

The world's wife essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Duffy very cleverly in “ The World’s Wife” gets famous myths and tales from the past and turns them around making them have a totally different meaning to their originals. Duffy refers to the women in “ The World’s Wife” as victims or outcasts. Duffy modernises the poems on a contemporary basis. In this way Duffy shows her own views and as how she sees the women in today’s society, not as independent as they should be. Duffy’s poems present women suffering for the consequences for the men in their lives. Some of Duffy’s women are victims but aren’t weak.

Out of this collection the poems I will be studying and carefully looking at are Mrs. Quasimodo and Little Red Cap. The World and his Wife is a cliché that makes the World out to be a man, this is very sexist as the World is big and powerful and the wife is just the extra bit just added on in the end. Not every couple nowadays marry, some just cohabit and not all couples are of the same sex. “ The World and it’s partner wouldn’t create much arguments compared to this cliché.

Gays and Lesbians would find this cliché offensive. Quasimodo was originally a person from the tale “ The Hunchback of Notre Dame”. Duffy is playing around with the characters and has created Quasimodo a wife evidently called Mrs. Quasimodo. There are a lot of mixed emotions in Mrs. Quasimodo.

It is a very powerful, strong and violent poem. Mrs. Quasimodo characterises herself as an ugly and deformed person, the evidence to show this is “ I frightened cats”. She thinks the City is a horrible place that’s why it suits her. She describes it as unpleasant, just like her – resemblance is shown here.

She is lonely and isolated evidence to this is when she says " alone up seven flights... single silver fish". This poem is a first person narrative.

Mrs. Quasimodo is an unreliable narrator because this poem only shows her view. Is she really how she says she is? Or is this a female trait of exaggeration, when other people don't see the women as how they tend to usually describe themselves. This is for the reader to decide. Mrs.

Quasimodo describes herself as a mirror image of Quasimodo, this is too cliché. When Duffy talks about Mrs. Quasimodo she is interested in modern women's lives and the aspects of them fighting back if they are upset about something and how they are rejected from society by their gender roles.

Duffy is trying to show that women always bare up despite all the difficulties in their lives.

There is a lot of use of Taboo Language in this poem, a few examples are " you pig... cow..

. fucking buffalo...

cripple... mongol.

.. ape... bloody.

.. pissed" these words show that this poem is very abrupt and violent. It is politically incorrect to call yourself an abortion. The aggressiveness of this poem is what makes it so powerful. Mrs.

Quasimodo has a very low self-esteem, she abuses herself both verbally and physically. " Driven to an ecstasy of loathing of yourself" the word ecstasy

<https://assignbuster.com/the-worlds-wife-essay/>

shows the extremity of the poem. Ecstasy is a drug that makes you feel happy, when Mrs. Quasimodo says this sentence I think she is referring to be apparently enjoying the self-loathing that shows she is twisted, unbalanced and slightly unhinged.

Mrs. Quasimodo overreacts because when he just looks at Esmerelda she talks about betrayal. Duffy presents the relationship of Mr and Mrs Quasimodo by the choices of words she uses and the images she uses. An example of this is that when Mr and Mrs Quasimodo are having sex instead of using pleasant images like making love, Duffy deliberately uses nasty images of sex “ he fucked me”. She describes her husband in a positive way for her that sounds horrible and negative to us.

For her it's romantic. Duffy uses stereotypes in this poem by referring to Esmerelda as the perfect “ pin-up” woman by this I think she means the kind of girl that men would fantasise about. The reader can sympathise with Mrs. Quasimodo of being a victim to quite an extent. The reasons why the reader could think of Mrs.

Quasimodo, as a victim is that she feels unwanted, unloved, used, unhappy and hurt. She's insecure about her physical appearance. She's isolated from Community and then Quasimodo, as he loves Esmerelda. He's only with Mrs. Quasimodo because he can be with her and not with Esmerelda who he secretly loves.

He hates Mrs. Quasimodo who knows about his love for Esmerelda. Mrs. Quasimodo's love justifies her actions of destroying the bells, which used to mean a lot to her this shows that in anger and frustration she is willing to

destroy and damage what she admires since she was little which is ironic but on the other hand she's unreasonable with the extent of her jealousy and rage, her personality is extreme so she could be to blame.

She also uses language that is not very lady like. The poem intends for the reader to feel sorry for Mrs. Quasimodo because Quasimodo looks at her with discontent. Duffy changes this poem by getting rid of the naive and helpless little girl who is to always be the damsel in distress, a typical stereotype of girls.

This poem differs to the original story, as Little Red Cap is not innocent. She's evil and deviant. She's smart, she uses her attractiveness to seduce the wolf (who is an elder man). She's revengeful about sex and violence. She gets herself involved into something she doesn't want.

She uses the wolf for freedom and when she gets fed up she moves on.

There is a lot of colloquial language in this poem such as " in the interval I made sure he spotted me, sweet sixteen...

babe, waif... I stitched him up.

.. I first..

. I took... I crept.

.. I lost... I slid.

.. I knew...

I crawled... I clung". Duffy uses this style so that the reader knows it's a recent poem.

Compared to the original this has a different genre, no moral and just hidden messages to modernise it. It's quite contemporary. Little Red Cap volunteers herself into the woods, she moves away from civilisation. The man representing the wolf is a poet a reason for this could be that Duffy thinks of other poets as her rivals especially men.

Duffy uses the words " paperback" which suggests cheap, " hairy... bearded" which suggest old and " red wine staining" to show that he's sloppy. Duffy plays with her stereotypes by making Little Red Cap independent.

" Deep into the woods" shows darkness and isolation, " away from home" shows abduction and " stockings ripped to shreds" indicates a symbol to rape - violent removal of her clothes. Wolf's lair, better beware" reminds me of fairytales. This sentence has an internal rhyme scheme. Little Red Cap eventually learns that women can be just as strong as men. She wasn't scared about killing the wolf, she certainly didn't need a woodcutter.

The ending of the poem shows an optimistic assertion of female independence, as Little Red Cap is capable of the best possible way of being aggressive and forceful. Although some people might think that it's a sad ending and that Little Red Cap was messed in the head. Duffy portrays Little Red Cap to be a victim and all the evidence which suggests that is that she is trapped in a forest away from society, she's a victim of gender stereotyping and she has a boring life so she does extreme things to find herself however she's a rebellion which shows that she isn't a victim as she has just

murdered someone. Little Red Cap and Mrs. Quasimodo are similar because both to some extent are victims and both to some extent are not. I don't agree with Duffy though, she's a feminist and usually all her poems are against men.

Mrs. Quasimodo is biased and just wants the readers sympathy. She is a victim but in a way she's brought this on herself. She has destroyed the glory of Notre Dame.

The bells were very important symbols of the city and she destroyed them because of jealousy and a way to get back. Quasimodo hadn't had an affair he had only looked at another woman. Mrs. Quasimodo is deviant. I don't think that Little Red Cap is much of a victim either because she has killed someone.

Duffy has succeeded in proving that women can be independent in Little Red Cap though and in Mrs. Quasimodo she has proved that women can get revenge.