

Woman-to-Woman: Displacement, Sexuality and Gender in Carol Ann Duffy's Poetry

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Carol Ann Duffy is, arguably, not only the most widely acclaimed poet in Britain today, but is also a major influence on a wide range of poets. With her filleted syntax, populist verse technique, feminist politics, and most importantly dramatic monologue, (which she is famous for), Duffy best illustrates the subtle, but profound changes that are taking place in contemporary British poetry. Duffy is also known for her poetry's attempt to unmask the poetic language, her exploration and exploitation of everyday speech; as well as addressing of complex philosophical issues, like the place of language in the construction of the self, the failure of language to say anything, etc. She also writes about lesbian love and female sexuality, in either gendered or ungendered narrative voices. This paper seeks to appraise and discuss the poet's sense of displacement and sexuality through textual analysis of Duffy's major book-length collections. It also highlights the place of pronouns in the poet's oeuvre, while concluding with the proposition that "home" in Duffy's poetry is a reflection of pluralism and fluidity in which the poet is raised and lived; and the implication of these for African readers is also underlined.

Introduction

This paper will examine one of the strongest voices in British poetry today, Carol Ann Duffy. Duffy is seen as someone out to break literary taboos and traditions which manifest in her denunciation of traditional discourses, and ability to re-write masculinist's representations of female identity and sexuality (Armitage and Crawford 1998). Duffy is among the most celebrated and widely read poets in Britain today: her poems have found a place in her native Scottish and English schools' curriculum; and she has received numerous awards including the Forward, Whitbread and a CBE¹.

Given the success that Duffy achieved she could well have been the representative poet of her generation. The representativeness of her work is probably the subject of her own sense and sensibility, of her dislocation within contemporary Britain². It is by virtue of her exemplary re-introduction of a feminist voice in poetry through habitual, but impressive use of the technique of monologue, which gives her poems a vantage position to attack and affirm, while allowing her to simplify and reconcile complex ideas about language and its political meaning. Duffy's poetry belongs to "the New Plain Style" employed by many contemporary poets – Tony Harrison, Wendy Cope, James Fenton, Kit Wright and Simon Armitage – along with sophisticated devices and "speaking voice"³. Yet Duffy is significantly different and stands out from her contemporaries (Forbes 1995).

An important feature of Carol Ann Duffy's poems is the issue of displacement. Closely related to this is her treatment of sexuality. While another aspect of her work is the question of pronoun and the related use of gendered and ungendered voice. In discussing Duffy's work, there is quite a lot to gain in tracing her development through

these features; therefore, this paper will focus on these three different but related themes.

Displacement

Duffy, white and in her late forties was born in Glasgow in 1955. Having been born in Scotland, then moving to Stafford in England at the age of six, Duffy has to endure a change in her language and the accompanying, inherent changes in her accent as well. This linguistic displacement stays with her as is evident in her work. Indeed, the veil of displacement has literally covered much of the terrain of Duffy's poetry. For instance, "Yes Officer" prefigures displaced and alienated persona in a foreign country:

It was about the time of day you mention, yes.
I remember noticing the quality of light
beyond the bridge. I lit a cigarette.

I saw some birds. I knew the words for them
and their collective noun. A skein of geese. This cell
is further away from anywhere I've ever been. Perhaps.

[...]

Without my own language, I am a blind man
in the wrong house. Here comes the fists, the boots.
I curl in a corner, uttering empty vowels until

they have their truth. That is my full name.
With my good arm I sign a forgery. Yes, Officer,
I did. I did and these, your words, admit it
(*Selling Manhattan* 1987:31).

Duffy's position as a Scot transplanted in England as a long-term resident puts her on the edge: on a kind of boundary that imposes a choice on her. She has to both assimilate and blend, or maintains the difference. Either she belongs or faces exclusion, either to familiarise herself with her new country or get alienated. All these are paradoxical for a poet that is considered as "representative". In the same vein she reflects in "Deportation":

I used to think the world was where we lived
in space, one country shining in big dark.
I saw a photograph when I was small.

Now I am *Alien*. Where I come from there are few jobs,
the young are sullen and do not dream. My lover
bears our child and I was to work here, find
a home. In twenty years we would say This is you
when you were a baby, when the plum tree was a shoot
(*Selling Manhattan*, 59, original italics).

There may be other parallel causes of displacement of Duffy as a Scot living in England, or as a lesbian in a heterosexual society. The dilemma for people who find themselves in this situation appears problematic as it is for Duffy. Whether to be on the margins while confidently affirming her difference in a society that trivialises and rejects; or to discard her difference with the assumption that the metropolitan culture, (English and Englishness as opposed to Britishness) will simply ignore it.

Apart from the sense of displacement, the related theme of homesickness, nostalgia, and loss are also strong features of Duffy's poetry. The integration of the sense of homesickness and romantic/national love is a significant point for Duffy as she asks in "Homesick":

[...]
 What country do we come from? This one?
 The one where the sun burns
 when we have night? The one
 the moon chills; elsewhere, possible?

Why is our love imperfect,
 music only echo of itself,
 the light wrong?

We scratch in dust with sticks,
 dying of homesickness
 for when, where, what (*Selling Manhattan*, 19).

Here, Duffy tacitly echoes that well-known Freudian dictum: "love is homesickness", laying bare her unflinching desire to, in the words of Rees-Jones "place the unplaceable, to recapture the prelinguistic, the country which is the other, because we can never speak or reclaim it" (2001:42). In other words, the poem highlights fully the dangerous desire to return to a repressed material body: It is no more than a yearning for an imagined identity which is simultaneously a search for an ungendered, unmediated, even undifferentiated self, with all the attendant ambiguity and impossibility.

The highly moving "Nostalgia" relies on what could be called the "Scottish threnody of displacement", referring to the Scottish mountains with their clear, refreshing air, and the emblematic bag pipes. The nostalgia that is so characteristic of Scottishness is not only peculiar to those that are displaced; even those who chose to remain behind and stood their ground are afflicted by the overwhelming sense of loss; while to a potentially returning "exile" like Duffy

... when one returned, with his life
 in a sack on his back, to find the same street
 with the same sign on the inn, *the same bell*
chiming the hour on the clock, and everything changed
 (*Mean Time* 1993:10, emphasis added).

This poem, with its intense evocation and celebration of home does not, however, hint that there is no alternative to *home*; its contention is that there is nothing called home: only the word, which is continuously echoed in place of it⁴. In "Plainsong" the all-pervasive melancholy is identified even in such things as mundane as the rustling sound of grasses and trees:

Listening. The words you have for things die
in your heart, but grasses are plainsong,
patiently chanting the circles you cannot repeat
or understand. This is your homeland
Lost One, Stranger who speaks with tears (*Selling Manhattan*, 60).

What this poem portends to is that homesickness can transpire almost about everywhere at any point in time as the poet says somewhere in "Strange Place": "love, later, / I will feel homesick for this strange place" (*Selling Manhattan*, 55). Elsewhere in "The Way my Mother Speaks" successfully deploying twin incantatory Scottish phrases, "The Day and Ever" and "What Like Is It", Duffy juxtaposes homesickness, mother and childhood memories: "I am homesick, free in love/with the way my mother speaks" (*Another Country* 1990: 54). This subtle juxtaposition is also apparent in "Moments of Grace":

The chimes of mothers calling in children
at dusk. *Yes*. It seems we live in those staggering years
only to haunt them; the vanishing scents
and colours of infinite hours like a melting balloon
in earlier hands. The boredom since
(*Selected Poems* 1994: 111, original italics).

Juxtaposition achieves an added burst of brilliance in "Before You Were Mine" in which Duffy speculates about an old photograph of her mother: she remembers and experiences love for "the bold girl winking in Portobello, somewhere/ in Scotland, before I was born. That glamorous love lasts/ where you sparkle and waltz and laugh before you were mine" (*Mean Time*, 13). The setting here is crucial: the nostalgia is simultaneously for both the poet's motherland and biological mother.

In Duffy's case therefore, displacement appears as neither being completely uprooted nor even being rootless as O'Brien (1998) would say, as it is also not having taking any root at all. Ironically, she can be seen, as her sense of being displaced attests, as increasingly an 'emigrant' in the country to which she can legally and no less technically be a citizen of, as she is. And this double edge of estrangement and displacement is what imbue her to poeticise the bitter/sweet experiences of other 'strangers' like her who live in Britain today.

Sexuality

The idea that female identity is a notion constructed by masculine discourse is also a well-known theme in Duffy's poetry. Her poems are explicitly addressed to women. They are woman-to-woman poems in a distanced way, in their disparate settings,

sometimes (as discussed above) in memories of childhood ("The Good Teacher"), in their exploration of a specific sense of origin ("Stafford Afternoons"), or in their use of settings that are historical ("Warming her Pearls")⁵. But despite their obvious erotic and intimate lyricism the poems do not suggest much in terms of sexuality. She attempts to re-assess and subvert the language of love poetry in order to show its unsuitability, especially in the portrayal of lesbian love. The language is re-written to demonstrate the strength and vitality of the female voice. Consider, for example, "Sleeping" which like Calder and Goodman (1996:41-70) argue is deeply erotic:

Under the dark warm waters of sleep
your hands part me
I am dreaming you anyway.

Your mouth is hot fruit, wet, strange,
night-fruit I taste with my opening mouth;
my eyes closed.

You, you. Your breath flares into fervent words
which explode in my head. Then you ask, push,
for an answer.

And this is how we sleep. You're in now, hard,
demanding; so I dream more fiercely, dream
till it hurts

that this is for real, yes, I feel it.
When you hear me, you hold on tight, frantic,
As if we were drowning (*Mean Time*, 35).

It is a vague poem since it is not clear whether or not the sexual encounter vividly recalled here is merely a "dream", or it actually happened, as it were, between individuals one of whom is sleeping at the beginning. But the ambiguity does not in any way obscure the clarity of the picture painted; just as Duffy's trenchant employment of the three-line stanzas that she so much likes actually heightens the feeling of intense sexual *catharsis*. Also in her further attempt to revise masculinist representations of female sexuality, invert the supposed authority of masculine voice and offer a female alternative, lots of her poems deploy a well known metaphor of lesbianism: mirror imagery⁶. The image of mirror is deployed in "Oppenheim's Cup and Saucer" whose title refers to the famous Meret Oppenheim's fur-lined cup known originally in French as "*Dejeuner en Forrure*": "As she undressed me, her breasts were mirror/ and there were mirrors in the bed" (*Standing Female Nude* 1985:48). The imagery here suggests not just an act of love, but also portrays the two lovers erotically looking at themselves, objectifying their love by eroticizing it. The speaker of the poem views her partner as an exact reflection of herself, physically and psychologically, ("her breasts were a mirror"), and the unmentioned, though hinted private part(s). Also in "Small Female Skull" the persona looks rather mystified in a drunken stupor at her own reflection to which she remarks: "this is/ a friend of mine. See, I hold her face in trembling, passionate/ hands" (*Mean Time*, 25). While in

"Warming her Pearls" the image of mirror is portrayed with an absurd tone: "in her looking glass/my red lips part as though I want to speak" (*Selling Manhattan*, 58).

Even though the image of mirror is symbolic of lesbian love, it also suggests a concern, as say in the novels of D. H. Lawrence with a concurrent exploration of both heterosexual and lesbian (or homosexual) relationship. It is a longing for heterosexual partnership; "the 'other' country of lesbianism" as Woods (2001:87) describes it. The imagery could as well be seen as a self-imagery, attesting to a hidden masturbative tendency, or a presumed heterosexuality in the speaker of the poem; since the very act of undressing could be that of the speaker's self revealing herself before the mirror for her own fulfilment.

This apparent ambiguity in the tenor of some poems' speaking voices can subsequently be extended to show how Duffy (and the speakers) reveal their own concealed longing for heterosexual fulfilment. "You're in now, hard/ demanding" could as such be alluding to phallic penetration, and therefore represents some kind of penis envy and a longing for heterosexual love. Yet, the over-assertive lesbian tone of some of the poems is very much tied to lesbians' tendency to fall into what Freud calls masculinity complex. Duffy and some of her speakers are bent on taking a substitution for phallus, but all the more ironic, she also phallicize *her* own body and that of her poems' speakers. This substitution is done while Duffy is claiming to have taken on a non-phallic, external object – a woman – via which they both act as they *have* rather than they *are* the phalluses themselves.

As such the issue of sexuality is deployed in Duffy's poetry as a means of exploring the nature and form of love and ensuing relationships in a variety of ways. Hence, Duffy's reliance more or less on the use of dramatic monologue, (though there are also many lyrics about love in her oeuvre). Sexuality therefore is tackled from a context that is generally gender-based, and one that relies on actual/physical relationship (Woods 2001). That is why perhaps eroticism is so pervasive in her poetry in terms of its exposition of orgasmic sounds, (as in "Two Small Poems of Desire"), male homosexuality ("Café Royal"), masochism in a heterosexual relationship ("Psychopath"), the height of love beyond expression in words ("Words, Wide Night"), the destructive effect of intense love ("Eley's Bullet"), the breakdown of love ("Adultery"), or images of an unknown, brutal lover ("To the Unknown Lover"), and motherly love ("The Way my Mother Speaks" and "Before you were Mine").

The Question of Pronoun

Like Adrienne Rich (1987:244) – who memorably sets the pace for the question of pronoun particularly in lesbian poetry, when she writes "and so even ordinary pronouns become a political problem" – Duffy too is plagued by what Eagleton (2000) calls in a celebrated phrase "the problem of pronouns". The constant tussle between the "I", the individual subject, "we", the collective subject and the relationship between them. The importance of saying "I" alongside the difficulty of saying "I" and "we" have become a constant refrain in Duffy's work.

In this regard, Hanscombe and Namjoshi (1991) argue that in lyric poetry the gender and the position of the persona are of immense importance, because the speaking "I" determines the relationship between the "I" and the "You", as it is always

repressed into silence. And it is the relationship between the speaking voice represented by the "I" and the silenced "You" which points to some form of a relationship between the "same" and the "other", or as they put it between the "human" and the "other". This relationship is what stakes the lyric universality.

Indeed raising doubts about self and its supposed authenticity in relation to narrative authority has been something of a norm in recent British poetry. While some of the most accomplished women poets – Sujata Bhatt, Jackie Kay – try to maintain a relatively unmediated *singleness* in first person pronoun, Duffy views such an act as a mere pronominal exercise that is undependable. Her poetry is deliberately couched to reveal a position of "otherness", a stance that makes her work stand out as central in new British poetry. In Duffy's love poems the clear level of that sense of otherness is often difficult to determine, let alone to define. Her erotic lyrics are sometime written in order to "gender" the speaking voice: the "I" as female, while some other time it is not. The poet is often fond of writing about sex and love in second person, sometimes in first person plural; she may portray a persona as female but refer to what the persona desires in the third person, which helps bring in a new dimension, adding a further distance. What she, however, avoids is gendering both lovers as female when the persona is inscribed as an "I" interlocuting with "You". Experimenting with both gendered and ungendered narrative voices allows Duffy to re-draw the lines that supposedly exists between the self and the other, and between the lover and the beloved.

But in her recent "Mrs Poems" now collected in *The World's Wife* (1999) – which attempts a conceited book-length series of poems via intertextual re-writing of some well known narratives and historical characters. Each poem is directed at a particular legend, ancient or modern, ranging from Sisyphus to Elvis, from a point of view of a funny, offended and morally upright feminine sympathiser. The narrative voices are clearly delineated to reveal the speaker's gender. In "Anne Hathaway" Duffy writes:

The bed we loved in was a spinning world
of forests, castles, torchlight, clifftops, seas
where *he* would dive for pearls. My lover's words
were shooting stars which fell to earth as kisses
on these lips; my body now a softer rhyme
to *his*, now echo, assonance; *his* touch
a verb dancing in the centre of a noun
(*The World's Wife*, 30, emphasis added).

Likewise, in her most recent book, *Feminine Gospels* (2002), Duffy continues with gendered voices most sophisticatedly in "Beautiful":

[...]
She knew *her* man.
She knew that when
he stood that night, ten times her strength,
inside the fragrant boudoir of her tent,
and saw her wrapped in satins like a gift,
his time would slow to nothing, zilch,

until *his* tongue could utter in her mouth.
 She reached and pulled *him* down
 to Alexandria, the warm muddy Nile
 (*Feminine Gospels*, 11, emphasis added).

It is obvious from the foregoing that Duffy is also trapped by the question of gender assumption of the form of lyric poetry. As a lesbian she is apparently unable to adopt either the speaking "I", the persona of a male lover, or that of the "You", the repressed female lover. As Gonda (1995) says:

The problem with the lyric tradition was that it had been shaped by white, Western, liberal humanism, and its assumptions: the unspoken equation of human` with Man; and the loudly asserted `doctrine` of ultimate realities or the universality of human nature and of the human experience, a tenet which completely ignored the facts of imperialism and was therefore unconscious of its assumption of power (3).

The assumption of liberal humanism is that all human experiences are central. Yet the form of lyric poetry is opposed to this, in a case where even the imageries themselves are gender role and stereotyped, then how is a lesbian poet like Duffy going to find her place? As such sexual love would not be the same experience for all people. And therefore, a lesbian poet like Duffy would have to abandon "patriarchal humanism" and adopt a position more concrete going by the needs of lesbianism.

In "Moments of Grace" the gendered persona recalls in a poetic vignette, her first love: her bygone moments of grace. But her memory clearly points to an unforgettable sexual encounter carried out by hands, and etched in her mind:

Shaken by first love and kissing a wall. *Of course*.
 The dried ink on the palms then ran suddenly wet,
 a glistening blue name in each fist. I sit now
 in a kind of sly trance, hoping I will not feel me
 breathing too close across time. A face to the name. *Gone*
 (*Mean Time*, 26, original italics).

The voice is clearly female, which obviously means the "I" is gendered as a woman. But the object of the persona's desire is unclear whether it is female or not. The pronoun "we" does not give a clue. What it gives is the strong sense of loss, coupled with nostalgia about those moments of grace, the memory of which is no more than "the chimes of mothers calling in children / at dusk". Indeed, it is a fleeting moment of passion, whose:

[m]emory's caged bird won't fly. These days
 we are adjectives, nouns. In moments of grace
 we were verbs, the secret of poems, talented.
 A thin skin lies on the language. We stare
 deep in the eyes of strangers, look for the doing words (*Mean Time*, 26).

And abruptly the persona switches back to "you" and addresses the unnamed lover. The triadic, nominal narrative leaves the reader pondering who is who. The "I", "we" and "you" all combine to give a feeling of going back and forth from a "lofty and privileged abstraction", back to a particularity. Here, "we" is an act of appropriation; the "I" portrays an incipient self-dramatisation, while "you" seems to be a connector of the two.

Now I smell you peeling an orange in the other room.
 Now I take off my watch, let a minute unravel
 in my hands, listen and look as I do so,
 and mild loss opens my lips like *No*.
 Passing, you kiss the back of my neck. A blessing
 (*Mean Time*, 26, original italics).

Several lesbian poems of Duffy, like those of another lesbian poet, Elizabeth Bishop, demonstrates that an artist can participate fully in the life which s/he reflects and reflects upon in his/her work, by virtue of his/her sexuality. While in "Moments of Grace" the persona feels as if she is a mere "face to [a] name", but in "First Love" the persona wakes up with a dream of her first love, here identified as a "child's love". Yet she is able to recall:

... I clench my eyes
 till the pictures return, unfocussed at first, then
 almost clear, an old film played at a slow speed.
 All day I will glimpse it, in windows of changing sky,
 in mirrors, my lover's eyes, wherever you are (*Mean Time*, 27).

The persona's first love could be either male or female, but the voice addressed to it is apparently female. The "you", when it comes, sound plaintive, in danger of becoming insignificant if it fails to link with the 'I', and the absent 'you': "You smile in my head on the last evening. Unseen / flowers suddenly pierce and sweeten the air" (*Mean Time*, *ibid*). And towards the end of the poem the subtle dramatic monologue is evidently derived from the intense sexual attraction.

The use of gendered or ungendered voices or that of the second person is, in essence Duffy's way of drawing the attention of the reader as much as it is the manner of heightening the familiarity a poem invokes in the reader. Both gendered and ungendered voices are experimented with in order to redraw the line of commonplace binaries that supposedly exist between the important theme of Duffy's poetry: between the self and the other, between the lover and the beloved.

The employment of the poetic form known as dramatic monologue avails the poet the opportunity to reunite with herself. And it also enables the poet to carry on with her utterances without any fear of embellishment as these utterances would have happened in the realm of experience that is unmediated by language. This has twin advantages to Duffy: it gives her the space to reappraise the question of subjectivity in poetry whereby the poet doubles up as her poems' speaker. It also gives her a leeway to project things not necessarily arising out of her real experiences. Conversely,

dramatic monologue represents a discomfort about depicting a form of the self, which is easily related to the poet. At the same time it functions to preserve the purity/authenticity of the self, while subtly giving in the course of it, a criticism of some hints of purity it appears to highlight.

Conclusion

The twin themes of displacement and sexuality are, in the last analysis both rooted in a language that is wholly Duffy's. And language becomes the epicentre of Duffy's poetry, largely as the notion which, "nurtured and disappointed" the philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein. He prefigures in her work as a symbol looming through not just what cannot be said yet will not remain unsaid, but as evidence of truth, as a means of philosophical inquiry⁷. In the end Duffy's poetry demonstrates further one characteristic about recent wave of poetry composed in response to lesbian sexuality: The assumption that what counts most is the content which may reflect the experience of lesbian women/writers. This poetry, to which Duffy's work is part of, is an essentially *polemical poetry*, marked by a content of personal narrative and intense rhetoric about displacement and sexuality.

The implication of all these to, say an African reader, particularly a female reader to which Duffy's poetry is largely directed at is given below. As members of societies which are continuously inundated with culture-specific gender construction in literature, Africans need to challenge these discussions of gender which are unfolding through out their societies. Both Newell (1997) and Abraham (1999) assert that African women are raised in a social milieu that is at best fluid, while images of gender and the ensuing ideological position are constantly changing to underlay the changes taking place. What Duffy's poetry reminds African readers is that being raised in formerly colonised societies, their struggle for emancipation, their quest for self-identity is, in a way, a form of deserting not just traditional beliefs, but the 'imperialism' from within their culture and its representation of them. Duffy's assertive voice against masculinist stereotyping of women demonstrates the veracity to rewrite women's poetry from what Newell calls "matrifocal principle", and to focus on the treatment of the female body as a kind of a textual attempt to dismantle and destabilise established knowledge. While there is no compelling need to accept Duffy's sexuality, African readers can and should, as Duffy insists, associate their sexuality and gender with positive attributes in order to defocus women's attention from masculine values and focus their attention toward completely feminine foci.

And since Duffy's work is primarily rooted in a textual practice that is beyond the inscribed words or ideas, it is, as such, a representation of a real, lived experience of the world constructed in a text. Duffy captures this world, mould it into a kind of poetic interpretative experience reflecting a particular (British/Scottish) *community life* in a social ambience that others could follow. It lays bare to an African audience the ambiguous/ unambiguous notion of *home*. To Duffy, home is a representation of the multicultural, cosmopolitan environment in which the poet lives, with its continuously evolving new identities, and its postmodern, even cyber-like community. Connected to this is Duffy's handling of home as fluid and elastic: locating it in images that are clearly Scottish, while asserting that home is everywhere. Ambiguous and paradoxical as it may sound Duffy's idea of home is evident of the transformation

of identity in Britain. Therefore, instances of displacement, issues of gender and sexuality are continuously being reworked and contested as people in both Britain and elsewhere look for ways of linking their language, their sexuality, and their preoccupations in a disorderly world. This has a profound lesson to Duffy's African readers.

Notes

1. In 1999 Duffy was widely regarded as a leading contender for the post of Poet Laureate. This made her an exciting public figure, and numerous newspaper articles were written about her. But in the end, Prime Minister Blair opted for a less adventurous candidate in the person of Andrew Motion. The decision of Tony Blair to appoint Andrew Motion sparked up huge controversy. Some leading figures in poetry and Duffy herself felt she was denied the post because of her sexuality. For more, see, among other: Brooks (1999), Padel (1999), Webster and Inglefield (1999) and White and Gibbons (1999).
2. While reviewing Ann Duffy's award winning collection, *Mean Time* (1993), Sean O'Brien refers to this unique identity of Duffy in contemporary British poetry by asserting that Duffy "could well become the representative poet of the present day" (quoted on the back cover of *Mean Time*).
3. For more on British poets and poetry see, O'Brien (2001), Thwaite (1996), Kennedy (1996), Grigson (1996) and Day and Docherty (1997).
4. For more on Duffy's sense of alienation and nationalism, see Linda (2000).
5. "Warming her Pearls" is among the poems Duffy read and revealingly discussed in the cassette tape, *Poetry Quartets: 2* (1998).
6. For more on mirror imagery and lesbianism in poetry, see Spraggs (1992) and McNaron (1993).
7. During her studies in the 1970s at Liverpool University where she read philosophy, Duffy was influenced by the writings of the Wittgenstein and his philosophical notion

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Carol Ann Duffy. Poems bibliography criticism learning resources. Carol Ann Duffy was born in the Gorbals (Glasgow) on 23 December 1955, the first child of May (née Black) and Frank Duffy; May was Irish and Frank had Irish grandparents. They subsequently had four sons, and moved when Carol Ann was six to Stafford, where her father worked for English Electric and managed Stafford Rangers Football Club in his spare time. Duffy attended Roman Catholic primary and middle schools, and then Stafford Girls' High. Vicki Bertram, "Thrown Voices: dramatic monologues by Carol Ann Duffy, Jackie Kay and Jo Shapcott" in *Gendering Poetry: contemporary women and men poets* (London: Pandora, 2005). Further Information. Copyright. Although marginalised because of their gender, both Carol Ann Duffy and Sharon Olds use of strong subjects have been able to make an impact for the female voice within their poetry. Sharon Olds is highly religious due to her upbringing as a Calvinist; her poetry echoes a lot of this belief in the sense that her works speak a truth and hold a strong theme of morality. On the other hand, Carol Ann Duffy's poems pose the exact opposite approach; through her poems she is also speaking a truth using irony, however, she often does this by using surreal imagery and complicating her words to create a usual cynical view towards the subject. Like Olds, Duffy also addresses the issue of love within her works. Victorian women were coerced into limiting expressions of sexuality in part through the specter of becoming a fallen woman. A fallen woman is one who has lost her virginity before marriage, become a prostitute, or otherwise sexually compromised herself. Fallen women were usually ostracized by society and often were unable to find a husband or have a proper family in a time when these were supposed to be women's sole markers of success. Tess Durbeyfield in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is probably the most famous fallen woman in Victorian fiction, but it was a standard trope used to ... Greider, Julia. "The French Lieutenant's Woman Themes: Sexuality and Gender." LitCharts LLC, October 3, 2017.