

My box and valentine

Literature



'My Box' and 'Valentine' are both written by two female poets, Gillian Clarke and Carol Ann Duffy, respectively. They are both contemporary poems about love. Clarke has an idealistic perception of love while Duffy writes more metaphorically about an onion. She uses single isolated lines and words; there is no regular rhythm or rhyme scheme. 'My Box' does have a regular 8, 6, 8, 6 rhythm and a rhyme scheme. Duffy portrays her strong feelings against the commercialism of Valentines Day in her poem; Clarke mentions nothing about it.

Both of these poems contain effective imagery. Duffy uses an onion as an extended metaphor; she writes 'It is a moon wrapped in brown paper'. As the moon is associated with mystery it may be referring to a mysterious relationship or a mysterious lover. Another example of effective imagery in this poem is 'It will make your reflection a wobbling photo of grief' which could mean, that because onions make your eyes water every thing will be distorted. Metaphorically this means that the future of a relationship is never clear, you never know what is just around the corner.

All of these images near the beginning of the poem are positive but they get more and more negative throughout the poem until 'Its scent will cling to your fingers, cling to your knife'. The writing becomes commanding and more authoritative. The last three lines are painful images 'Lethal. Its scent will cling to you fingers, cling to your knife'. It is interesting how the last word in the poem is knife, which in this context would be associated with murder and the relationship ending abruptly. Duffy may be issuing a warning to the reader. The images in 'My Box' are also very effective.

The very first line 'My Box is made of golden oak' signifies that the box is strong and sturdy and is very special to the person who has received it. Clarke says in her poem that 'He made it out of winter nights' which makes us assume that it was made secretly in a cold shed in the garden for a birthday or surprise anniversary present of some kind. Another line that suggests that it is an anniversary present is the fact that it says 'In my box are twelve black books where I have written down' these could be diaries, one per month and the fact that there is twelve suggests it is a first anniversary present.

Clarke uses many verbs in the second stanza like 'Written down' 'Harvested apples and words and days' 'Planted a garden' 'Built a wall' and 'drilled a well'. The 'Built a wall' part of this stanza could imply that an ideal relationship like a wall needs to have strong foundations to survive. The 'Drilled a well' part could mean that the lover is looking for deeper meaning in their love and their relationship. The 'Harvested apples and words and days' part of stanza two could be referring to memories that she wants to harvest and keep of the relationship; this is also positive.

'My Box' is positive all of the way through unlike 'Valentine', which is positive at the beginning and negative at the end. The structure of both poems is very different. 'My Box' has a regular amount of lines and syllables per line and stanza but 'Valentine' has isolated lines and single words. The single words are commanding and harsh ones. These forceful words might indicate that all relationships do not go to plan and there are arguments and different opinions that cause arguments. However, the structure and mood of 'My Box' is a lot more positive and philosophical.

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It is a regular poem; it has regular rhymes, syllables, a regular number of lines and a regular tetrameter rhythm. Throughout the poem you feel a sense of time passing and generations 'I leave it there for you to read, or them, when we are dead' this tells us that the box will be there containing the diaries and memories for generations to come. They may represent the legacy of a lifetime. Both of these poems contain sound effects like consonance. Consonance is included in 'Valentine' 'Its fierce kiss will stay on your lips' this repeats the -s- sound.

There is also consonance in 'My Box' 'Sanded oiled and planed' this repeats the -ed- sound in the verbs and they are all words that signify the person making the box. Overall I prefer 'Valentine' because it is irregular and it uses many effective images. I like the way some words are isolated because it makes them outstanding and more important, it makes you try to think what they mean. 'My Box' though is also a good poem. There is many effective images and lots of effective verbs used in the right place to symbolise things. The regular rhythm and rhyme scheme are also effective.