

# Valentine and i wouldn't thank you for a valentine

Literature



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Although Carol Ann Duffy and Liz Lockhead are both writing on their views and experiences to do with Valentine's Day and love in general, the tone varies greatly between the two. Liz Lockhead's "I Wouldn't Thank You for a Valentine" is satirising the idea of Valentine's Day, but still believes in love and her feeling about it are sincere. In contrast Carol Ann Duffy's "Valentine" is really just using Valentine's Day as a way of mocking the entire idea of love. Her poem comes across as being more aggressive, and uses a conceit, in the form of an onion, to mock the metaphysicals.

In Carol Ann Duffy's "Valentine", a poem about Duffy and her views on Valentine's Day and love in general, the tone is really quite aggressive. One of the ways she expresses this is through the way that the poem is structured and by some of the language she uses. For example she starts off the poem by saying "Not a red rose or satin heart" in a one line stanza, which paints a very blunt, harsh, negative picture. This suggestion is further enhanced throughout the poem by the way she continues to use one line stanzas and by continuing to use negative statements such as "Not a cute card".

All of these statements that she uses to describe love are very frank assertions and some of them like "Take it" and "Here", make it seem that she is almost forcing her opinion upon the reader. "I give you an onion." Duffy uses this line twice during the poem, at the beginning of the first and second sections of the poem. I find this statement to be very blunt and unusual at the same time. This combination makes the phrase very easy to remember and sticks in the reader's memory.

Duffy thinks this would be a suitable gift to give to someone on Valentine's Day because in her opinion love is a lot like an onion, meaning this negatively. She further conveys this point by saying that " It will blind you with tears", because your eyes water around onions and that love always ends badly and ends up reducing you to tears. As well as " Its fierce kiss will stay on your lips. " The word " fierce" in this phrase puts across a sense of brutality and harshness that would not normally be related with love.

Throughout the poem Duffy uses lots of very emotive words that would not normally be used in a love poem such as " grief", " possessive", " lethal" and " cling". The words " grief" and " possessive" tell the reader that love is full of pain and misery and almost as if it owns you and has a grip over you. The word " lethal" in the poem is used on one line to itself in the final stanza, which advocates that love is deadly and that it is used on one line makes it seem all the more potent. Finally, the word " cling" is used twice in the final stanza to really communicate to the reader how love is inescapable.

Duffy's use of the words " as we are" and " for as long as we are" suggest that she is describing some of the despondent feelings she has experienced with her partners in the past, which give the reader some insight into Duffy's background, and what her experiences with love must have been like. In contrast, the tone in Liz Lockhead's I Wouldn't Thank You for a Valentine, while still against the idea of Valentine's Day, is a lot more light hearted and she tries to put across elements of humour throughout her poem.

She shows this to the reader by saying things like " Who loves ya, Poo? I'll tell you, I do, Fozzy Bear, that's who! " Using comical language like this

makes her appear a lot more light hearted than Duffy, who doesn't include any humour in her poem. Although both poets are Scottish it is only Lockhead's accent that is obvious. She uses Scottish dialect such as "swither" and "canny be bothered" throughout her poem, which suggest to the reader that she isn't taking it very seriously, but is proud of her heritage and is willing to show it.

The first line in Lockhead's poem is "I wouldn't thank you for a valentine", which is very similar to Duffy's poem, "I give you an onion", in that it starts off with a blunt, negative statement. However Lockhead's is an ordinary sentence that wouldn't be considered unusual, unlike Duffy's, which would be considered to be very unusual indeed, and thus makes Duffy's more memorable.

Whereas Duffy is against the whole idea of love, Lockhead supports the idea of love but is against the commercialism of Valentine's Day and the cliché associated with it. She sums this up in one sentence, "The whole Valentine's Day Thing is trivial and commercial", and Lockhead goes on to say that it is "A cue for unleashing clichés and candyheart motifs to which I personally am not partial". The way that Lockhead uses capital letters for the words "Day" and "Thing" as well as for Valentine suggests that that it has become an event because of the commercialism associated with it and for no worthy reason.

Although the writers have written two different styles of poems one thing that is clear to the reader is that they are both parodying the male use of love poetry, Duffy more so than Lockhead, and are almost making fun of the

famous group of poets, the Metaphysicals, Duffy in particular does this by using her own conceit and in doing so describes a wedding ring as "platinum" because it would be worth more than gold or silver, although not traditional. Many of the things that men may do to try and woo a woman are included, but in the negative. "Not a red rose or satin heart" and "not a cute card or kissogram" are prime examples of this.

Lockhead never directly satirises them but still does it, although quite subtly. She describes gifts that would be given but exaggerates them greatly. "Pints of Chanel Five" would cost hundreds of pounds but she would still refuse it, and she says that if you gave her "a pair of Janet Reger's", which is expensive underwear; she would think "that they were politically suspect" and "would rather something thermal." She says this because she would never dress up for any man because it would go against her feminist beliefs.

The fact that she names real companies also shows she is not afraid of coming across as being quite cheeky. The main difference between the poems is the form and the way that each poem is structured. Lockhead has written in relatively long stanzas that have a deliberate rhythm and there is a subtle rhyme scheme included in the poem as well. In fact Lockhead describes her poem as a rap, which is ironic because a rap would usually be associated with gangsters and street gangs, rather than the traditional type of love music, like Ballad or lyric poetry.

Alliteration features quite regularly throughout the poem. "Sticky sickly saccharine" and "very vulgar verses" are just two of the many examples. This poetic feature suits the style of the poem and makes it easier and more

enjoyable to read. In addition the words "vulgar" and "sickly" express feelings of disgust and crudeness towards some of the gifts that are given on Valentine's Day. As this alliteration is used near the beginning of the poem it portrays a negative image but it is put across in a different way to Duffy's poem.

Duffy, on the other hand, has chosen to write her poem in very short, irregular stanzas, some of which may only be a word or two long and there is no obvious rhyme scheme. This prevents the poem from flowing like Lockhead's, but is useful because the separate points are clear and it is easy to see which points are intended to be emphasised. Unlike Lockhead's poem, "Valentine" uses plenty of metaphors. For instance "it will make your reflection a wobbling photo of grief", proposes that you would be depressed and crying continually, and because she uses the word "photo" suggests that the effects of this would be permanent.

To paint a very vivid image of her feelings, she uses similes such as "It will blind you with tears like a lover" and "It promises light like the careful undressing of love." These tell you that love was meant to be good, but always ends up breaking your heart in the end. The way Duffy says "undressing of love" also suggests possible dishonesty. Together these poetic devices portray a depressing image that is only enhanced as the poem continues. It is clear to see that both poems have been strongly influenced by the writer's feminist beliefs and both have similar points of view on Valentine's Day.

However, I prefer " I Wouldn't Thank You for a Valentine" by Liz Lockhead because of the original way in which the poem is structured and the humorous tone and general light heartedness depicted throughout her poem, which make for an easier and more enjoyable read, but Duffy's more serious approach and very vivid imagery portrayed in " Valentine", while still interesting, does not quite flow as well and therefore is not quite as enthralling a read.