The Dramatic Monologue and the New "Democratic Voice" in the Poetry of Carol Ann Duffy

Reda A. Shehata

Abstract

This paper intends to examine the use by Carol Ann DufJY (b. 19 55) of the dramatic monologue in order to dramatize the anxieties of foreigners, immigrants, and social misfits in contemporary British society. The paper advances from the premise that DufJY is part of a new "democratic voice, " a term used by some critics to describe the ethnically diverse, contemporary British poets. It contends that, just as she is part of this "democratic voice" (Scottish, female, poet from outside the establishment,) her poetry showcases that "democratic voice," not only in the "accessibility" of its language but also in the plurality of its speakers who would not have a chance to voice their anxieties except on a democratic platform. Just as she, as a poet, has succeeded to conquer the center-the first woman ever to become Britain's Poet Laureate in 2009-her marginalized speakers are brought to the center of attention, surprisingly, in the dramatic monologue, the conventional poetic form associated with Browning, and linked with "imperial" England that marginalized women and the other. While DuffY employs the dramatic monologue in the manner of Browning, she, meantime, undermines it. In her monologues, she constructs a democratic platform on which she uses non-standard forms of English to give fresh insights into the inner life of some lower elements of contemporary British society, mentioned above. On that platform, we listen to each one of them, caught at a crucial moment of his/her life, revealing his/her fantasies, fears and preoccupations. Most of these characters struggle against hard circumstances. By dramatizing their anxieties, DuffY is able to examine British society's narrow assumptions about identity and authority.

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استخدام المنولوج الدراسى لإبراز "الصوت الديمقراطي" فى شعر كارول آن ضافى

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ملخص

يقدم البحث دراسة نقدية لاستخدام كارول آن دافى (المولودة فى عام 1955) للمنولوج الدرامى لتجسيد قلق المهاجرين والأجانب والمهمشين اجتماعيًا فى المجتمع البريطانى المعاصر. وينطلق هذا البحث من فرضية تقول أن دافى تمثل، جزءًا من "الصوت الديمقراطى الجديد" - ذلك المصطلح الذى صكه بعض النقاد لوصف شعراء بريطانيا المعاصرين الذين يتميزون باختلاف أجناسهم ولهجاتهم. ويهدف البحث إلى إثبات أنه مثلما تمثل دافى جزءًا من هذا الصوت - كونها امرأة اسكتلندية - وشاعرة من خارج المؤسسة - فإن شعرها يعكس هذا الصوت فى استخدامها للغة بسيطة وتعدد نوعيات الأشخاص المتحدثين فيه، والذين لم تكن لتتاح الفرصة لأمثالهم للتعبير عن ذواتهم إلا من خلال منبر "ديمقراطى". وهى بذلك تنقد النظرة الضيقة لمجتمعها المتعلقة بالذات في مواجهة السلطة.

وكما استطاعت دافى أن تصبح فى قلب المؤسسة الأدبية بصفتها أول امرأة فى تاريخ بريطانيا تصبح شاعرة البلاط الملكى، فإنها - من خلال شعرها - تضع الشخصيات المهمشة فى مجتمعها فى بؤرة الاهتمام وذلك من خلال الاعتماد على المنولوج الدرامى، ذلك الشكل الشعرى الذى أتقنه الشاعر روبرت بروانينج، وتبدى فى معالجتها لمأساة المهمشين تشابهات واختلافات مع بروانينج فى استخدامها لهذا القالب الشعرى، فهى تتفق مع بروانج فى استخدام العناصر الأساسية لهذا القالب ولكنها تختلف عنه بسبب طبيعة الأصوات التى تعبر عن مشاعرها.

The 2009 appointment of Carol Ann Duffy (b.1955)[1] as Britain's first ever woman Poet Laureate marks a new stage in the development

of contemporary British poetry in which the traditional notion of the center is strongly challenged. Terry Eagleton describes the new poetic scene as one in which "the marginal" has become "central," a scene that is formed by the appearance of a growing number of women, black, Irish, Welsh and Scottish, regional and working class poets (46). Judy Allen-Randolph cites Duffy as an example of a woman poet who, against the dominance of the establishment poets such as Craig Rain, Andrew Motion, James Fenton, Blake Morrison, Allen Jenkins, and Christopher Reid, has managed to rock "the patriarchal boat," becoming "one of the most courageous and original" poets of her generation (12). "Queen of the eighties renaissance," she is now seen as central to the new poetic scene wherein she creates a poetry, especially her monologues and love poems, which combines "scouring feminist wit, social anger, dramatic originality and steely intelligence with a clear gentle lyricism…" (Padel 166).

Duffy's poetics reflects precisely what the age not only required, but also dictated. She rose to prominence against a complex global scene in the eighties, a period marked by "the absence of shared moral and religious ideals, common social or sexual mores or political ideologies, or any philosophy on the conduct of life…"(Hulse et.al.15). In poetry, according to Ruth Padel, that change brought along with it "plurality of forms and voices" that corresponded to a large number of published poets "developing new of ways of saying things" to a large number of people through different media (1). The 70s, which witnessed the publication of major works (Larkin's High Windows, Heaney's North, Hughes' Crow, Hill's Mercian Hymns,) led to a new atmosphere in the eighties in which Northern Irish poets (Derek Mahon, Paul Mauldon, Tom Paulin, and Michael Longley) and working-class Northern English and Scottish poets (Tony Harrison and Douglas Dunn) became distinctive voices. In addition to the surge of women poets such as Fleur Adcock, Anne Stevenson, and Carol Ann Duffy, other talented poets such as John Fuller, Peter Redgrove, and James Fenton have also contributed to that "plurality", which was unequaled before (Forbes11). In more specific terms, Armitage and Crawford interpret such "plurality" in terms of the rise of a new "democratic voice" that "may speak Gaelic or English," may be "gendered as male or female," and which is "unheiratic, belonging to a

culture of pluralism, where its authority is both challenging and challenged (xxi-xxii). Emerging out of such a plural and multicultural atmosphere, the new poets construct a platform on which they can define their identity against the "the center," traditionally located in London and Oxbridge. And they do so by writing a poetry that exhibits "accessibility, democracy, and responsiveness, humor and seriousness, and reaffirms the art's significance as public utterance," showing "a new cohesiveness—its constituent parts 'talk' to one another readily, eloquently and freely while preserving their unique identities" (Hulse et. al.16).

Duffy is the product of the new multicultural scene. The accessibility of her poetry is apparent in the use of forms of everyday non-standard English—reflected in short-clipped sentences, varied clichés, moving colloquialisms, all rendered in traditional stanza patterns that depend on loose meters and occasional rhymes. But beneath this apparent simplicity, there are deep insights into different issues relating to identity, language, and gender. Duffy constantly writes about displacement, loss, alienation, and failure of communication in contemporary British society. She also succeeds in drawing attention to issues related to woman, creating a public voice for her generation in poetry. Armitage and Crawford point out that she belongs to "an increasingly confident generation of woman writers" who "incorporate in their work a strategic and imaginative awareness of issues of gender" (xxviii). Rees-Jones argues that her work forms a bridge between the early experiences of "feminism and post-feminism," which, though aligned itself with poetic tradition, have benefited from the political, social, and economic changes that swept British society in the last quarter of the twentieth century (3). However, Duffy is aware that "feminist" poetry is not critically appreciated properly because its apparent political agenda has limited its status as art. In 1988 she wrote about this tension between her role as a woman and her role as a poet:

> I don't mind being called a feminist poet, but I wouldn't mind if I wasn't. I think the concerns of art go beyond that. I think as long as the work is read it doesn't really matter what the cover is. I have never in my life sat down and thought "I will write a feminist poem....

(Interview with Andrew McAllister 71)

Therefore, without neglecting the difficult experiences of women, she moves beyond straightforward feminist poetry because, by freeing herself from direct feminist biases, she can open up many possibilities, "exploring as she does issues of gender, identity, sexuality, alienation, desire, and loss in a way which at the same time foregrounds the difficulties of communication, objectivity and truth" (Rees-Jones 3).

This paper contends that just as Duffy is part of the new "democratic voice" (Scottish, female, poet from outside the establishment,) her poetry showcases that "democratic voice," reflected not only in the "accessibility" of her language, but also in the plurality of her speakers who would not have a chance to voice their anxieties except on a democratic platform. Duffy presents in her poetry a gallery of disadvantaged persons, struggling against difficult circumstances. She allows them to speak and define their marginalized identities in linguistically accessible verses. In dramatizing their social and political anxieties, she surprisingly depends on a conventional poetic form—the dramatic monologue, which is mainly associated with Browning and traditionally linked with "imperial" England that oppressed the other and subjugated women (DiMacro164). While she employs the dramatic monologue in the manner of Browning, she, meantime, departs from it. In her hands, this "old vessel," to use Ostriker's words, is "filled with new wine…"(213). In other words, Duffy uses the dramatic monologue in the Browning fashion while she breaks away from it by portraying persons who are essentially cut off from the mainstream life. And this will be made clear once the distinctive features of the dramatic monologue are briefly examined.

Numerous critics have written about the nature and function of the dramatic monologue. Stefan Hawlin, for example, interprets it in terms of "drama and lyric." A lyric is a short poem uttered by a single speaker, usually the poet, expressing his state of mind. However, in the dramatic monologue the state of mind expressed is not the "poet's own, but that of an imagined character," coming into being "in a particular setting at a given moment in time: a dramatic context" (63). The single speaker, according to M.H.Abrams, "addresses and interacts" with one or more other people" whose presence is detected in "clues in the discourse" of that speaker," a discourse that essentially

reveals his "temperament and character (48). Houghton and Stange voice similar views. Suggesting that Browning mastered the genre under the influence of Shakespeare and Donne, they point out that he presents in his monologues "a single character, set in a vividly real world, observed at a moment of emotional intensity," who "reveals himself through the medium of natural speech." It is an objective method by which Browning can access the inner world of his characters through "the tone of speech, the rhythm of language, the casuistic use of words." In addition to establishing "dramatic time and place," Browning sets "next to the speaker one or more subsidiary characters who help to define the situation or to reveal conflict of attitudes"(165). Hawlin refers to irony as an important element of the monologue, arguing that "Browning's characters are often projecting one image of themselves, yet, through the ironic structure of the poem and the distance it imposes, they are revealed to readers in a way that contradicts their self-image"—the Duke in" My Last Duchess" gives an image of himself as a noble, good husband and lover of art while to us he reveals a disturbed bent of mind, eaten out with suspicions and jealousy (63).

Rephrased in some detail, these views demonstrate that Browning introduces in his monologues a single character, caught at a moment of emotional crisis where the clash of his thoughts and motives are registered in a dramatic context. For example, in "Last Ride Together," we follow the speaker's reaction to his lady's rejection of him, in "My Last Duchess" the Duke's response to his late wife's behavior as he is negotiating a second marriage with another Duke's emissary, in "Andrea del Sarto" the gifted painter's reaction to his beautiful wife's deceit, and in "Fra Lippo Lippi" the monk's response to interrogations by some Medici guardsmen. The presence of the implied listener imparts to the monologue a conversational tone: "Don't count the time lost, neither; you must serve / For each of the five pictures we require: / It saves a model. So! keep looking so— / My serpentining beauty, rounds on rounds!" ("Andrea del Sarto" 225: 23-26—this and subsequent quotes are taken from Houghton and Stange). Sequence of events from the speaker's mind do not flow chronologically, but rather in shifts backward and forward, where his past and future operate in the present, all emotionally yoked together:

the Duke shifts from the present portrait of his late wife to memories about her sexual conduct and back to his expected second marriage. Browning chooses to start his monologue by directly plunging into the speaker's crisis in a language that follows closely his thought processes: "I am poor brother Lippo, by your leave! You need not clap your torches to my face ("Fra Lippo Lippi"209: 1-2). Oftentimes, this language is informal, dispensing with known rules of grammar and syntax. This is clear in the telegraphic utterances that reflect the speaker's hesitancy and incoherence in parentheses and dashes: "Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked / My gift of a nine-hundred-year-old name / With anybody's gift. Who would stop to blame / This sort of trifling? Even had you skill / In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will…("My Last Duchess"194: 31-35). Obviously, the mode of the speaker dictates the manner of presentation that may be lyrical and emotional ("My Last Duchess"), narrative and descriptive ("The Last Ride Together"), reflective or reminiscent ("Andrea del Sarto"). Although Browning is at most sincere to his objective method by letting his speakers voice their own anxieties, he sometimes deviates from it by obliquely expressing his views concerning life, art, and religion, especially in his monologues about painting ("Fra Lippo Lippi" and "Andrea del Sarto").

Like Browning's monologues, Duffy's give fresh insights into the inner life of her speakers, especially the lower elements of society. Each is caught at a crucial moment of his life, revealing his own fantasies, fears, and preoccupations. For while creating a particular image of her self, Duffy also shows an awareness of the needs of immigrants, foreigners, and British society's drop-outs. She gives them a chance to show their unique understanding of the world through specific experiences. She is, in her words, specifically aware of those elements' linguistic inarticulacy "on those levels where one speaks of the personal, the feelings, the private inner life." Since language for those people "was often perceived as embarrassing or dangerous," she uses the dramatic monologue, which, though objective, is closer to her than it would appear (Interview with Jane Stabler 127). Out of some sort of identification, born out of a general sense of belonging to the people, Duffy writes about the aspirations and disappointments of those disaffected persons. As she explains in

her interview with McAllister: "What I am doing is living in the twentieth century in Britain and listening to the radio news every day and going out every day and reading the newspaper every day and meeting people who've had wonderful or horrifying experiences" (70).

Most of Duffy's characters are the product of the dreariness of Thatcher's England in the 80s, where perpetual violence, pressing social problems, and rising unemployment were the mark of the day. By dramatizing their anxieties, Duffy is able to examine British society's narrow assumptions about identity, authority, and representation. Her use of the dramatic monologue, both in and away from the Browning fashion, becomes a convenient democratic platform on which their plight is brought into focus. On that democratic platform, Duffy allows us access into their inner world, revealing their expectations, worries, and disappointments in catching idioms and phrases. In "Comprehensive," (Selected Poems—later referred to as SP—5-7), for example, she unveils the private thoughts of a number of ethnically diverse school children: an African, an East Asian, a Moslem and a British. Such plurality of voices intends to give a "comprehensive" image of the anxieties of living in contemporary Britain. The anxieties of the three immigrants seem to center on the tension between nostalgia and adaptation, while those of their English schoolmate bring into focus wider problems of unemployment, intolerance, and racism.

To begin with, we listen to the voice of the African immigrant who is not yet able to cope with the new place he has moved into, although it may bear some similarities to his original one (the English games he is playing now—"hopscotch" and "hide-and-seek"—are similar to his indigenous African "Tutumantu" and "Kwani-Kawni"). His present estrangement is foreshadowed in his quarrel with his sister who, upon returning from England, does not communicate with him in their native language. Currently, he is still on the periphery, feeling negative passions for his new home—"I like Africa better than England" (4). He is still haunted by reminiscences of his old happy days in Africa. Suddenly, the flow of his thoughts is interrupted by the voice of "Wayne," the British student. In short telegraphic sentences, "Wayne," belonging to a working-class family (his father drives a

mini-cab), reveals his laziness and racial bent of mind. He believes that those newcomers threaten his chances for a better life:

….We watch
the video. I Spit on Your Grave. Brilliant.
I don't suppose I'll get a job. It's all them
coming over here to work….(10-13)

Like his African counterpart, this Arsenal fan has similar negative passions for England, though for different reasons. Racist, defeatist, and celebrator of cultural degeneracy—he likes to watch "I Spit on Your Grave," one of the 1980s' notorious films—he later declares his intention to leave England altogether. While we are expecting continuity of his thoughts, Duffy suddenly changes gear to the thoughts of another speaker—apparently a Moslem immigrant—who also sounds as nostalgic as his African counterpart: "There was much more room to play than here in London. / We played in an old village. It is empty now. / We got a plane to Heathrow. People wrote to us / that everything was easy here "(17-20). The cultural markers associated with him—Masjed, Mecca and nun—seem to suggest his peripheral existence.

Duffy changes gear back to the British speaker whose confusion adds to that of his Moslem counterpart. Both suffer the frustrating London atmosphere, the latter because of his defeated expectations about it, the former because of his idleness and boredom. Wayne's disjointed thoughts reveal the uncertainty of his existence: he is single, jobless, isolated, and enjoys mad music—"Marlon Frederic's nice but he's a bit dark. / I like Madness. The lead singer's dead good" (23-24). Furthermore, he reveals ambivalent feelings towards other schoolmates. For example, he pretends to be a friend of a Moslem boy who dropped his "sausages" to prevent him eating pig meat (forbidden in Islamic law) and claims that his sister dated one of those newcomers. However, he is revealed to be racially motivated: "I'd like to be mates, but they're different from us./ Some of them wear turbans in class. You can't help / taking the piss (34-36). He is hopeless about his future in Britain: "Australia sounds all right," as he says.

At this moment of despair, a new speaker, apparently an East Asian immigrant, more than a turban wearer with dark skin, also voices his anxieties of living in Britain. Although he sounds proud of

his family lineage—"Some of my family are named after the Moghul emperors./ Aurangzeb, Jehangir, Batur, Humayun. I was born / thirteen years ago in Jhelum"—(40-42) he, like the two afore-mentioned immigrants, is unable to integrate into his new community. Language barriers prevent him from participating in some school activities—he does not drink milk because he cannot not understand his teacher's accent—in spite of his hope, ambition, and belief in his new country. Here, Duffy may sound apprehensive of his and other immigrants' worries, but her attitude towards Wayne—whose name is "shorthand for low intelligence and low social class"—changes from sympathy to "caricaturing," according to Ian Sansom. Sansom points out that Duffy tries to explore the "depth" of his "inarticulacy" by "risking stylistic disaster in an attempt to provide him with a voice." However, she ends up "caricaturing and stereotyping his language-use so that he becomes nothing more than a cipher, a representative of all that is bad in British society—racist, ignorant, lazy (n.p.).

As the monologue concludes, we feel as if we were following a panorama in seven scenes about the anxieties of living in contemporary Britain. The four scenes devoted to Wayne are crisscrossed by the three scenes related to the immigrants. The alternation between the scenes brings into focus the laziness and racism of Wayne and the nostalgia and ambition of his foreign counterparts. This sense of diversity that the poem shows is reflected in its structure and style. The poem is constructed in seven and six-line-seven stanzas of varied lines. It is written in simple or compound sentences in which we listen to the natural speech of these ethnically diverse children. The sentences are characterized by incompleteness, sudden turn of direction, repetition, and incoherent syntax: "Brilliant. / I don't suppose I'll get a job. It's all them / coming over here to work. Arsenal." Duffy also uses clichés to typify "Wayne," the British student who likes to watch the notorious film "I Spit on Your Grave" and who uses slang and racist terms such as "Paki," "dead," and "piss." She also relies on evocative vocabulary, which includes names of persons (besides Wayne there are "Ejaz," "Aurangzeb" "Jehangir" etc…), places (England and Africa), and cultural markers (Masjid, nan, Mecca, Mogul, Arsenal, I Spit on Your Grave, Safeways). By allowing Wayne to use the pronouns "they" and "I," Duffy hints at

divisions, still setting contemporary British society apart.

On her democratic platform, Duffy again highlights this theme of division in "Foreign" (SP 54), a monologue that dramatizes the plight of another displaced, alienated, and troubled person. He also seems to belong to an ethnic minority, physically and linguistically estranged from the mainstream life. Rob Jackaman tends to interpret the foreignness of the poem in terms of geography and gender. The poem, Jackaman writes, defines the status of Duffy as a female Scottish, living in a male dominated British society and more as it is "set in an ominous, unspecified metropolis," finally creating a situation that may "apply just as much to the gendered other as the geographically other (100). However, one tends to read the poem as much as a dramatization of the plight of the "geographically other" than the plight of the "gendered other." The reason is that, although she is female, Duffy may, like other British residents, find it somehow easy to travel and live in Britain. This facility may not be available to other foreign immigrants who are faced with tremendous social and linguistic barriers that limit their full integration into British society. Here is one of those immigrants inviting us to "imagine" his plight of living in some dismal dwelling "on the east side" of a "strange dark, city for twenty years." Linguistic estrangement contributes to his peripheral existence:

> …. On the landing, you hear
> your foreign accent echo down the stairs. You think
> in a language of your own and talk in theirs.
>
> Then you are writing home. The voice in your head
> recites the letter in a local dialect; behind that
> is the sound of your mother singing to you,
> all that time ago, and now you do not know
> why your eyes are watering and what's the word for this. (3-10)

Like all foreigners residing in an adopted country, he feels torn between two languages: he thinks in one and talks in the other. This feeling is reinforced in the linguistic act (writing home against the sound of his mother's song of comfort in the distant past) he does. But, even at the moment this act may provide him with a sense of comfort

and some sort of identity, his existence seems to be threatened by a hateful inscription of his name on a brick wall. A name may be a positive sign of identity, but here his name is negatively reduced to a sign of abuse, seen against a cold city life. In spite of conformity to his new home's basic codes of working and living, this act—suggestive of its frustrating linguistic atmosphere—exiles him from its mainstream life:

> And in the delicatessen, from time to time, the coins
> in your palm will not translate. Inarticulate,
> because this is not home, you point at fruit. Imagine
> that one of you says Me not know what these people mean.
> It like the only go to bed and dream. Imagine that. (16-20)

The city coin in his hand "will not translate" once he remembers his local one. Again this act, along with reference to his inarticulacy, emphasizes his foreignness which bars him form full integration into that city life.

This foreigner's failure to integrate into his new environment is articulated in four-five-line stanzas, written in lines that vary in length, mostly enjambed to allow his thoughts to come out uninterrupted. In the manner of Browning, the monologue starts abruptly and moves forward to express that sense of disparity that usually marks the relationship between immigrants and native residents. For example, it sets the warm emotions the speaker experienced back home against the cold discriminatory feelings he now suffers in his new city, and his native coin against the new coin that does not "translate." Like other monologues, this one tries to bridge the gap between the speaker and the reader by addressing him directly. This is apparent in the repetition of the word "imagine" that refers to all the psychological burdens this foreigner has to bear in his new city. Therefore, "Imagine living in a strange, dark city for twenty years" shifts to "Imagine one night / you saw a name for yourself sprayed in red" that leads to "Imagine that one of you says Me not know what these people mean. / It like the only go to bed and dream," all summed up in "Imagine that."

Continuing on the same platform, the reader is not only invited to imagine, but is also directly involved in following the inner thoughts of another immigrant leaving his homeland and heading to an alien destination as “Originally” (SP 65-66) shows. Although the poem, like

the previous one, may be read against Duffy's personal background when she moved with her family from Scotland to England at the age of five —an age in which she was aware enough of personal loss—it is preferable to read it in more general terms. Therefore, although the speaker may be identified as Duffy herself, she, from a universal perspective, may be representative of any child who may have a similar experience of displacement. The poem captures superbly well the sentiments of the speaker, both as a child who experienced such a move, and as an adult who is now recalling that experience. In the process, the poem examines personal identity in terms of place, speech, and culture. Obviously, it does so through turns of personal memory in which the speaker appears torn between two environments, accents, and cultural contexts. Although the poem may be read against Duffy's personal background when she moves with her family from Scotland to England at the age of five – an age in which she was aware enough of personal loss it is preferable to read it in more general terms. Therefore, although the speaker may be identified as duffy herself she, from a universal perspective may be representative of any child who may have a similar experince displacement.

The first stanza records the sad journey of the speaker from his original country to the country his family has immigrated to. The stanza is built on a number of contrasts: although the wheels are moving forward, the speaker is journeying backward to "the city, / the street, the house, the vacant rooms / where we didn't live any more" (5-7); while his mother admirably sings his father's name to the tunes produced by the wheels, one of his brothers cries "Home." In addition, the "blind toy" at the end of the stanza refers back to "the vacant rooms," both reflecting his state at the moment: empty, lost, and emotionally bereft. The clash of sounds we listen to produces a note of sadness, perennially associated with the notion of childhood as departure, as the second stanza explains:

All childhood is an emigration. Some are slow,
leaving you standing, resigned, up an avenue
where no one you know stays. Others are sudden.
Your accent wrong. Corners, which seem familiar,
leading to an imagined, pebble-dashed estates, big boys
eating worms and shouting words you don't understand.

my parents' anxiety stirred like a loose tooth
in my head, I want our country, I said. (9-16)

The metaphor of "childhood is an emigration" doubly suggests movement and growing up, both experienced by the speaker. Thus conceived, his "emigration" results in social and linguistic estrangement. In his new surroundings, he is apart from the city boys, whose eating and speaking habits are unlike his. Furthermore, its linguistic atmosphere divides him from them: he is torn between his native accent and their accent, which he got wrong. Whatever the type of "emigration"—"slow" or "sudden"—he has gone through, he still has own fears and worries, which are equally experienced by his parents, whose anxiety is described in physical terms—the loose tooth in the speaker's head. Those fears and worries suggest a nostalgic, peripheral identity—unable to adapt to his new environment he still longs to get back to his original country.

However, his nostalgia seems to be upturned in the third stanza in which the second sense of childhood as growing up, forgetting, and change is articulated:

But then you forget, or don't recall, or change,
and, seeing your brother swallow a slug, feel only
a skelf of shame. I remember my tongue
shedding its skin like a snake, my voice
in the classroom sounding just like the rest. Do I only think
I lost a river, culture, speech, sense of first space
And the right place? Now, Where do you come from?
Strangers ask. Originally? And I hesitate. (17-24)

This experience of "emigration" is conceived in terms of gains and losses, apparently resulting in feelings of shame and hesitancy. While his brother appears to be coping with his community's social habits—he swallows a "slug"—he seems to be adapting to its linguistic one—"my voice / in the classroom sounding just like the rest." His brother's act generates in him a feeling of "shame", and his own creates hesitation. Both acts remind him of what he has lost: "a river, culture, speech, sense of first space / And the right place." This painful cost of "emigration" is bought not only by loss of place, but also by a whole culture and the self-identity shaped by it.

Significantly, the speaker's sense of lost identity informs the structure of the poem. The poem consists of three eight-line stanzas. It

has a loose meter, mostly iambic—"which fell through the fields, our mother singing / our father's name to the turn of the wheels." There are also occasional ("room" and "Home", "paw" and "slow") and internal ("space" and "place") rhymes. Many sounds echo in the poem just as they do in the speaker's mind: the mother's singing to the tunes of the wheels, the brother crying home, the miles that rushed back, the big boys shouting words, his voice sounding like the rest. Except for "Others are sudden./ Your accent wrong," the short and one-word, telegraphic sentences of the other poems are missing here, and the rest of the poem reveals itself in long sentences and enjambed lines, meant to record freely the flow of this speaker's thoughts concerning his notion of "emigration."

On Duffy's democratic platform, the notion of "emigration"—either in time or place—recurs, although it may be in the opposite direction as "Deportation" (Selling Manhattan 53) shows. The poem dramatizes the anxieties of another displaced person, forced to leave his adopted country. In the process, it touches on themes of marginalization and the relationship between "home" and the self. The speaker seeks to define himself while living in an unfriendly environment and, meantime, tries to define home, both in physical and emotional terms. The loss and estrangement of this deportee is dramatized in loosely structured stanzas, composed of five-to-three and two-to-one lines that establish his feelings of gradual withdrawal and dwindling. For example, the first stanza—consisting of five lines—explains how the decision to deport him disappoints his simple, even naïve, belief in a global world—conceived as "one country shinning in the dark"—where emigration is just a move in place:

> They have not been kind here. Now I must leave, the words I've learned for supplication, gratitude, will go unused. Love is a look in the eyes in any language, but not here, not this year. They have not been welcoming (1-5).

He laments having to live on the sidelines, ignored and emotionally deprived. He now realizes that his attempt to adapt linguistically to his community is not succeeding. Ironically, he learnt only words of "supplication" and "gratitude" to win the hearts of original residents who ultimately fail to change the intent of immigration officials to deport him. In such an alien setting he tries to

conceive home in terms of love.

Moving from a three-line stanza (2), the poem returns to five-line and two- line stanzas (3 and 4 respectively) to record the uncertainty of the speaker's position. The last two stanzas suggest that by having a lover who is expecting a baby, he seems to be rooted in a physical setting which, in the future, he hopes to look back as a place of happy memories. But, this turns out to be a dream that is threatened by the fragility of their position: "We are not strong enough." This realization—rendered in a five-line stanza (5) that is followed by one and, again, five line stanzas (6 and 7)—becomes comes clear shortly before his deportation:

> They are polite, recite official jargon endlessly. Form F. Room 12. Box 6. I have felt less small below mountains disappearing into cloud than entering the Building of Exile. Hearse taxis crawl the drizzling streets towards the terminal (16-20).

However cruel this moment is, it is less emotionally tormenting, compared to losing his lover. The dream of establishing home in one another's arms dwindles as the ocean that parts him from his lover leads to "without you I am nowhere. It was cold" (26). The true loss becomes less of the physical home and more of the emotional one. Structurally, this stanza, like the previous ones, consists of natural, short, and longer utterances that render the flow of this alien's troubled state of mind. Among the matter-of-fact utterances—"Now I am Alien," "Form F. Room 12. Box 6" and "It was cold"—metaphorical ones are incorporated in which the speaker perceives love as a universal language of the eye, his lover's arms as home", the taxi carrying him to the airport as a "hearse," and the eyes of his lover as a "bitter-sweet" apple.

On her familiar democratic platform, Duffy dramatizes the anxieties not only of the displaced foreigners who are socially and linguistically estranged, but also those of the native speakers who appear to be living on the margin, let down by their society. In "Education for Leisure," (SP 11), for example, she gives voice to the inner thoughts of an ignored, bored, and idle person. By dramatizing his plight, the poem questions the value of an education that does not lead to the betterment of life. After years of hard schooling, the

speaker ends jobless, discovering that his education seemed to have been for "leisure." To make up for his loss, he declares his desire for senseless killing, chillingly announced in the opening stanza:

> Today I am going to kill something. Anything. I have had enough of being ignored and today I am going to play God. It is an ordinary day, a sort of grey with boredom stirring in the streets (1-4).

Fed up with being bored and ignored, this idle person seeks attention by wanting to "play God"—to have and exercise power. But his invocation of "God" is negative as he intends to use his power to harm others: now he casually kills a fly and remembers doing the same at school. In this context, he invokes Shakespeare by vaguely recalling Gloucester's speech in King Lear in which he compares his fate to that of flies killed by "wonton boys" for their sports (iv, i: 37-38). But his invocation of Shakespeare does not appear to be relevant. In other words, he seems to be alien from the values inherent Shakespeare's world that triumph for humanity and condemn cruelty and violence. That he is worlds apart from Shakespeare is suggested in his admission that Shakespeare's play was written in a language different from his colloquial, non standard one (he also notes that "the fly is in another language"—at least no longer alive).

That his invocation of Shakespeare is ironic at best is again detected in his characterization of himself as a genius who needs "half/ the chance" to change the world. He is not at all creative like Shakespeare: he is only talented in scarring a cat and a budgie, and in flushing a goldfish down the toilet. He is not even employed: he walked "two miles into town / for signing on." By referring to his "signing on" as his "autograph," he reminds us of his self-delusion, because his search for fame and recognition will not materialize. Desperate and victim of his society's neglect and rejection (the radio presenter cuts him off as he claims to be "a superstar"), he decides to be remembered in his own way—the kitchen knife and the glittering pavements provide him with an opportunity for a dramatic action. Bereft of a chance to change the world, he intends to take things into hand and kill. With "nothing" of the poor creatures "left to kill"—implicitly, the cat and the bird met the same fate of the goldfish—he is about to harm humans. What seems to be a first person monologue

throughout now addresses the reader personally and threatens him directly: "I touch your arm." Suddenly, then, the reader is involved. But the irony here, like the irony of the title, suggests that the fame and recognition this speaker seeks will be obtained at the expense of harming others, an action that brings notoriety not fame.

Consisting of five-quatrain-stanzas, written in unrhymed and metrically irregular lines (though many of them are Alexandrine), which consist of short and one-word sentences, the poem suggests that the speaker has planned to carry out a certain action—senseless killing with a knife. The final reference to "knife" has sparked wide controversy about the message the poem wants to communicate to the young educated, but idle people. In 2008, on complaints from the public, Britain top exam board, AQA, has removed the poem from its GCSE syllabus on the grounds that it, according to its spokeswoman, neither encourages nor facilitates the young people to "think critically" or sensitively about "social issues and public concerns." Others have defended the poem, saying that it did the opposite of what the spokeswoman said. Michael Rosen, the children laureate, points out that the poem is tame in comparison to works like Hamlet or Macbeth. He adds that the poem does encourage young people to think seriously about knife crimes and concludes saying that "condemnation and censorship of something never works" (qtd. in Curtis, n.p). The present writer tends to believe that the poem has a message to communicate, a message that is confirmed in the change of its tone from humor to seriousness. At the beginning, the poem reveals a funny tone: when we know that this idle casually squashes a fly, scars a cat, a budgie, and kills a goldfish, we feel he is not serious. But, once he picks up the kitchen knife and touches someone's arms, we become aware that something serious is about to happen. Here, the poem becomes a warning of the dangers that may erupt when an educated idle is denied a chance for a better life.

On Duffy's usual platform, the same concern with social deprivation is also examined in "Stealing" (SP 49-50). Here, too, an unintelligent criminal seems unlikable because his thefts are motivated by boredom. Unlike his counterpart in "Education for Leisure," he does not pose a threat to other people's lives. Thus, this poem—unlike the previous one—directly captures the reader's involvement from the

beginning (although this thief may also be speaking to a police officer or a social worker). The reader's involvement is clearly stated in the opening and closing questions of the poem: "The most unusual thing I ever stole?" leads finally to "You don't understand a word I'm saying, do you?" Between these two questions, this thief recounts his various thefts and motivations, which do not seem to be apprehended by the reader, suggesting, perhaps, the inevitability of his misconduct.

Of all his various thefts, the snowman—"magnificent; a tall, white mute / beneath the winter moon"(2-3)—is the closest to his affection. But he appears to be morally confused as he equates not taking the snowman with being dead. Furthermore, by linking the thrill of stealing to upsetting the children who made it, he reveals an apathetic bent of mind. He does not even sound convincing in justifying his other thefts—riding cars to nowhere, breaking into houses out of curiosity, pinching a camera, stealing a guitar, and nicking a "bust of Shakespeare"—as he links it to boredom, not need. Out of a false sense of self-regard, he seems anxious to leave his mark in places of theft, be it a mess or a sigh against mirrors with his breath. Ironically, he will not enjoy what he steals: he steals a guitar, although he might not learn how to play it as it needs time and patience; he pinches a camera, though it may be of little importance to him; he nicks a "bust of Shakespeare," though he cannot realize the values that Shakespeare stands for.

> The self-defeating nature of his thefts becomes clear in the penultimate stanza when he returns to the snowman trying to reassemble him only to discover that "he didn't look the same." Therefore, he "took a run": and booted him. Again. Again. My breath ripped out in rags. It seems daft now. Then I was standing alone amongst lumps of snow, sick of the world. (18-20)

Although done to his pleasure, though against the displeasure of the children, this theft reminds him of the futility of his endeavor. As the snowman no longer looks the same, he altogether demolishes him and, ends in a mode of solitude, "sick of the world." "Lumps of snow" is an illustrative image, rendered in colloquial language that reveals how, in trying to speak his mind up, this social misfit condemns

himself. Other images include "a mucky ghost" and "a bust of Shakespeare." In addition to the suggestive vocabulary describing the snowman and this thief, the poem has clichés—"Life is tough" and "I sigh like this—Aah" and one word sentences, "Mirrors," "Again," and "Boredom." Many lines of the poem are not semantic units; they are fragmented with punctuation, which may be taken to reflect the improvised quality of his speech.

The same false image of the self in relation to the outside world recurs in "And How are we Today?" (SP 42). Again, on Duffy's familiar democratic platform, we listen to the voice of a psychiatric patient who reveals a disturbed soul as he views himself in connection with the world beyond. This relation is articulated in the poem's four quatrains, written in enjambed, largely unrhymed lines where enjambment reflects the continual flow of this patient's thought, dramatized in Duffy's usual style of short clipped sentences—"I go O O O", "I go Ugh", and "I go BASTARDS." These and other short utterances reflect this person's mental confusion. Every time he listens to the radio, he imagines that the announcer is poking fun at him. Suddenly, this feeling of uneasiness turns into animosity, strongly suggested in his perception of the announcer's voice ("cold tea with skin on",) and the spirit of defiance he shows.

As the monologue proceeds, we realize that his awareness of the outside world is expressed in terms of flowers. Flowers, plastic or real, become a symbol that suggests his hazy perception of the world. Although, as an adult he is surrounded by plastic flowers, he is conscious that real flowers, like them, become lifeless, especially in autumn. However, he is not oblivious to the psychological relief that they can give, especially in times of stress. But this consciousness is reduced to that of a child once he says he can name a rose, a tulip, and a lily. Soon, his disturbed mind verges on hallucination:

> I live inside someone else's head. He hears me with his stethoscope, so it is no use sneaking home at five o'clock to his nice house because I am in his ear going Breathe Breathe (9-12).

He appears to be capable of communicating with others only through illusions. Strangely, he prefers solitude to company as long as he can relate to them through an imagined union. However, he does

not realize that his solitude has taken its toll on him:

> I might take my eye out and swallow it to bring some attention to myself. Winston did. His name was in the paper. For the time being I make noises to annoy them and then I go BASTARDS. (13-16)

Isolated and lonely as he is now, he appears to be on the verge of harming Isolated and lonely as he is now, he appears to be on the verge of harming himself. He is considering plucking out his own eyes, perhaps in the manner of Oedipus. But whereas Oedipus blinded himself out of a sense guilt, this person wants to harm himself because he is an attention-seeker. However, for the time being he delays, remaining content with making noise by committing wild, offensive acts.

Another attention-seeker appears on Duffy's usual platform in "Psychopath" (SP 43-46). Like the above-mentioned psychiatric patient, the potential killer of "Education for Leisure", and the bored thief of "Stealing", the "psychopath" of this poem discloses the same faulty attitude toward a society that has failed him without forgiving his devious behavior. Like the others, he becomes a true mirror of everyday violence and all negative values in contemporary British society. This social deviant is self-centered: he views himself in terms of Hollywood film heroes such as James Dean, Marlon Brando, Elvis Presley, and Humphrey Bogart. As he first shows up, he "poses" his "reflection between dummies in the window" of a men's wear shop and refers to James Dean as he is about to recount one of his sexual parades:

> ….All over town, ducking and diving,
> my shoes scud sparks against the night. She is in the canal. Let me make myself crystal. With a good-looking girl crackling
> in four petticoats, you feel like a king. She rode past me on a wooden horse, laughing, and the air sang Johnny, Remember Me. I turned the world faster, flash (3-8).

Actions of "ducking," "diving," and "scudding" indicate that this person is apparently in a fun fair in which he is riding a wooden horse with a good looking girl. He is wildly excited as she sings him a song of remembrance. Rees-Jones points out that the Johnny, / Remember

Me" song fragment is an echo from Adrian Henri's "Fairground Poem"—published in his collection, Tonight at Noon (1968), in which he allows the reader to listen to the thoughts of a predatory male: "Deafened by music from all sides / Johnny, remember / she's square, / Baby, I don't care..."(22). Here, the predatory person exhibits a self-magnified image in relation to his female victims. Like one of his movie idols (Marlon Brando), he claims to be artful in seducing them with "his eyes." He adds that he can "woo them…with goldfish and coconuts, "whispers in the Tunnel of Love" and soft sighs, "toffee-apple, and "teddy-bear." He is over-confident of his appeal and his ever-haughty ego: "I took a swig of whisky from the flask and frenched it / down her throat. No, she said, Don't, like they always do" (23-24). But, his seduction is sadist at best because the attractions he lists to tempt them is attended by violence.

Duffy tries to account for his sadist behavior by linking it to incidents from his past. In a sudden turn of memory, she allows us to realize how his seduction of this local girl is connected to his first sexual experience with a girl named Alice in the woods at the age of twelve. With Alice, he also exercised the same violent sexual behavior:

> She jeered. I nicked a quid and took her to the spinney. I remember the wasps, the sun blazing as I pulled her knickers down. I touched her and I went hard.... (25-28)

From his past insensitivity and gullibility, we return with him to his present coolness and restlessness, linked to his defeated aspirations. On a prediction of a "gypsy" that he would be famous like one of his idols, Elvis Presley, he tried without success to sing. This is because he is self-deluded, as his girlfriend admits.

Again, his present sexual parade—as he "eased" the girl "down by the dull canal / and talked sexy"—is connected to a traumatic early childhood experience: his father's desertion of the family following the discovery of an affair between his wife and the Rent man. In another shift of memory, he flashes back from such a devastating incident to his present affair in the dull town with its "dreary homes" and suffocating atmosphere. By using some clichés such as "giving her everything I had," "Jack the lad," "Ladies' Man"—there are also "Here we go on, old son" (stanza one) and "the world is your fucking oyster"

(the last stanza)—he asserts his violent masculinity: "You get one chance in this life / and if you screw it you're done for, uncle, no mistake. / She lost a tooth. I picked her up, dead slim, and slid her in" (52-54). Apathetic and cool, he underestimates his violent act and appears ready to suffer another "loss of memory":

The barman calls Time. Bang in the centre of my skull, there's a strange coolness. I could almost fly. Tomorrow will find me else where, with a loss of memory. Drink up son, the world's your fucking oyster. Awopbopaloobop alopbimbam (63-66).

His rendition of Little Richard's chorus from the rock-song "Tutti-Frutti": "Awopbopaloobop alopbimbam"—itself an echo of "Wham bam, thank you mum" by recent itinerant male predators—seems to reinforce his cool tone, backed by details from Pop songs, Hollywood movies, and images relayed from late 1950s media, as Rob Jackaman writes . But, we soon realize that he is far from those images as he watches himself "pose" his "reflection between dummies in the window" of a men's wear shop. Siding with the "shop window culture," he sees "no distance at all between the invented and the actual, so that his macho violence" appears to be "no more than part of a film in which he features along with his screen idols…" (102). The shifts he makes, according Ian Gregson, become "important because they draw attention to the question of how what is being seen is being interpreted (qtd. in Rees-Jones 22). Agreeing with Gregson, one can say that those shifts allow us to watch and judge him—a "psychopath"—just as he watches and judges himself—a hero. This ironic portrayal is rendered in incomplete pieces of language, full of male cliché, echoes from popular songs, and other poets' work. All are presented in eight octet stanzas, composed of enjambed, end-stopped and metrically loose lines: "Mama, straight up, I hope you rot in hell. The old man /sloped off, sharpish. I saw her through the kitchen window" (41-42).

In addition to immigrants and psychopaths, Duffy's familiar democratic platform extends to include prostitutes, maids, and women in the shadow of great men. In "Standing Female Nude" (SP 20-21), for example, we listen to the voice of a silenced female nude who works as an art model. Along with this nude, concerned about her next meal, Duffy portrays an artist, intent on achieving prestige by having

his painting hung in great museums. While she seems to be apprehensive of the nude's financial worries, she sounds critical of the artist's self-centeredness. However, through the tension that arises between the two, she explores the question of representation, either in language or through art. She does so by presenting their opposite viewpoints concerning the painting.

The nude's "private, distinctive character and temperament" is "inadvertently revealed....in the arrangement of her words, her tone, her silences" (Linda Kinnahan 257). Agreeing with Kinnahan, one can say that her mode is expressed in fragments, short-sentences, and evocative vocabulary, all rendered in four-septet stanzas. To begin with, the short telegraphic words of the first line—"Six hours like this for a few francs"—sum up her socio-economic background. And the use of the colloquial, even vulgar, "Belly nipple arse" suggests her status as "a river-whole." Although she and the artist are both "poor" and present in the same place (the artist's studio), they seem to be worlds apart: she is here for her next meal, and he for his painting; she sees herself as parts ("Belly nipple arse",) while he looks at her as a whole. Their difference is further accentuated in her reaction to his representation, or misrepresentation, of her: "he drains the colour from me." She even suspects that his analytical representation of her will find its way into great museums, where the bourgeoisie will admire it as an "Art." Analytical representation, or concern with "volume, space", and the use of the forename "George" suggest that Duffy may be alluding to an early painting by the cubist Braque. In the early years of the twentieth century Braque's Nude and Picasso's Demoiselle d'Avignon inaugurated Cubism as a break with the "optical realism of impressionism" for the sake of representing objects in their "solid, tangible reality" (Hawkins 203). In his "renegotiation of space, "says Rees-Jones, "Braque seems to offer Duffy a positive model of representation" that can be compared to her ambitious project to revitalize the dramatic monologue by rejecting the single viewpoint perspective (15). Although we cannot deny that Duffy's monologue presents two perspectives (the artist's and the nude's) concerning the painting, still, its revolutionary aspect lies in the fact that it becomes a public platform for those on the periphery—like this model—to express themselves and seek self-assurance, though they may exist in

unsupportive surroundings.

This model's search for self-assurance is suggested in the prophecy she makes about the future of her portrait:

….In the tea-leaves I can see the Queen of England gazing on my shape. Magnificent, she murmurs moving on. It makes me laugh …. (11-14)

By allowing this model to imagine the Queen of England praising her portrait as a magnificent piece of "art," Duffy, obliquely, seems to satirize the kind of culture in which such an "art" is produced and appreciated. It is a culture that thrives on the needs of the lower elements of society. For, while the artist gets the praise for his "magnificent" piece of artistic creation, the portrait itself will be turned into a commodity, possessed and set apart from the nude's material condition. Ironically, such a commodity will be appreciated as "magnificent" in an environment in which the nude may be disdained. That such an imagined act makes the nude "laugh" should be taken seriously. This is because she reminds us that she, too, has her own popular "art," which is clearly distinct from the painter's high "Art":

There are times he does not concentrate and stiffens for my warmth. He possesses me on canvas as he dips the brush repeatedly into the paint. Little man, you've not the money for the arts I sell. (16-20)

She claims that if the painter succeeds in the domain of high "Art," she wins in the domain of obscene art. In other words, if he manages to possess her on his "canvass" during the painting session, he fails in his sexual seduction of her because he, as she dubs him and herself as well, is poor. Just as he is quite aware of his "Art" as a commodity that brings him money and fame, she is also conscious of her "arts"—bodily attractions—as a commodity that bring hers money. By denying the artist those attractions, she is able to assert her identity, throwing into question, according to Linda Neat, the traditional power relationship between the model and the artist where "the artist's female model is also his mistress and the intensity of the artistic process is mirrored only by the intensity of their sexual relationship" (qtd. in DiMarco 199-200). Thus, the final line of the poem—"It does not look like me"—suggests how highly she regards herself, and how his representation of her fails to bring out her attractions.

Some critics have attempted to read the poem from a feminist perspective, showing how woman can be abused, even in the name of art. For example, Kinnahan argues that the nude is a victim of a "morality that seeks to control women's bodies" and, meantime, "conceals the ways in which the marketing of women is institutionalized—in this instance—through art" (258). DiMarco characterizes this monologue as cloaking "the subjugation of the female in order to construct an art, and ultimately a self, that is unmediated by social discourse" (196). She compares it to Browning's "With Francis Furini," arguing that Browning's poem, like many other Victorian works, perpetuated "Victorian ethnocentrism and imperialism" that marginalized women and non-Anglo others. Browning's poem, she says, treats "the female nude primarily in connection with themes of high art and biological evolution" while Duffy's poem—an intertextual critique of Browning's—"politicized the traditional form, unmasking it as one through which the male artist claims his own aesthetic and intellectual superiority over the female and feminine." Duffy's poem changes "the nude model from a silent object to a speaking subject who has real socio-economic and political concerns," thus differing from other Browning's most famous "painter" monologues such as "Pictor Ignotus," "Fra Lippo Lippi," and Andrea del Sarto" (1-4-20). Although we cannot ignore the poem's feminist biases that focus on the empowerment of woman, we still look at the model, like other speakers in the previous monologues, as one of the lower elements of society, given the chance to define herself, even in an unsupportive environment.

From the world of this nude concerned about her living, Duffy moves—on her familiar platform—to the world of a female servant, trying to define herself in terms of a curious relationship with her mistress. This is very well articulated in "Warming Her Pearls" (SP 60-61), a monologue about love, desire, and longing. Again, in common language that depends on fragments, short sentences, and conventional meter, mostly iambic, used within traditional stanziac patterns (here are four sestet stanzas), Duffy dramatizes the longing of this maid. The abrupt Brownian beginning leads to a number of short scenes. In the first scene the maid wears her mistress' pearls in order to warm them till the time comes when the mistress goes out for an

evening party. But, in the second scene, she continues to think of her all day. By recording the simultaneity of the mistress' thought and the servant's action, the scene reveals that the two are worlds apart: while the mistress is thinking about a suitable dress for the night party, the maid is busying herself with warming her (mistress) pearls, channeling her "slow heat" of desire into each one of them. The maid's thoughts shift from "work" with the pearls to a dream about the mistress herself. In the third scene she lies on her "attic bed," imagining her "dancing / with tall men, puzzled by my faint, persistent scent / beneath her French perfume, her milky stones" (10-12).

But she shifts back—in the fourth scene—from dream to reality, where she is to enjoy an intimate contact with her mistress. She is now in her bedroom, helping her dress. Body touch generates erotic desire:

I dust her shoulders with a rabbit's foot,
watch the soft blush seep through her skin
like an indolent sign. In her looking-glass
my red lips part as though I want to speak. (14-17)

The closer she gets to her mistress, the higher her desire rises. She is so taken by the soft touch of her skin that, on looking at the mirror, she feels a strong desire to speak, perhaps to praise her mistress' beauty or to reveal her love for her. But, being aware of the distance separating them, she hesitates. Although she wears the pearls, she can not identify with her mistress because of their different social standings. This difference becomes clear at the end of the poem when the two are to part, the mistress to her party and the maid to her fantasies about her. Those fantasies go high as the last two scenes in which the maid, on her mistress' return, continues to imagine her undressing and:

taking off her jewels, her slim hand reaching
for the case, slipping naked into bed, the way
she always does…And I lie here awake,
knowing the pearls are cooling even now
in the room where my mistress sleeps. All night
I feel their absence and I burn. (17-25)

Once we reach the final scene of the poem we realize that The succession of this maid's thoughts is given immediacy by the use of the participles "resting," "contemplating," "entering," "dancing,"

"Undressing," "reaching," "slipping," "knowing," "cooling." Specifically, acts of undressing, "taking off jewels", and "slipping naked into bed" become sexually inciting, serving, as they are, as a prelude to fulfillment of erotic desire. However, such imagined acts do not come to fruition: the mistress retires to her room, and the servant is secluded in her attic bed with her erotic longing left to burn. Against the cooling of the pearls (the object of erotic desire), the servant immensely feels the heat of eroticism. Serving more than a piece of jewelry, the pearls become a symbol of a sexual longing that does not materialize. Indeed, the meaning of the poem hangs on the contrast between the warm pearls and the cool neck of the mistress at the beginning, the cooling pearls and the rising heat of the maid's desire at the end, again signaling class differences that seem unbridgeable.

Many critics have interpreted the poem as a non-traditional love poem. For example, Allen-Randolph argues that Duffy's "original and subversive use of the mistress/servant trope" discloses "a drama of class, gender, power, intimacy and desire that radically restates the traditional love poem" (12). In a similar vein, Evan Boland writes that this erotic monologue disrupts the traditional relation between lover and object. The poem, Boland says, is:

… a bold subversion of the sexualized erotic; a lyric which reassembles the love poem so that it becomes, like handwriting in a mirror, a menacing reverse inscription: the speaker is powerless, while the object of her affections has a power which puts her well beyond possession by either desire or expression.

In a traditional love poem, Boland adds, the erotic object is viewed at a cool distance, the pearls are warm, vital, and "held in common between the [two] women" and "far from signaling distance, they inflict the anguish and ugliness of control itself" (qtd. in Biography, no. p). Nicky Hallet reads it as a possible lesbian poem. By comparing Daphne du Maurier's novel Rebecca (1938) and Duffy's poem, Hallet finds that the two works have "maids and mistresses" who "meet and touch in bedrooms, ballrooms, mirrors, dreams, their same sex desire is sited in heterosexual domain, and has ramification inside and beyond the marital home" (38). She maintains that a "lesbian desire remains perpetually possible" in the poem as the maid continues to reflect on "her feelings while she 'burns' and her mistress merely

sleeps" and the "walls and bar" between her and her mistress' rooms are frangible. Beds merge, in fantasy at least, and body heat is transferred, blushes and sighs 'seep through her skin'" (46) Downer is more confident about the poem's "lesbian eroticism," linked, in her view, to Duffy's use of "pearls, a clitoral image, in the title and making it central to the poem's theme (58). However valid these interpretations may be, the present writer still prefers to read this monologue as part of the democratic platform on which the voice of one of the marginal elements of society—a maid— is heard, revealing her anxieties over love, albeit same sex, and a longing that is left unfulfilled.

A woman suffers marginalization not only because of her social standing, as the last two monologues demonstrate, but also because of her living in the shadow of a great man like Anne Hathaway, wife of the giant dramatic poet William Shakespeare. The monologue, which carries her name, belongs to Duffy's The World's Wife (30), a volume in which she revises fairy tale, history, and myth, reworking them into contemporary settings. Disclosing her "wit and energy," the volume blends "formal ingenuity and social concern in insightful, exuberant dramatic monologues" that explore "contemporary and historical scenes from surprising and unexpected viewpoints." It is told by the wives of famous as well as unknown men who sometimes sound "wise, cynical, scornful" or angry with the follies of their husbands. At other times they are "blunt and bawdy like" Frau Freud. All throughout the volume her presence underneath the mask of her characters is felt in the colloquial language she uses (Satterfield 123-124).These monologues blend what is personal with what is public: behind her presentation of those women, there is also much about her, as she channels her views concerning the position of women in contemporary society. In the view of Rees-Jones, Duffy, confident of her talent, is here able to "encode the personal within the characters from myth and history, as well as making feminist statements about the absence of women from history, or their misrepresentation" (29).

Here, she brings Anne Hathaway into focus, showing her ironical perception of Shakespeare, whose love of her was conceived only through his writing. She speaks about their bed of love in terms of her body and his language:

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 center of a noun (1-7).

The bed metaphor suggests a double meaning: it was the setting of both their sexual intercourses and her husbands' dramatic writings. In addition to their sexual overtones, the words "forests, castles, torchlight, clifftops, seas" with "pearls," hint at the imaginative nature of that setting. For example, the bed was a sea—a world of imagination—in which he could find "pearls"—words of magical overtones. The impression his words left on the outside world was similar to that his kisses left on his wife's lips. Besides his touching words, Ann reminds us of the auditory elements of his technique such as "rhyme," "echo," and "assonances," which become metaphors of bodily contact. That physical intimacy was conceived in terms of the poet's lexicon, becoming "a verb" (an action done by him) that danced in the center of her "noun" or (world).

In terms of memory, Anne reveals more about her in relation to the bard as the second part explains:

Some nights, I dreamed he'd written me, the bed
A page beneath his writer's hands. Romance
and drama played by touch, by scent, by taste,
……
My living laughing love—
I hold him in the casket of my widow's head
As he held me upon that next best bed (8-10, 12-14).

The bed metaphor continues to assert its strong presence, revealing how on that bed Shakespeare had dramatized his love of Anne in terms of a "page" of his writing. Therein, his passions for her as well as for drama were articulated in his usual images of "touch," "scent," and "taste." When compared to their guests', their bed was far better off: the guests' bed was kept for the "dribbling" of their "prose," a phrase suggestive of an inferior sexual pleasure, whereas theirs was reserved for their "romance" and "drama." Because Shakespeare

intimated her on their dear bed, she would continue to hold him dear in her memory (given the fact that Anne, who was nine years older than her husband, outlived him by seven years2).

Although she disregards the conventions of rhyme and meter, Duffy composes the sonnet on Shakespeare's model. Like him, she relies on images, most of which are obviously erotic. So is her vocabulary. One can guess what his "verb" and her "noun" are by imagining what the one is doing in the other. Their guests "dribbling their prose" is suggestive of a lower sexual encounter. The bed metaphor doubly suggests a sea of pearls (words) in the first part and a page of writing beneath the hands of Shakespeare in the second. Although her language sounds contemporary, Duffy convinces us that it might have been spoken by Anne herself.

To conclude, we can say that Duffy is the product of contemporary, multicultural British society that questions the notion of the centre and produces plural voices. Just as she has succeeded as a poet to conquer the center, her marginalized speakers are brought to the center of attention, surprisingly in conventional poetic form—dramatic monologue, associated with Browning and linked with "imperial" England that oppressed women and the other. While Duffy employs dramatic monologue in the manner of Browning, she, meantime, undermines it. In her monologues she constructs a democratic platform on which she uses non-standard forms of English to give fresh insights into the inner life of some lower elements of contemporary British society. On that platform, we listen to each one of them, caught at a crucial moment of his life, revealing his fantasies, fears, and preoccupations. For example, she writes about the worries of immigrants facing poverty, hardships, and discrimination in contemporary British society as "Comprehensive," "Foreign" and "Originally" show. Beside the anxieties of those displaced foreigners, she also dramatizes the worries of British society's drop-outs: a young idle intent on harming others ("Education for Leisure"), an unintelligent criminal driven to stealing out of boredom ("Stealing"), a psychiatric patient ("And How are we Today?") and a self-deluded psychopath ("Psychopath")—all questioning their position in a society that has failed them without tolerating their devious conduct. In addition to "psychopaths" and foreign immigrants, Duffy's democratic

platform gives free reign to the thoughts of a prostitute worried about her living ("Standing Female Nude"), a maid burning with a potential lesbian desire for her mistress ("Warming Her Pearls"), or woman marginalized because of living in the shadow of great man ("Anne Hathaway"). Most of these characters struggle against hard circumstances. By dramatizing their anxieties, Duffy is able to examine British society's narrow assumptions about identity and authority.

Like Browning's monologues, Duffy's show obvious irony. In "Education for Leisure" the speaker gives an image of himself—a genius—that contradicts our perception of him—a poor-minded potential killer, intent on achieving fame by harming others. Irony also draws our attention to how the "psychopath" sees himself and how he is seen by others: to himself, he is a hero, delighting in his sexual prowess, but to us he is a self-centered psychopath, delighting in harming others. But, in "Foreign" and "Originally Duffy sounds apprehensive of the worries of immigrants and foreigners who appear torn between two worlds. She is also apprehensive of the unfulfilled erotic desire of the maid in "Warming Her Pearls"—given the fact that her lesbianism is now exposed. While she seems sympathetic to the worries of the three immigrants, she is satirical of the English Wayne in "Comprehensive." Again, her sympathies lie with the nude's financial worries, and her satire is directed against the artist's self-centeredness. She also appears to condone Anne Hathaway's ironical perception of Shakespeare.

Like Browning's, the mode of Duffy's speakers dictates the manner of presentation that may be lyrical and emotional (“Foreign," "Deportation" and "Warming Her Pearls"), narrative and descriptive ("Comprehensive”, "Education for Leisure" and "Stealing"), reflective or reminiscent (“How Are We Today? and "Originally”). Similarly, in each mode her speakers are accessed through the tone of their speech, the rhythm of their language, the naturalness of their vocabulary.

Notes

1- For general information on Duffy's life and work, see "Biography and Bibliography." (Anonymous).
2- For general information on Shakespeare's life and work, see "Biography and Works." (Anonymous).

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