

## EMANCIPATORY DISCOURSE IN CAROL ANN DUFFY'S THE WORLD'S WIFE

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** This study examines Carol Ann Duffy's unique discourse of rewriting and telling old stories, fairy tales, and myths that represent female characters as marginalized, inactive, and weak.

**Methodology:** A qualitative research design was adopted to investigate the pervasive shifts of restructuring female convictions, configurations, and identity in selected poems from Duffy's *The World's Wife*. The research data in this paper is drawn from two main sources: literary books and articles.

**Main Findings:** The analysis unravels Duffy's feminist attitude in her poetic collection to reveal how she used her poems as weapons to fight against female marginalization. Simultaneously, the study critiques the traditional patterns of feminist thinking with origins in history and myths that are still prevalent in Western culture.

**Applications:** This paper can be used by literary scholars and students.

**Novelty/Originality:** In this research, female characters were explored in the light of Simon de Beauvoir's concept of the *other* from her book *The Second Sex* and Hélène Cixous's critical notions postulated as *écriture féminine*.

**Keywords:** Carol Ann Duffy, emancipator discourse, The World's Wife, marginalization, patriarchy.

### INTRODUCTION

It is well known that the patrimony of myths, fairy tales, history, and male narcissism have had ambivalent roles in structuring female identity in society. Carol Ann Duffy, as a feminist and the current laureate poet of the UK, has played a great role in contemporary English literature. She is known for her feminist writing intended to give voice to the marginalized women who were silent in history. Duffy's feminist poetic discourse has long received considerable critical attention from many scholars and researchers. However, hardly any study has examined Duffy's *The World's Wife* (1999) in the light of the feminist theories of Simon de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* and Hélène Cixous' *écriture féminine*. In the pages that follow, it will be argued that Duffy's feminist discourse in her collection was highly affected by the previously mentioned theories.

Duffy, through her poetry in the collection, eruditely handles a story, myth, fairytales, and even a movie within which lurk archetypal female characters. Most of the poems have as the title the original character revered in myths, but the poet's persona in her poems talks about wives, mothers, a goddess, and the beloved as the main figurative characters from these myths. *The World's Wife* incarnates a new phase of women's writing. It emerges as a direct challenge to the male mainstream. Even the title is challenging, and true to this is the wife depicted in these poems as the first lady and the husband's representation of the world.

The study will be conducted by utilizing a feminist theoretical framework to study female marginalization, gender, and sex. The study focuses on female identity, gender, and sex with regard to the various social contexts and historical facts portrayed in selected poems from Duffy's *The World's Wife*, which will be analyzed according to Simon de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* and Hélène Cixous' *écriture féminine*. These poems from Duffy's anthology appear to be composed under the influences of the critical insights of these two theorists.

These theories will be utilized to examine female identity and gender equality in the selected poems. In this regard, the study focuses on female characters in the myths and fairy tales of Western culture in comparison with the same female characters but with totally different personalities and identities in *The World's Wife*. Feminist literary criticism will be applied to analyze the independent female characters in *The World's Wife* with a reflection on dependent females in myths and history. The study will also focus on the importance of poetry in urging and mobilizing women to take on real and positive roles in society. In a striking way, Duffy bravely presented diverse types of stereotypical female personality and identity in her collection. Mother, mistress, sister, wife and even lesbian women are introduced in her poems as obtrusive examples of pursuing independent gender identity. Therefore, the study introduces *The World's Wife* as a reflection of the aforementioned theories in order to build a new concept of independent and liberal women. The study asserts that the new feminist paradigm in Duffy's selected poems diverges from the traditional representation of women in history, which has been mostly written by males.

(For this reason, the study tries to answer these questions :

1. How do the ideas of Simon de Beauvoir effect the awareness of the poet and offer her a fresh field of imagination to imagine the characters of the women in *The World's Wife*?
2. How is the concept of *écriture féminine* by Hélène Cixous applied in Duffy's writing of *The World's Wife*?
3. How did the poet's reaction to previous feminist theories inspire her in the creation of the new female generation followed in her writings?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Carol Ann Duffy is famous for her feminist creations of independent, strong, aware, and confident female characters in her poetry, especially in her collection of poems *The World's Wife*. This study focuses on Duffy's representation of this voice as the "Other" in her collection. Actually, the poet's ideology of defending female voices is in line with many feminist theorists such as Simone de Beauvoir and Hélène Cixous. De Beauvoir is considered a leading feminist theorist who proposed a worthy theory on the embodied, sexually different human being. Despite her essays being misinterpreted and misunderstood in the English language, they introduced critics to the possible, tangible, and important comprehension of the body that many recent feminists had been searching for (Moi, 2002). Simone de Beauvoir explained the feelings of women when they realize that they are living in a masculine-dominated culture and have remained under the control of men (De Beauvoir, 2011). Similarly, she contends that:

It is a strange experience for an individual recognizing himself as subject, autonomy, and transcendence, as an absolute, to discover inferiority—as a given essence—in his self: it is a strange experience for One who posits himself for himself as One or be revealed to himself as alterity. That is what happens to the little girl when, learning about the world, she grasps herself as a woman in it. The sphere she belongs to is closed everywhere, limited, dominated by the male universe: as high as she climbs, as far as she dares go, there will always be a ceiling over her head, walls that block her path. (De Beauvoir, 2011, p. 359)

Like de Beauvoir, Millett (1970) maintains that the superiority of males over females in all aspects of life may be attributed to the patriarchal culture of any society. Millett writes, "the fact is evident at once if one recalls that the military, industry, technology, universities, science, political office, and finance - in short, every avenue of power within the society, including the coercive force of the police, is entirely in male hand" (Millett, 1970, p. 25). De Beauvoir also explained her view about marriage and the philosophy of Western culture and how the male-dominated society does not let a woman feel dignified unless she is married. Moreover, de Beauvoir argues that a man is considered to be the "Other" to a woman but remains adored and plays a very essential role in her life. Conversely, a man considers her as the unessential "Other," and she is the opposite of him: "but generally the woman wants to 'hold on to' her husband as well as to refuse his domination. She struggles against him to defend her autonomy, and she fights against the rest of the world to conserve the 'situation' that dooms her to dependence" (De Beauvoir, 2011, p. 571). Moreover, many theorists such as Freud considered women as being less than men even in morality and sense. Chang (2018) noted that the "notion of women's closeness to emotions as Freud argues results in the fact that women are slower than men in developing their sense of morality" (Chang, 2018, p. 102). Thus, there was a need to resist this kind of ideology, and that is what many feminist writers and theorists actually did.

De Beauvoir, in *The Second Sex*, emphasizes the importance of religion and poetry in writing history, asserting that the marginalization of women is attributed to all myths which are written by males. De Beauvoir comments:

Any myth implies a Subject who projects its hope and fears of transcendent heaven. Not positing themselves as Subject, women have not created the virile myth that would reflect their projects; they have neither religion nor poetry that belongs to them alone: they still dream through men's dreams. They worship the gods made by males. And males have shaped the great virile figures for their own exaltation: Hercules, Prometheus, Parsifal; in the destiny of these heroes, a woman has merely a secondary role. (De Beauvoir, 2011, p. 196)

As for myths, Lauter (1984) asserts the fact that "the trouble is that *myths* are not made by individuals. To be sure, individuals do make *mythic* stories, but in order to become myths, these require validation by a group. Myth is a collective agreement about some aspect of the unknown" (Lauter, 1984, p. 6). Concerning *The Second Sex*, Evans (1998) argues that "Beauvoir's analysis of the myth of femininity and the ascription of cultural attributes to woman is a virtuoso piece, a *tour de force*, of analysis of dynamic contradictions and paradoxes" (Evans, 1998, p. 46).

In like manner, Hélène Cixous's (1997) *écriture féminine* asserts the importance of poetry in offering a fresh field of expression. She writes, "but only the poets-not the novelist's allies of representationalism. Because poetry involves gaining strength through the unconscious and because the unconscious, that other limitless country, is the place where the repressed manage to survive: woman, or as Hoffman would say fairies" (Cixous, 1997, p. 350).

Just as de Beauvoir accentuates the liberation of women and that they should gain their gender independence, Cixous (1997) also highlights the same notions in her seminal work "The Laugh of the Medusa," arguing that "it is time to liberate the New Woman from the Old by coming to know her by loving her for getting by, for getting beyond the Old without delay, by going out ahead of what the New Woman will be, as an arrow quits the bow with a movement that

gathers and separate the vibrations musically, in order to be more than herself” (Cixous, 1997, p. 349). Therefore, Duffy dedicates her work to breeding a new generation of women who are fully self-confident, or as she simply puts it, the future of women should not resemble their past when patriarchy rendered them subordinate to men: “The future must no longer be determined by the past” (Cixous, 1997, p. 347).

## METHODOLOGY

(The research includes the following selected poems, which are analyzed to explore various representations of female characters in contemporary society: “Little Red Cap,” “Queen Herod,” “Mrs. Midas,” “Mrs. Tiresias,” “Delilah,” “Medusa,” and “Pygmalion’s Bride.” The study deals with these poems because they cover various female character types in contemporary society. A qualitative research design was adopted to investigate the pervasive shifts of restructuring female convictions, configurations, and identity in the selected poems from Duffy’s *The World’s Wife*. Information for this paper was collected using literary books and journal articles. Concepts derived from Simon de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* and Hélène Cixous’s *écriture féminine* are cited as elements comprising the conceptual framework of this study.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Female marginalization begins at birth when a nurse announces the baby is a girl. There is an imbalance between females and males in all aspects of life. Asl, Hull and Abdullah (2016) asserted that “The prevalence of this gaze in Western metaphysics plays a significant role in the production of sexist-norms and in its privileging the masculine” (Asl et al., 2016, p.124). Women have been treated as objects or possessions, and “throughout history, women and everything associated with the feminine has been relegated to the second-class status” (Asl et al., 2016, p. 6). Accordingly, Duffy’s “Little Red Cap” attends to childhood since it is the beginning of female marginalization in society. The poem’s persona describes her feelings as being cast away from normal social life. This life does not equal men’s life in the same society:

At childhood’s end, the houses petered out  
into playing fields, the factory, allotments  
kept, like mistresses, by kneeling married men,  
the silent railway line, the hermit’s caravan,  
till you came at last to the edge of the woods.

It was there that I first clapped eyes on the wolf. (Duffy, 1999, p. 25)

In May 2009, Duffy, who is a feminist poet, became Britain’s first female Poet Laureate and the first Scot appointed to that position. In recognition of this accomplishment, “Congratulations came from the Labour Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, along with the literati. The position was an endorsement to carry on taking poetry into many walks of life and signaled huge advances in the status of women as poets” (Dowson, 2016, p. 17). Concerning her talent of writing poetry, Wardle (2012) claims that “when Carol Ann Duffy called poetry ‘the music of being human’ [...] she was referring to the way in which poetry can transmit humanity through a peculiarly human medium and genre” (Wardle, 2012, p. 8). The poetic genre reflects Duffy’s feminist concerns in “Little Red Cap” in her meticulous portrayal of the lives of women as victims of male bias. Duffy represents the persona in a stranded setting, which allegorically indicates her marginalization by society. More interestingly, the society has traditional ridiculous attitudes towards women. The hermit in the poem exemplifies such discriminatory tradition against women:

He stood in a clearing, reading his verse out loud  
in his wolfy drawl, a paperback in his hairy paw,  
red wine staining his bearded jaw. What big ears  
he had! What big eyes he had! What teeth!

In the interval, I made quite sure he spotted me,  
sweet sixteen, never been, babe, waif, and bought me a drink (Duffy, 1999, p. 25)

Duffy has a significant role in the feminist movement by using poetic diction as a means of empowering women’s reaction against marginalization. Female marginalization is frequently conspicuous in the bulk of Duffy’s poetry, especially in *The World’s Wife*. She offers many stereotypical ideas about what it is to be a woman. She rejected the dominant male figures for many decades. Duffy wants to give voice to the silent woman by depicting anew side of old stories, myths, and popular characters. In Horner’s (2003) words, “*The World’s Wife* also very clearly presents itself as engaging with a tradition of women’s writing and thought. Not surprisingly, then, running through the volume there is a heavy emphasis on speech, silence, and finding one’s voice as a woman” (Horner, 2003, p. 106). This feminist voice corresponds to the notion of the voice of women’s emancipation represented in “Little Red Cap,” especially when the persona seems to be searching for self-autonomy as a woman:

my first. You might ask why. Here's why. Poetry.  
The wolf, I knew, would lead me deep into the woods,  
away from home, to a dark tangled thorny place  
lit by the eyes of owls. I crawled in his wake,  
my stockings ripped to shreds, scraps of red from my blazer  
snagged on twig and branch, murder clues. I lost both shoes ([Duffy,1999,p. 25](#))

In Duffy's collection of poems *World's Wife*, the poet examines the fairytales, myths, popular characters, and even movies that women have been exposed to since their childhood. The marginalization of the female characters in the society and the transmitting of the myths which marginalizes females frequently from one generation to another puts in the minds of women the idea of being weak and unconfident. [Sankovitch\(1988\)](#) argues that "women's deprivation of *mythos*, of *their* myth, and their cooptation or enslavement into the male mythic structures have reduced them to secondary creatures, deprived of their own voice" ([Sankovitch, 1988, p. 4](#)). Duffy's "Medusa" embodies the very fact of mythical accounts of women's plight in patriarchal societies:

A suspicion, a doubt, a jealous  
grew in my mind,  
which turned the hairs on my head to filthy snakes  
as though my thoughts  
hissed and spat on my scalp. ([Duffy,1999,p. 82](#))

Furthermore, the poetic framework of *The World's Wife* is comprised of chronologically structured episodes and symbols underlined by consecutive poems connected by a number of textual and visual links. These stories are conveyed from one generation to another by fictionists to make a sense of universal tales of different times which are related by the wife of the world ([Holownia, 2012, p.63](#)). As such, she retells these very familiar stories and characters in a way in which the women appear to be strong, wise, active, and even elusive. Duffy attempts to develop a new personality for the new generations of women to follow and to establish strong, self-aware, and stylish women characters contrasting with the traditional figures that have been dominated and controlled by males. These authorial views are implicitly projected in "Medusa" when the poem ends with emphasizing a "girl's" power. This is carried out by the sword as symbol of power:

And here you come  
with a shield for a heart  
and a sword for a tongue  
and your girls, your girls.  
Wasn't I beautiful  
Wasn't I fragrant and young?  
Look at me now. ([Duffy,1999,p. 82](#))

On a more symbolic level, this remains a crucial motivation behind the revisionist politics of *The World's Wife*, which rely on the (re)voicing of female characters who had been marginal in, for example, "Mrs. Sisyphus" or who had yet to be invented as in "Mrs. Faust," "Elvis's Twin Sister," and "Queen Kong" in the stories that form the core of Western cultural mythology. In "Mrs. Sisyphus," Duffy resorts to myth as a way of revealing women's ordeals and the necessity of elevating their social status:

But I lie alone in the dark,  
feeling like Noah's wife did  
when he hammered away at the Ark;  
like Frau Johann Sebastian Bach.  
My voice reduced to a squawk,  
my smile to a twisted smirk;  
while up on the deepening murk of the hill,  
he is giving one hundred percent and more to his work ([Duffy,1999,p. 56](#))

Many scholars focusing on Duffy's poetry were tracing the themes of the selected poems. Others were analyzing or comparing her poems with other poets' poems. Also, some scholars shed light on the masculinity and sexuality of poetry. However, less attention has been paid to the feminine characters and the overall changes that Duffy made to the female characters so that they are manifested in the way that she has accomplished. Moreover, less attention has been paid to the study and examination of these poems in the contexts of Simon de Beauvoir's ideas in *The Second Sex* and Hélène Cixous's *écriture féminine* theory to show that Duffy follows Hélène Cixous' theory and wrote poems for women incorporating the assumptions of Simon de Beauvoir in the depiction of women which she dreams about. This may be seen realized in Duffy's "Mrs. Tiresias," which incorporates de Beauvoir's and Cixous's feminist arguments about women in their societies:

All I know is this:  
he went out for his walk a man  
and came home female.  
Out the back gate with his stick,  
the dog;  
wearing his garden kecks,  
an open-necked shirt,  
and a jacket in Harris tweed I'd patched at the elbows myself.  
Whistling. (Duffy, 1999, p. 71)

Although the poems in *The World's Wife* are written by the same poet in the same collection, each poem introduces a different condition of the woman. The collection introduced a variety of female icons who were oppressed and marginalized in the past but viewed from new perspectives, or in other words, as they appeared from Duffy's perspective of a feminist future. In doing this, she writes about women in accordance with Cixous's (1997) request in her *écriture féminine* theory that "woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies for the same reason, by the same law, with same fatal goal" (Cixous, 1997, p. 347). Many feminist theories and concepts have emerged to criticize this radical way of thinking built on misogynist points of view (Pedlar, 2018, p. 11). In her theoretical book *The Second Sex* (1949), Simon de Beauvoir (2011) explained female marginalization in her concept of the "Other." De Beauvoir asserted that culture had relegated women to a senseless existence and considered as only objects in the eyes of men. De Beauvoir argued that the society and the culture forced the female to be feminine, not her physical structure. She stated, "One is not born a woman, but, rather, becomes one" (De Beauvoir, 2011, p. 330). She asserted that 'woman' carries a set of meanings and a person cannot be born with gender but rather with sex. Also, she noted that sex is totally different from gender, and it is not possible to assign gender based on sex. De Beauvoir also mentioned that culture changes the gender of the female and oppresses her, while the body is only mediatory, and the lack of a phallic organ does not assign her to the position of the "Other" as the masculine culture does. While later a feminist theorist, Judith Butler (1990), in her book *Gender Trouble*, argued that de Beauvoir's notion about woman as "One" is quite strange, asserting that if gender can be changed according to culture that means it is not stable and just acquired performance, and if sex cannot be specified to a gender, that raises the assumption that more than one gender can exist in one body of a particular sex (Peters, 2018, p. 48). Based on Judith Butler's views, Hadaeghand Heidari (2018) mentioned that "one is not simply a body rather one perform one's body which indeed differs in time and place" (Hadaegh & Heidari, 2018, p. 2). In "Mrs. Tiresias," Duffy addresses taboo-related behaviors, like kissing, in societal traditions. She conveys this via the historical perception of her society's apparent bias against women:

Don't kiss me in public,  
he snapped the next day,  
I don't want people getting the wrong idea  
It got worse. (Duffy, 1999, p. 64)

Chowaniec (2015) contends that writing about women is not merely an expression or a way of writing but is a strategy and an important task to bring awareness to readers, especially in women's writings since "writing as a term appears also as a reading strategy and was associated primarily with reading. The need to invent a new methodology and rediscover a different history of literature became an important task within literary scholarship, and it was done by following several distinct paths" (Chowaniec, 2015, p. 20). Accordingly, all the poems in *The World's Wife* take the form of dramatic monologue to show the perspective of marginalized voices and the psychological situation of the characters. Readers are introduced to the characters in a way that lets them feel what the characters feel and sympathize with the characters' conditions through dramatic monologue. This was highlighted by Holownia (2012), who stated that the dramatic monologue used in Duffy's *The World's Wife* has "played a pivotal role in the rise of popularity of the dramatic monologue in contemporary British poetry. In her much anthologized and discussed monologue, the poet gives voices to a variety of

typically marginalized and alienated figures” (Holownia, 2012, p. 62). For example, in “Mrs. Darwin,” Duffy recounts the Darwinian experience through dramatic monologue. In essence, Darwinism is a form of mythical appropriation of women’s poor conditions in society. In other words, the poem ironically identifies women as equal to men because both of them evolved from the same species, which is expressed in the poem as in “something about Chimpanzee over there reminds me of you” (Duffy, 1999, p. 42).

Marginalization, additionally, has been the traditional status of women for many decades. It emerged from a mythological illusion rooted in Western culture. Myths have long overshadowed patriarchal society and coincide with male psychology which has adopted this archetypal idea about females. Males are overvalued in Western society, and at the same time, females have been marginalized, and futility and senselessness have been articulated toward them (Rosen & Twamley, 2018, p. 47). Women who have lived uninvented in male society are supposed to seek remedy and to end their ordeal of being always the Other. They seek to find another horizon for their identity by resisting male tyranny in all its forms. It is well known that a woman’s role politically, economically, and even conventionally has always been under-estimated as coming second, and women have not yet obtained their key basic rights or been treated equally. In some developed countries, women are still paid less than their male counterparts who do the same work and have the same responsibilities. There is no doubt that male hegemony has played a great role in structuring women’s identity, especially in Western society, which still believes in myths and fairy tales. In such environments, males had major opportunities to establish their ideology through narrating fairy tales and myths, which lay great emphasis on the same target. Women had been striving for equality long before the notion of feminism appeared to defend them in various ways against all types of oppression and silence (Antler, 2018, p. 19). In fact, feminism has now become active in the fight for women’s social equality, and the current task is to encourage the development of a sense of female self-consciousness. This fight against marginalization is expressed in Duffy’s poem “Queen Herod,” which hinges on a story of queens. Although queens represent grandeur, the poem depicts them as being left alone. Their alienation is a token of their marginalization:

Ice in the trees  
Three queens at the Palace gates,  
Dressed in furs. (Duffy, 1999, p. 47)

These queens are the archetypal embodiment of women’s marginalization. This is because the queens do not find anybody to console them. They only entertain each other.

Feminism has been the subject of much debate since the 1920s. The women’s movement within Western culture has achieved great progress and development (Dale & Overell, 2018, p. 76), and many respectable feminists have created new ideas about the notion of feminism (Fiorini & Rose, 2010, p. 181). Their agendas have expanded, and education has become one of the most basic objectives for which feminists have been calling. They believe in liberating women through education, which is essential for women to obtain their rights (Chimakonam, 2018, p. 29). In the 1920s women gained high education levels and were equal to men at that point. But great efforts have since been exerted to convince females that their real realm is in their husbands’ homes. Furthermore, the curriculums in schools and colleges have underestimated women and attempted to persuade them to find stability through marriage and motherhood (Eschle, 2018, p. 92). Notwithstanding this, feminist writers have written about this fact, among whom was notably Betty Friedan, the writer of *the Feminine Mystique* (Friedan, 1963). In her book, she emphasized the combining of career and marriage responsibilities. There were myriads of ramifications for the patriarchal society which affirmed identity-grounded distinctions and supported male supremacy (Sen, 2018, p. 65). In “Mrs. Midas,” Duffy conveys feminist marginalization in the words of a persona that is not allowed to do anything. The persona is even deprived of speech:

What gets me now is not the idiocy or greed  
But lack of thought for me. (Duffy, 1999, p. 50)

In “The Laugh of the Medusa” (1975), Cixous (1997) noted the importance of women’s writing for women’s sake, creating the *écriture féminine*, or body writing, the theory which explains the relationship between body and gender. She criticized phallogocentric discourse which represented females as dependent and complementary to males. Cixous created a new perception about the female structure by stressing that, a female is not merely an object of man’s desire, but rather she is a sexual subject separate from men’s duplicity about their sexual desire for the otherness or object. The *écriture féminine* discourse indicates liberating the female body from male desire and asserts that the female body comprises multiple organs, but she is prohibited from confessing that because of the policy of the patriarchal society. Cixous was highly affected by the theories of Lucan and Freud in explaining her *écriture féminine*. In his essay “Medusa’s Head,” Freud explained that the idea of gender differences is connected with an Oedipal complex, asserting that the child prefers to be like his father and rejects his mother’s realm after recognizing her lack of a phallic organ. Lucan, however, connects the relation with to the linguistic theory of symbolic order when explaining that a male child imitates his father’s words rather than the mother’s language because of physical similarity, while the mother represents the womb world, which is strange to him, and that a girl always likes to acquire her mother’s language. Cixous, who was affected by the aforementioned theorists, goes further by connecting her theory of female writing or body writing with gender equality, explaining this with connotative meaning from the myth of Medusa, who was a very beautiful woman but was cursed by the goddess

Minerva, who turned her into a woman with snakes on her head and a lethal gaze that would change people into stone, and she was later killed when Perseus beheaded her. Cixous relates this myth to male-centric thinking and alludes to the killing of Medusa by beheading as a way of stripping a woman of her ability of expression and confining a woman with the illusion of being weak and subordinate. This is because women appear subaltern to men (Mfum-Mensah, 2018, p. 125). In “Mrs. Quasimodo,” Duffy exposes the defects of the patriarchal society that marginalizes women: “I’d loved them fervently since childhood” (Duffy, 1999, p. 96). In “Pygmalion’s Bride,” she also expresses the same idea: “Cold, I was, like snow, like ivory” (Duffy, 1999, p. 118).

These poems symbolically describe the states of women who have suffered from gender discrimination since childhood. Cixous emphasized that masculine constructs cannot explain the female experience; therefore, female writers should write for and to females to bridge the gap in thoughts which males could not attain. The concept of women’s writing, or *écriture féminine*, is widely used in many cultures and countries. Chowaniec (2015) has stated the importance of women’s writing, or *écriture féminine*, in Polish literature, stating, “The reading of literature written by women-as a certain reading strategy reveals a new reality, new sensitivity and new horizons that are worth studying” (Chowaniec, 2015, p. 28). In this sense, women are subject to persecution in male-centered societies (De, 2018, p. 36). They are exploited for sexual desires in most cases. In “Delilah,” Duffy portrays such exploitation in the following lines:

Teach me, he said—  
we were lying in bed—  
how to care.  
I nibbled the purse of his ear.  
What do you mean?  
Tell me more.  
He sat up and reached for his beer. (Duffy, 1999, p. 124)

## CONCLUSION

(In conclusion, Carol Ann Duffy’s poetic discourse in the poems she composed for *the World’s Wife* has emancipated female characters from all kinds of sexual discrimination and marginalization found in the old myths and fairy tales which have been passed down from one generation to another. She provided the present generation of young people with a new image of the female characters represented in these stories by composing this collection. The poet has restructured the female figures in her poems and showed them as strong, independent, and no longer marginalized. Through the analysis of the poems, it can be clearly stated that Duffy’s discourse in this collection was profoundly inspired by previous feminist theories in the course of writing her poetry collection. Clearly, the poet did that to validate the ensuing radical developments in feminist writing’s emergence in postmodern poetry.

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