, the dramatic monologue. A large number of her speakers occupy overlooked or struggling statuses, such as historical women, victims of violence, displaced subjects and morally ambiguous ones. These voices are not transparent manifestations of experience of life. Rather, a secondary lyric presence often exists within the poems and destabilizes the dominant identity and reveals the artificialness of oration. This is done to create an ethical conflict of providing a voice and stealing experience so that suffering is presented with a view to anticipating the boundaries of representation in advance (Goursaud, 2019, p. 31).

Critical scholarship insists that the realism of Duffy is not aimed at objective or unmediated description of the reality. Her stated regularly reiterated promise to deliver it, as it is, is a form of political intervention, as opposed to a dispassionate aesthetic principle. Representation is an inclusion that requires choice, framing and positioning in ideology. Consequently, the suffering in the poetry of Duffy is presented in the form of the historically situated and socially constructed, which is predetermined by such institutions like the media, world of art, and education (Reis, 2004, p. 142; McGuirk, 2021, p. 95).

The suffering that comes out in her work is interlinked. The pain is refracted through professional witnessing and mass consumption, which shows the ethics of spectatorship in the poems that deal with war, like War Photographer (Smith, 2022, p. 410). The experience of suffering in Standing Female Nude is manifested in the ways of aesthetic commodification and gendered politics of representation (Carter, 2022, p. 83). Originally, the presence of pain is incorporated within the linguistic correction and cultural displacement in which the normal practices of institutions

generate symbolic trauma (Ahmed, 2023, p. 69). As can be seen, these instances reveal that Duffy does not seclude suffering as individual feeling but makes it public as occurrence that is organized by social authority.

This paper will present the argument that Duffy is a symbol of human suffering and this could be referred to as voices of pain. These poetic voices are both inside systems of power and at the same time call forth the moral boundaries of the speaking-on-behalf. They are mediated and self-aware not singular or just confessional. Duffy creates an ethical space where the readers can observe suffering through dramatic monologue, realist imagery, irony and self-reflexive commentary where the readers are being invited to face their own distance and complicity.

The research is qualitative and interpretive based on the close textual analysis and modern literary criticism. Poetry is approached as a practice of discourse where meaning is created by use of form, voice, and context instead of outward reflection of individual experience. On the basis of discourse-oriented stylistics, feminist criticism, trauma studies, and representation theories, the analysis will be performed to study the ways in which suffering is constructed, framed, and mediated in the poetry by Duffy. It is especially focusing on diction, imagery, rhythm, voice, and dramatic structure with special emphasis on how poetic form makes sense of pain rather than just states it.

The approach to the methodology is interdisciplinary and combines three perspectives that are complementary to each other. To theorize poetic voice as an ethically articulated and constructed stance instead of a straightforward expression of authorial identity, the dramatic monologue theory is used, which allows addressing the questions of authority, distance, and responsibility in representing suffering (Goursaud, 2019, p. 29). Second, realism is understood as a politics of representation, where representation of pain is ideologically mediated and socially positioned, and where forms of representation are mediated by the class, gender and institutional power instead of impartial observation (Reis, 2004, p. 138; McGuirk, 2021, p. 93). Third, the trauma and witnessing theory provides insight into the narration, viewing, and consumption of the suffering especially in the poems that address the issue of violence, loss, and mediated pain in photography and news discourse (Smith, 2022, p. 408; Ahmed, 2023, p. 65).

The major corpus is a selection of the poems of the big collections such as *Standing Female Nude* (1985), *The Other Country* (1990) and *Mean Time* (1993). Any quotes used are taken out of approved editions and the line numbers are entered in parenthesis to ensure accuracy. Peer-

reviewed articles and scholarly monographs published after 2000 and focusing on post-2020 scholarship are all secondary sources in order to capture the current critical debates.

The methodology of the analysis takes place in three steps. To begin with, the poems are analyzed at the level of voice and addressee to identify how suffering is framed up and which speakers are allowed to have the power. Second, specific details like imagery, irony, enjambment, caesura, and structural design are considered to reveal how pain is meditated with the help of technique instead of being offered as pure emotion. Third, the results are explicated with references to the wider questions of representation, spectatorship, and reader responsibility, which are ethical. This stratification approach provides the rigour of the analysis and, at the same time, the attention is paid to the cultural and ethical aspects of suffering in the poetry of Duffy.

Accordingly, the study addresses the following research questions:

How does Duffy construct poetic voice as a site where suffering is both expressed and mediated?

What ethical problems arise when pain is transformed into art, news, and dramatic persona?

How do Duffy's formal strategies resist sentimental simplification and encourage critical witnessing?

2.Theoretical Background

The representation of suffering that Carol Ann Duffy gives is based on a poetics of realism that understands pain as a social fact, rather than an individual feeling. The definition of poetry as an ethical witnessing, not as a kind of personal confession is determined by her poetic principle to present it as it is. Reis states that the poetry of Duffy could not have been written without politics of representation since it does not merely report on the reality but questions the manner reality is constructed and framed and how it is ideologically constructed. Suffering thus can be seen in her poetry not as a personal emotion but as a collective state. This is quite evident in War Photographer whereby the objectification and systematization of pain is carried out by the image with the use of the word spools of suffering are arranged in neat rows where human suffering has been turned into a form of organized material. The suffering is further introduced in the line of a hundred agonies in black-and-white where the pain is archived and consumed, expressing that the pain is socially processed not privately. Duffy therefore builds suffering as a system of representation and not as isolated emotional trauma.

In the poetry by Duffy, language is a suffering generator rather than a medium that is neutral. Her work has been studied with the focus on the fact that meaning is constructed through discourse rather than represented by it, and language itself is the source of force and violence. Naming, framing, and narratives thus construct pain. The fact that pain is mediated into regulated emotional reaction in *War Photographer* is reflected in the line where the reader is told that his or her eyeballs are pricked with tears and that the term between the bath and pre-lunch beers displays how the discourse facilitates indifference and trivializes pain through the normalization of routine. The agony is made linguistically controlled. In *Mrs Lazarus*, the loss is ordered by the repetitive verbal structures: I had grieved. One night, one day had I wept, / had howled, shrieked, clawed / at the burial stones. Repeating of verbs demonstrates that the pain becomes arranged with the help of the language, and grief is narrated rather than being an unspoken emotion. Language is not the simple expression of pain; it constructs its form, meaning and restrictions.

The voice has been the key to the transformation of suffering to meaning in the poetry of Duffy. Critical works affirm that the poetic initiative of Duffy is based on the reinstatement of the voice to the disenfranchised and muted. Suffering is not as a dumb bearing, but as an active witnessing. In *The Dolphins*, the first-person plural voice states, we are in our element yet we are not free and transforms captivity into witnessing it together. The physical containment, contained in the line We sink to the limits of this pool, is turned into vocalized existential anguish, in which anguish is narrative resistance. Here pain no longer makes itself felt; it now makes itself heard, visible, and visible, moral. The speaking subject is not only turned into victim, but voice in its own right is a power. Duffy is well-known for making characters speak, and in particular for giving voice to the disenfranchised, socially marginalised or previously silent.” (Al-wattar, 2023, p. 302)

The feminist theory can approach suffering as a gendered framework and not a condition of Duffy in her poetry. The feminist criticism demonstrates that in literary history, women were conventionally depicted as objects and not speaking subjects. The reconstruction of female suffering in the voice of experience is the rewriting of myths and stories by Duffy. In *Mrs Lazarus*, the grief is a kind of identity crisis, which is manifested through words: Till his name was no longer a particular spell upon his face, loss is equated to a fall of meaning and signification. Suffering is symbolized and bloody in *Medusa*: a bride has a sour breath, a stinky one, and it is corrupted, turning the betrayal of the soul into a betrayal of the flesh. The pain of women in the

poetry of Duffy is not eroticized but it is the structural, systemic and socially produced, and based on power relation as opposed to personal feeling.

The eco-critical theory extends the definition of suffering beyond the human in the poetry of Duffy. According to anthropocentric approaches to her work, her work is seen as a manifestation of ecological agony created by human domination systems. Suffering is made planetary in *The Dolphins: The world we have is small. The world is flat and round to us, and has no end.* This ironic picture turns imprisonment into existential and ecological pain, where the natural space is turned into artificial space. Pain ceases to be personal and it is collective, ecological and systemic. The voice of dolphins is the ecological testimony, which transforms the non-human suffering into the moral and political speech.

The poetry of Duffy is said to be realist, but her realism is much different as compared to traditional mimetic realism. Instead of providing a clear view into the kind of reality, the poems by Duffy are windows that show the mechanisms, by which reality is framed and perceived. This is more so when she portrays suffering which is constantly depicted to be mediated through institutions like the media, the art world, the education systems and the national discourse. Criticism after 2020 has pointed out that Duffy is a realist whose realism is in fact social criticism. According to McGuirk, realist techniques with which Duffy reveals the influence of class, gender, and power on every day experience transform realism into a form of political interrogation, and not a description of reality. The misery in this sense is not merely experienced, but created by the structure and maintained by the ideologies. With the help of this, the poem by Duffy asks the reader not only to wonder what is being represented, but also how it is being represented. Pain turned into a representational issue and not a mere emotional theme and made the readers think about their personal consumption, empathy and indifference habits.

Critical analysis of monologues by Duffy highlights the fact that although her speakers may appear to be one-voiced, in many instances, the poems contain a second lyrical voice that challenges the fiction of the existence of one voice. Instead of merely putting into voice the voiceless, this form establishes a zone of interaction between fictional voice and lyric presence, and disturbs one another. In this model, Duffy rejects the hubris of representing the other, but continues to address to him, creating a gap wherein identity is destabilized and politically significant.

This is significant in accordance with the expression of suffering since pain is never a neutral information but rather organized socially and ethically problematic. By performing suffering

through monologue, Duffy is able to anticipate, prior to occurrence, the politics of the speaking/hearing/credible speech. The poem is therefore not a writing of pain but a theatre of its performance- where the reader assumes the role of auditor and is therefore challenged to bear the moral aspect of hearing.

Across these frameworks, suffering in Duffy's poetry emerges as structurally produced, linguistically constructed, socially organized, and politically embedded. Pain is not metaphor. Pain is not symbolism. Pain is lived experience shaped by discourse, power, gender, and ideology. Through poems such as *War Photographer*, *Mrs Lazarus*, *The Dolphins*, and *Medusa*, Duffy transforms suffering into voice, testimony, and resistance, making poetry a space where pain becomes meaning and representation becomes ethical responsibility.

3. Voices of Pain and Human Suffering

The poetry of Carol Ann Duffy is always concerned with humanity suffering, through the words of the outcasts, mythical, and ordinary people, using dramatic monologue as a major tool of revealing human and social agony. Instead of providing the suffering as singular feeling, her work demonstrates the state of anguish as mediated by the memory, power dynamics, gender restrictions, and cultural discourses. The themes of emotional heartbreak, physical loss, mental disintegration, and romantic vulnerability stand out as the interdependent manifestations of pain, which portrays the wider societal realities. Duffy achieves this through the use of persona and voice in order to bridge the gap between personal experience and social commentary, between personal wounds and social commentary. Her poetry thus is not merely emotional release but rather moral action against injustice, marginalization and powerlessness.

The finest example of this project can be found in *The World Wife* (1999) where Duffy creates a poetic place of the historically suppressed women by rewriting myth and history through the voice of women. She gives a voice to suffering and silence to testimony by re-orienting the gaze away on famous male personalities in order to turn emphasis on wives and forsaken partners. The critics recognize the collection as a feminist intervention healing stolen voices and recreating female identity by narrative agency (Montefiore, 2005, p. 84). In this scenario, suffering turns into a political discourse as opposed to an individual status.

In "Mrs. Midas pain is in the shape of emotional and social alienation generated by money and authority. The fact that the husband is turned into gold kills intimacy and human connection, and

makes domestic life an exile of emotions. The element of magic transformation takes place in the common place of space, at the moment when he was under the pear tree breaking a twig. In addition, it was like a light bulb in his palm. On.” (Duffy, 1999, p. 11). What starts as a miracle turns into a disaster. The speaker comes out to confess later on, that he misses most, even today, his hands, his warm hands on my skin, his touch (Duffy, 1999, p. 14). The torment here is denial and not physical torture showing how emotional deprivation is a form of torture. The poem is seen by critics as an expression of alienation of women in relations based on power in which male desire leads to female absence (Thomas, 2009, p. 233).

In Medusa, agony is put into a psychological and bodily form. Jealousy is an internal process that kills identity. The speaker describes it in these words, A suspicion, a doubt, a jealousy/ became a part of my mind,/and made the hairs on my head turn into filthy snakes (Duffy, 1999, p. 47). The pain comes out in the mind and then reforms the body and voice. Even the language is not spared because she says, My bride breathed foul, stunk. I am foul-mouthed now, foul-tongued, yellow fanged. (Duffy, 1999, p. 48). According to scholars, the poem symbolizes the disintegration of female identity in the conditions of emotional insecurity and desertion when pain is already a mental and bodily change (Williams, 2014, p. 219).

Throughout *The World Wife*, pain manifests in various interrelated ways such as emotional denial, social isolation, psychological disintegration, historical denial and domestic domination. Duffy translates internal pain into an open dialogue, turns trauma into cultural commentary and silence into narrative protest. This approach redefines women as not passive victims but as active language speakers of pains who identify injustice and rebuild identity using language. According to feminist criticism, this process is poetic recovery of female subjectivity that is suffering transformed into awareness and agency instead of weakness (Gregson, 2017, p. 112; Shaw, 2016, p. 58).

The theme of exploration of pain is carried by Duffy into the background of romantic love: *Rapture* (2005) is an exploration of pain in the form of emotional vulnerability that is created by intimacy itself. The plot follows the cycle of attraction and obsession, union and fear, and love and abandonment. Instead of romanticizing romance, the poems reveal the psychological price of romance. *Time in Hour* is vulnerable and has already been tainted by the loss: Love, the beggar of time, but even an hour, in the sunshine, leaves love wealthy (Duffy, 2005, p. 7). *Joy Partnership* has anxiety. In the book, *Disgrace*, the speaker admits that he was the one who was broken, battered, and those who loved (Duffy, 2005, p. 45). In this case emotional imbalance and

dependency are the cause of pain. According to the criticism, Rapture is a poetic anatomy of vulnerability in relations whereby love itself becomes something that causes pain instead of satisfaction (Gregson, 2017, p. 134; Shaw, 2016, p. 142).

Another suffering theme in the poetry of Duffy is loss and alienation. Pain does not start and end with death or separation but it also involves estrangement with self, memory, and meaning. In Eurydice, the speaker opposes the identity imposed by myth and explains existential erasure: Girls, I was dead and in the Underworld, a shade, a shadow of my old self. (Duffy, 1999, p. 51). The self becomes absence. In other poems, suffering is manifested as the so-called small familiar pain of daily life, repetition, stagnation, and numb hopelessness (Williams, 2014, p. 225). This pain does not burst, it slowly builds up and becomes a part of the identity as a state of being. Gregson defines this as the existential suffering based on the memory, routine and lack of emotional contact (2017, p. 141).

At the center of all these depictions is the dramatic monologue employed by Duffy as a means of empathy and self disclosure. Her speakers identify, define and face what critics have termed the painful truth to self in which recognition is destabilizing and identity is a struggle. According to Shaw, such monologues are done as a form of emotional revelation to transform inner pain into a voice (2016, p. 63). Montefiore also holds that speakers in Duffy do not want pity, but articulation, the conversion of pain into language power instead of pathetic powerlessness (2005, p. 91). In such a way, suffering is talked about, voice is survived, and pain is subject to meaning.

In *The World Wife* and *Rapture* as well as the poems of loss and alienation, misery is a tool of structuralism and not a decorative element. It structures identity, forms voice, creates consciousness and forms resistance. Duffy does not consider pain as an event but rather a situation of being human and altered by social power, emotional vulnerability and linguistic mediation. Through her poetry, she turns suffering into a narrative, testimony, awareness and engagement in ethics, and that is why critics always describe her work as turning personal pain into cultural value (Shaw, 2016, p. 171; Gregson, 2017, p. 149).

The modern criticism also stresses the fact that Duffy does not only narrate about suffering but re-experiences it with voice and lived point of view. Her realism is viewed as ethical witnessing where pain is manifested as experience and not as something far off (Dowson, 2016, p. 22). The polyphonic voicing helps Duffy to overcome the wall between personal trauma and collective consciousness, and convert personal trauma into the common consciousness of morality (Scheller,

2021, p. 61). Suffering is addressed by the participants of the process and not by the spectators, so it is not rendered into aesthetic object.

This polyphonic form is connected to contemporary approaches to ethical spectatorship that demand that literature should turn spectacle pain into testimony. This moral space created by Duffy in her poetry allows voices of suffering to be heard and they can no longer be erased. Her poetic work was even characterized as public poetry where personal experience turns into ethical narrative where collective responsibility is needed (Dowson, 2016, p. 35). This form helps to stop suffering being a personalized load but instead making it a societal one, which again supports the main idea of this paper that the poetry of Duffy declares pain as a voice, opposition, and moral experience and not as a feeling.

4. War, Image, and the Ethics of Seeing in *War Photographer*

Carol Ann Duffy makes *War Photographer* a rumination of modern societies experiencing suffering not by experience but mediated by images. The poem begins in the darkroom where photographer finds himself, finally, alone and spools of suffering are laid out in neat rows, which immediately compares the routine of the profession with the disaster to human beings (Duffy, 1990, pp. 78). The use of the lexical means ordered and spools makes the pain an object of matter that may be processed, arranged and circulated, implying that the atrocity is rendered to an institutional control, prior to becoming an object of public consciousness. The darkroom itself is a transitional place where individual trauma and social apathy come into contact with each other, and the extent to which suffering is aestheticized and systematized in the media production process is made visible. It makes Duff less realistic according to Reis (2004, p. 142) and to the degree that ideological framing of reality is exposed and is therefore manifest in the way war is deconstructed into visual information. The tonal motion of the poem switches to the clinical detachment to a moral indictment all ending in the reader whose eyeballs are pierced with tears but briefly before coming back to comfort and routine (Duffy, 1990, pp. 1920). This obtuseness of world atrocity into a home moment accuses Western spectatorship, where compassion is short-lived emotional frugality instead of moral obligation. Smith (2022, p. 410) notes that the poem prefigures the trauma theory since it unveils that mediated suffering could not lead to long-term moral action. The enjambments and the controlled tercets are formally adjusted to the technical perfection of photography as well as abrupt violence that is captured by images. The reiterated lexical domain of processing develop, spools, red light and so on, the technical intertwines the traumatic and the

poetic structure itself is indicative of how human pain is turned into edible form. The rhetorical questioning in the last stanza compels the readers into compliance as the author stresses that suffering is not just being seen but being managed in the society and conveniently forgotten.

War Photographer is one of the most popular poems in the work of Duffy that provides an excellent example of how suffering is formed as a problem of witnessing. The poem focuses on a photographer who is developing photos of war atrocities as he or she is not present at the place of violence. The pain of the victims is never explicitly expressed; rather it is depicted in the form of photographs, memories and disturbed conscience of the photographer.

The well-known picture of the poem, which is a row of spools of misery, is organized (Duffy, 1990, lines 78) in order to turn the unsystematic violence into the regular visual information. This sorting is reflected in the institutional procedures of media production where trauma has to be packaged, chosen and commodified. The poem is therefore the exposure of suffering filtered through professional practices and commercial needs. Duffy deepens this criticism by the description of the audience, which is temporary and can be displaced. The stanza involving readers whose eyeballs seem to be torn by tears (Duffy, 1990, lines 1920) does not stress the vacuity of passive empathy very much, just because it is mentioned in the first line only. As Smith observes, the poem presupposes the modern theory of trauma by drawing attention to the moral ineptitude of spectatorship that cannot be translated into action. Notably, moral judgment is not readily provided in the poem. The photographer himself is once again entangled in the machine that he himself is critiquing and this implies that it is morally wrong to be able to see suffering even under the guise of good intentions. Suffering is a collective ethical liability instead of a far off spectacle.

5. Domestic Bereavement and Defiant Rebirth in *Mrs Lazarus*

The biblical miracle reinvented by Duffy in *Mrs Lazarus* is re-written as a dramatic monologue of intimate dramaturgy which reveals grief as a bodily destruction and social restriction. The speaker narrates about grieving in the form of a devouring identity where loss restructures language, memory and self: I loved him. I miss him. He was my own. That his name would never work again a magic on his face (Duffy, 1999, p. 28). Grief is the failure of meaning as such, when words no longer can invoke the present. Instead of the resurrection, the poem performs the resurrection like emotional violence interrupting the painful but stable reconstruction of the identity of a speaker. Duffy exposes the enslavement of women in the culture of unremitting attachments that they make

everlasting, refusing them a right to survive emotionally. Montefiore (2005, p. 91) contends that female speakers in Duffy struggle against sentimentalizing suffering by expressing pain as consciousness and not as weakness and Mrs Lazarus is an example of such resistance. The physical imagery of bodily detachment; the figurative one hand empty glove, and the other on the dust, (Duffy, 1999, p. 27) is a tangible grief, it does not merely exist in an abstract form. The rhythm of the poem is also altered stylistically, to the point of ritual repetition to the point of rhetorical stinging, because of the movement of the speaker through devastation to rebirth in defiance. The psychoanalytic meanings of the ending perceive the mourning process as a negotiation between the self-preservation and the cultural expectation, in which the speaker opts to live instead of following the cultural norms (Gregson, 2017, p. 118). Suffering is thereby turned into a place of change where voice gets agency as opposed to being the subject of constant victimization.

6. Myth, Transformation, and Gendered Violence in *Thetis*

In *Thetis*, Duffy transforms Greek myth to bring out the change of transformation as survival of the male desire but not of magic escape. The speaker constantly changes her body trying to avoid capture, but all the metamorphoses cost her body physically and expose her more and more. The use of imagery of taxidermy, formaldehyde and stoat in the hand of a taxidermist transforms mythic flight into lists of bodily violation and reveals the construction, preservation and consumption of female bodies in the dominance of patriarchy (Duffy, 1990, p. 64). Critics view the poem as the revelation of the violent economy of male dominance where women need to constantly change or be erased (Shaw, 2016, p. 103). It is not incidental pain, but systemic, created by pursuit as such. Breathless enjambments and discontinuous syntactic changes, formally, simulate the exhaustion of the continual change and create claustrophobic energy, which replicates the entrapment of the speaker. The juxtaposition of mythological story with clinical language makes violence both cultural and literal connecting ancient narrative forms with modern gender politics. By using this device, Duffy is able to show that when patriarchal systems transform it is a survival negotiated at the cost of pain, and thus reinforcement of pain as structural phenomenon as opposed to emotional.

7. Re-Voicing and Emotional Labour in *The World's Wife*

In *The World's Wife*, Duffy methodically reinstates the voices of women omitted in the official story, utilizing the work of emotion into the arena of politics. The woman Penelope, Mrs Midas, and Mrs Aesop are figures that express the loneliness, betrayal, and invisibility as the daily pain of marriage and myth. Domestic life gets an emotional exile in Mrs Midas as greed would be sterilizing intimacy and the speaker, lacks touch and companionship (Duffy, 1999, p. 14). This deprivation works as metaphor to a gendered inequality in general whereby male ambition creates female isolation. Thomas (2009, p. 233) claims that these poems reveal the ability of power between relationships to create unequal suffering where the women are the victims of emotional expense of male desire. The reversals of Duffy are more than a recovery of voice, they reassign suffering as critical position within which the male narratives are re-evaluated. The speakers tend to use irony and mocking detention, with humor and pain mixed together to create some acutely moral realization instead of heartfelt lamentation. Shaw (2016, p. 58) observes that this combination of pathos and irony defines the ethics of representation of Duffy, which enables the suffering to be both consciousness and resistance at the same time. It is emotional labor that is shown as a politics and not household liability.

8. Language, Form, and the Aesthetics of Pain

The fact that Duffy represent suffering cannot be separated with her formal craftsmanship. Dramatic monologues, persona changes, tonal change, and heavy clustering of images are part of the mediation process of pain and not just the expression of pain. In her poetry, clinical language borrowed through medicine, photography and institutional language is used in combination with colloquial speech in general, which collapses the divide between the systems of the world and the emotions. This stylistic conflict shows that suffering is a social product and a lived experience at the same time. Dowson (2016, p. 22) suggests that the realism of Duffy is ethical bearing witnessing when pain becomes experience rather than something perceived. In rejecting lyrical consolation, Duffy requires a sophisticated empathy that is expressive and representational simultaneously. Her poems continuously remind the readers that language creates suffering, institutions frame suffering, and narrative swallows suffering. By employing these formal techniques, pain is not spectacle but moral encounter which enhances the main premise of the work, that Duffy turns human suffering into voice and testimony and into ethical responsibility as opposed to aesthetic emotion.

9.From Domestic Pain to Historical Trauma

In the small-scale anguish of *The Worlds Wife* to the historical trauma of the en masse in *Shooting stars*, Carol Ann Duffy builds out an ongoing geography of pain, one which connects individual existence to the violence of the past. As shown in her poetry, suffering does not exist in personal and political realms but traverses domestic space, the body, memory, and history. Critics of feminism maintain that reforming myths and histories Duffy has helped to turn the suppressed suffering into cultural memory, personal trauma has become historical consciousness (Lum, 2019). Political and ecocritical readings will also demonstrate further that Duffy presents suffering as not an accident but as a byproduct of systems of power, as a product of solitary incidents (Adhikary, 2025). The mapping of pain that occurs between genders, time, and identity creates a moral cartography of the human experience (Lum, 2019; Adhikary, 2025).

The wife suffering at home is initially presented in *The Worlds Wife* (Picador, 1999) in the form of emotional shock and close-up terror. In *Mrs Midas*, the trauma breaks out within the house: “Then I began to scream (Mrs Midas, p. 11). The kitchen turns into a place of fear, and this demonstrates the way domestic space turns into a location of psycho-violence. The intimacy in the line is substituted with power and distance, as in, He sat in that chair like a king on a burnished throne (Mrs Midas, p. 12), and male authority creates female isolation. Love is lost and intimacy is deprived, pain becomes corporeal in the absence of his hands, his warm hands on my skin (Mrs Midas, p. 13), corporeality becomes absent. Domestic anguish is not emotional sadness; it is experienced bodily individuation.

Grief in *Mrs Lazarus* is existential suffering. The orator has described ritualized suffering: I had lamented. I had cried one night and one day (Mrs Lazarus, p. 27). The grief violence manifests itself in howled, shrieked, clawed at the burial stones (Mrs Lazarus, p. 27) wherein the pain is physical, animal and not subjected to control. The identity itself disintegrates into the loss: “Until his name was not a definite spell on his face any more (Mrs Lazarus, p. 28). Pain is turned into a devastation of meaning, linguistics and memory.

In *Medusa*, the misery is manifested in the gendered psychological violence. Pain of emotions is internal: a suspicion, a doubt, a jealousy emerged in my mind (Medusa, p. 44). Disloyalty is turned into flesh and blood: the breath of my bride turned sour, stank (Medusa, p. 44). The physical violence results in the emotional one with the help of the metaphor bullet tears (Medusa, p. 45) and pain is transformed into injury. The feminine pain is exemplified as embodied, violent, and

corrosive as opposed to sentimental. Sisakyan reported that Duffy's poem subverts the male gaze, portraying Medusa not as a monster, but as an embodiment of female agency and resistance." (Sisakyan, 2023, p. 1)

Within the framework of Anne Hathaway, sorrow is manifested in memory and absence: the bed we loved in was a spinning world (Anne Hathaway, p. 30), and love transformed into memory and pain. The loss is spectre in my living laughing love (Anne Hathaway, p. 30) and Suffering is perseverance not extinction.

This household pain spreads to historical and intergenerational trauma in Shooting Stars from Standing Female Nude (Anvil Press, 1985). Suffering goes out of the house in the past. In After I no longer speak they break our fingers (Shooting Stars, p. 39), silence is violence. In the story they tattooed a number on my arm, the identity is eliminated (Shooting Stars, p. 39). In A bullet in the back of the head, death turns out to be a mechanical act (Shooting Stars, p. 40). The presence of trauma is accepted in the reality of I am not dreaming (Shooting Stars, p. 40). The greatest injustice is elicited testimony: I not will be able to tell the tale (Shooting Stars, p. 40). Mass terror has been shown in the See how they run (Shooting Stars, p. 41) and the destruction of innocence is shown in the babies are thrown in the air (Shooting Stars, p. 41). This suffering is no longer domestic, but historical, collective and genocidal.

Suffering is already collective and systemic even in The Dolphins (Selected Poems 1984/2004, Picador 2004) where she writes: We are in our element but we are not free (The Dolphins, p. 147). Existence of confinement is experienced in the world we have is small (The Dolphins, p. 147). The pain becomes part of the ecological and structural oppression.

10. Discussion

This critique throughout the paper indicates that suffering in the poetry of Carol Ann Duffy is not a decorative emotional theme but a multifaceted problem of representation mediated by voice, discourse and institutional mediation. Throughout the poems about war, domestic loss, mythical change, migration and daily marginality, the pain is always presented as produced socially as opposed to being natural and personal. Duffy reveals the way in which suffering is only visible through the prism of power structures like media institutions, patriarchy, histories and structures of language. Trauma of war is packaged and consumed as images, female experience is being rebranded through artistic and cultural falsification, grief is being put into check by social demands

and identity is being brought to order by language. In both, pain will not appear as an immediate sensation but as a product of social process through which the pain of whom to be viewed, how to be storytelling, and how to be handled emotionally. This approach changes the suffering, as it is in the field of personal psychology, to the field of political and cultural production, showing it as something that cannot be separated out of relation to power.

One of the key results of the research is that Duffy uses dramatic monologue as an ethical mode of expression instead of a narrative mode of expression. Her speakers are not merely describing pain; they exist in subject positions created by exclusion, domination, emotional deprivation and institutional control. However, these voices are never put forth in an entirely transparent or even authoritative manner. Unstable lyricity frequently disrupts or confuses the narration by the speaker, and this aspect reminds the readers that suffering is never pure and can never be owned or conveyed in an ideal way. This forms an ethical area where testimony is made possible without going into the appropriation and sentimental demonstration. They thus act as arenas of mediation between experience and representation which compel the readers to acknowledge the facts of pain and the constraints of speaking on behalf of others. Suffering in poems about war, e.g., *War Photographer* is a commoditized image that generates a short-term sympathy lacking accountability and revealing the collapse of morality of spectatorship and the readers in a web of apathy. Suffering is no longer something far off tragedy but collective moral consequence.

This structural knowledge of pain is further affirmed by gendered and domestic representations of pain. Suffering exists in *The World's Wife* as a result of emotional work, misrepresentation, body control, and historical denial and the way patriarchal societies transform love and beauty and myth into power tools. Women voices are not innocent observers of harm but they turn pain into criticism, consciousness and story revolts. Likewise, in *Mrs Lazarus*, the loss is depicted as the failure and restructuring of identity as such and not the loss of a love interest in which the mourning is a social jail that the speaker eventually rebels against by voice. In the poems of alienation and daily marginality, the suffering builds up insidiously through repetition, correction and exclusion and illustrates the way institutions create slow and normalized violence that influences the emotional life in the long run. The only thing that gives coherence to these various representations is that Duffy does not find it easy to console. Her poetry retains an ethical residue to which the uneasiness continual exists to make the readers acknowledge their presence as witnesses, consumers, and decoders of suffering. The poems do not want to be pitied in isolation, but force

the reader to stay, to be morally responsible, and to be critical regarding the way in which suffering is created, packaged, and distributed throughout the society of the present.

Conclusion

This work has demonstrated that the poetry of Carol Ann Duffy builds human suffering by the voices that are never absolutely individual but rather socially mediated, ethically strata, and politically situated. By her continued replication of dramatic monologue and critically infused realism, Duffy is able to transform pain as an interior emotional condition into discourse, institutional authority as well as power relations testimony. Suffering in and through work is not something that just exists in individuals, it is made in cultural systems, and told in representational structures, and constantly challenged by people who speak out of the circumstances of marginalization, loss, and domination. Explicitly anticipating the way voice itself is positioned and bounded, Duffy demonstrates the mechanisms by which pain is given visibility, believability or silence, showing suffering as a social rather than a psychological phenomenon.

Throughout her poetry, Duffy methodically discovers how lived experience is transformed into controlled types of representation. War is turned into photographic pictures and emotional commodity, female bodies are reconfigured to consumeable aesthetics objects, grief is managed by social demands of devotion and survival, and ordinary life is characterized by sluggish institutional violence. With these exposures, Duffy reinvents poetry as one of the locations where ethical witnessing occurs where suffering is not only shown but posed. Her formal tricks, such as tonal variations, mediated realism, persona-based monologue and ironic distance, oppose sentimental resolution as well as depriving of emotional comfort as a resolution. They rather put readers in the moral economies that constitute and absorb pain and in a way the spectatorship itself is criticized.

After all, the poetic project established by Duffy teaches that it takes more than a mere moment of sympathy when faced with suffering. It requires acknowledgement of accountability, understanding of collaboration, and involvement in the systems which cause damage. Pain is expressed voice in contrast to silent endurance, voice becomes a method of struggle against erasure and representation becomes an ethical act instead of dispassionate depiction. In this metamorphosis, the work by Duffy retains perpetual relevance in the modern relationship discourse on the media culture, gendered power, collective memory, and social justice. Her poetry confirms that literature has the ability to directly address the human suffering, yet denies it the

human spectacle, sentimentality, or passive consumption, placing poetic representation as the moral experience that challenges the readers to the long-term attitude to ethical consciousness.

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