

# Pygmalions bride essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

“ Although ‘ Pygmalion’s Bride’ is humorous, it has an underlying dark message, like other poems in the collection.” With close analysis of ‘ Pygmalion’s Bride’ explore how far you agree with this statement. Make references to other poems that we have studied in your answer.

Undoubtedly ‘ Pygmalion’s Bride’ is a humorous poem, but the underlying dark message is clear throughout like many of Duffy’s poems. The confusion of the two is portrayed through the reader knowing the story of Pygmalion from mythology. The reader is led to believe that Pygmalion is either creating his statue. Or on a darker scale, he is committing an unlawful act against a woman. With those two different meanings of the poem being the humour to the reader.

The poem is told by ‘ Pygmalion’s Bride’ who is either perceived as the statue or the woman depending on the reader’s interpretation. She starts the poem by telling us how ‘ Cold, she was, like snow’ and how she ‘ thought he would not touch her but he did’ which gives the reader two meanings to the quote, either meaning he could be sculpting her cold clay figure or she could have been cold with fear about Pygmalion touching her and giving him a sinister image to the reader, straight away providing the reader with a dark concept of the poem.

In the next stanza we are informed of how Pygmalion ‘ kissed her stone-cool lips’ again she reiterates the cold vibe to the reader giving the poem that negative dark feel to it. We then learn how she ‘ lay still as though she had died’ and that ‘ he stayed’ which gives off the two meanings once again. As a statue she would have had no physical power or life of which to move with

and he would have been observing his work. Whilst the darker meaning is clearly apparent as well. Giving the reader an imposing, creepy impression of Pygmalion. She then tells the reader of how he ‘thumbed her marble eyes’ automatically giving off a dark, dirty vibe. But the humour being that Pygmalion could simply be sculpting her eyes.

In the next stanza we are told that ‘He spoke blunt endearments, what he’d do and how’ which could imply that he was speaking of what he had to do next in terms of sculpting her. But it also gives off the dark image because we know that ‘his words were terrible’ It could also be an attack on men and suggest that men only want sex from women, which is shown in ‘Mrs, Rip Van Winkle’ when Rip Van Winkle ‘was sitting up in bed rattling Viagra’. Shjne tells us that her ‘ears were sculpture stone-death shells’ which contradicts her being a human being and could even remind the reader that she is a sculpture being created by Pygmalion. She then says how she ‘heard the sea’, ‘drowned him out’ and ‘heard him shout’ which could be seen as a dark message. Suggesting that he got angry with her ignoring him and he could be shouting at her, when really it can’t be directed at her as a person because she is a statue and wouldn’t respond him.

At the start of stanza four ‘He brought her presents, polished pebbles, little bells’ which again contradicts the two meanings, the gifts could be accessorize to add onto the sculpture or it could relate to the dark meaning. Showing how he is trying to buy her conscience, make her feel guilty so she will almost give in to his dark desires. She then tells us how she ‘didn’t blink’ and ‘played dumb’ which could suggest that she unbeknownst to him has the control. Maybe suggesting that these women in Duffy’s poems have

control, for instance in 'Mrs Darwin' when Mrs Darwin says to Darwin how 'Something about that Chimpanzee over there reminds me of you' she is mocking him, showing her comfort in doing so it suggests that she has control. When we are told about him buying her 'pearls and rings' and calling them 'girly things' it again emphasizes the dark point of him trying to buy her, as well as showing the idea that they are accessories to add on to the sculpture. We find out that 'He ran his clammy hands along her limbs' which shows an obvious dark meaning. But coincidentally it could also be obviously implying that he is simply sculpting her body. 'She didn't shrink, played statue, shtum' which could either show that she is frozen with fear or simply she is the statue of which he has created. It could also reiterate this control she has or women have over men in Duffy's poems.

In the next stanza we find out that 'he let his fingers sink into her flesh' and how 'he squeezed' and 'pressed' which relays a dark message to the reader that he is aggressively making sexual contact with her. But it also can relate to him sculpting her. The fact that she 'would not bruise' and 'he looked for marks' makes the reader feel uncomfortable towards these seemingly sinister actions. But in fact he could be inspecting his masterpiece for blemishes. Another conflict between the two main ideas of this poem. We are informed that 'his nails were claws' which suggests he has hurt her, casting a dark notion into the reader's head. Yet she showed no scratch' or 'scar' which argues how she is a statue and not a person.

In the last stanza she takes complete control by 'changing tack' doing something the man doesn't expect, which is shown in 'Mrs Aesop' when she gives Mr Aesop her own fable about how the 'little cock that wouldn't crow'.

In Pygmalion's Bride the last stanza takes the poem away from the dark message and back towards the comical genre. The reader feels like they have read two different poems. Which is what Duffy intended. I agree that this makes the poem humorous as it relates to the original story whilst also conveying a dark underlying message.