

## **MEN ACT AND WOMEN APPEAR: OBJECTIFICATION GAZE IN SELECT POEMS OF CAROL ANN DUFFY**

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### **Abstract**

The Aim of this paper is to figure out the various causes of Women being treated as Object in reduction to Body and their Appearance. Objectification theory suggests that women frequently experience objectification gaze and have many negative effects. There are very few research articles written in the literature that question the above objectification reduction to body and Objectification on reduction to appearance by the male spectators. “When sexually objectified, women tend to be reduced to their sexualized body parts destined to satisfy others’ needs and desires” (Mulvey 12). The objectification of women is one among the central themes of Duffy’s work, which has many interrelated forms and manifestations. Duffy wields the dramatic monologue to add tone to several female characters and distance herself as a writer simply so those characters can specific themselves freely. Her manipulation of the dramatic monologue allows her to distance herself from any of the characters speaking within the poetic texts, and this aesthetic distance that enables her to play a staging role that permit her to be an invisible director.

**Keywords:** Objectification, Sexually, Anxiety,

### **Introduction**

#### **Objectification Theory and Sexual Objectification:**

To objectify is to form into and tidbit something that's not an object as an object, which might be used, strained, tamed, and known through its substantial settings. Theorist Martha Nussbaum came up with seven qualities that represent commonalities and various treatments toward objects and things that when applied to an individual constitutes objectification. And Rae Langton an Australian Professor added three more qualities into the list and this paper deals with two aspects and they are Objectification on reduction to body and Objectification reduction to appearance. Importantly, each of those qualities are inherited within the sexual objectification of women and girls. Objectification theory, originally proposed by Barbara Fredrickson and Tomi-Ann Roberts, is actually an amalgam and systematic formalization of the various disparate lines of awareness on the sexual objectification of girls. Objectification Theory begins from the social habit of sexually portraying women as an object. And this practise is most common among the westerners and treat women as an exhibitor by revealing their body parts. Women are treated as commodities and men target them to satisfy their sexual urge on daily basis.

Sexual Objectification cites the decentralizing of women into an assortment of sexual parts and are sexual capacities basically by removing her of an extraordinary character and reviling her body

to the patriarchal society which men love to gaze. And it is also very important to note that these erotic scenes take place without the presence of women.

### **Reduction to Body and Appearance:**

Women are being marginalized, Caged and always treated as an inanimate thing. This treatment towards women must be altered; because this at times leads to gender bias. “If [we] look neutrally on the reality of gender as constituted, writes MacKinnon, the harm that has been done will not be discernible as harm” (Kinnon 51). It just becomes the way things are. “Once we have depicted women as meek and obedient 'by nature,' efforts to modify this role appear uninspired, even futile...” (Kinnon 51).

Haslanger continues. These considerations show that what looked to be a neutral or ‘objective’ ideal—namely, the technique of using observed regularities to govern practical decision-making—is actually one of them. Which will, under conditions of gender hierarchy reinforce the social arrangements on which such hierarchy depends” (Haslanger12). Duffy throws a vehement satire on men who condemn women. She criticizes male world which tries to put women in a box and try to rob their individual identity. She has written various poems in her collections to represent women and she also wants other women to come out and fight for themselves. Some of her poems in which she talks about men treating women as an object in reduction to body and appearance are *Pygmalion Bride*, *The Diet*, *Beauty*, *Standing Female Nude*.

In Duffy’s *Pygmalion’s Bride* she talks about a Greek Sculptor whose was more interested in the Statue that he curved; Galatea. And falls in love with it and he wants her to marry him, have sex and bore kids. But she was not ready for anything with him and she constantly start to hate him. Though he brought all the goodies and named them as girly things that are worth. She doesn’t like to have a gaze on him and the goods he brought. But Pygmalion forces her and treats her like an object of sex and wanted to do everything as he wishes and she is not given space to expose her wish or opinion to him. Because men are always praised and women are tuned in such way that they must accept it and not oppose it.

“Cold, I was, like snow, like Ivory.

But he did.

got hot, got wild,” (Duffy 8).

“The presence of a man always implies that he is more powerful in whatever he is involved in. On the one hand, it can be moral, physical, temperamental, economic, social, and sexual; on the other hand. a woman is always treated as inferior to man (Beauvoir 12)”. Here in this poem; a woman is being reduced to body and appearance and Duffy’s men being a superior creature on Earth can take advantage on an inferior creature without her permission and do whatever he wants. The Poem *Diet* talks about society’s stress on woman by asking her to fit into certain shape and size that Duffy’s men adore and fall in love with. And hence this aspect of looking perfect is affixed into the minds of Duffy’s woman and she starts an intense diet where she cuts down everything and decided to fast for the entire day at first the diet seems to be ‘like a dream’ and then after her continuous fasting she became ‘thimble sized woman’ by adding a metaphor. Duffy feels very bad on her girl who has become very weak, thin and could barely stand. ‘She was eight stone;

by the end of the month, she was skin and bone'. Duffy feels that her woman in the poem considers living as a curse on earth. And now her life has become a battle between to eat or fast or stay fit in shape as per the societal norms. And Duffy's woman has to fit into this mirage that she is full of health, sexy and beauty; So that she will be liked by the male heroes. "Women are often referred to as social chameleons"(Beauvoir 11). they have to adapt everything around them and change time and again and live a life with full of agony. So here there is partiality between the genders and women are always forced to stay fit. "You are what you have"(Duffy 55). and this phrase explains about a woman's sexual appeal or the way they behave towards her opposite gender and her character is removed and kept aside. She had no control on herself and gradually started to lose her identity. Simon de Beauvoir also explains the pain of women when being treated as inferior and are made to live under masculine hierarchy. She quotes that

"It is a strange experience for an individual recognizing himself as a 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 One or be revealed to himself as One or to be revealed to himself as alterity. This 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 to go, there will always be a ceiling over her head, walls that block her path" (Beauvoir 359).

*Beauty* is a poem by Duffy which discusses about list of women: Helen of Troy, Cleopatra, Marilyn Monroe, and Princess Dianna who appear as an expression of being the same, they have only one purpose for being and that is to please men in all the way they can. Duffy discusses about the agony of substantial and cerebral damage that happens because of the beauty that they possess. Duffy brings out various ways of how these women are used by the males in the society and at last exploit them. She also added that this outer beauty has been a tool which helped women to be attractive and men automatically started to have an eye on them and that also brought the fall within. "Woman are victims of some mysterious fate: our ovaries do not condemn us to a life time of submission"(Beauvoir 11). Though all the women discussed in this poem are very influential they couldn't live a happy life because of the society that still remains as a male privileged one. Poet has used this poetry as a key to explain how these women were torched until they lost everything that they had Cleopatra, Marilyn Monroe and Princess Diana all died horribly. The exploitation of women has been rife throughout history, not even stopping as we enter the 21st century. And it's also that the poet has more concern with the term beauty which denotes the female body. However, this beauty is often a negative thing, leading to exploitation. Duffy argues that female bodies are used as a point of manipulation, with society sexualizing these bodies for their own benefit. Duffy depicts the beauty of Helen of Troy by praising her throughout in her poetry. She writes.

"She was born from an egg,  
A daughter of the gods,  
Divinely fair, a pearl, drop – dead  
Gorgeous, beautiful, a peach

She won the heart

Of everyone she saw.

Her skin a celebrity” (Duffy 8).

And on the other hand, she talks about the other women who might see this as a form of power gain, it seems that Duffy was more focused on how this attention of men towards Helen who was more powerful and knowledgeable chose beauty over her courage and this led to the eventual downfall of these women. Duffy figures out Helen that she has possessed the divine beauty that no women could have and she denotes her beauty as, ‘daughter of the gods’ and ‘divinely fair’. And she also quotes this reference to beauty in her poem ‘pearl’, Duffy uses this poem to highlight the importance beauty in the patriarchal society. Duffy with the help of asyndeton connects multiple adjectives to praise how beautiful Helen was at once. The “starlike sorrows of immortal eyes who looked there, loved ones” (Duffy 8). Duffy compares Helen to a godly position and talks about the great toil that this standards of remaining beauty in the patriarchal society had always placed on her.

Duffy completes the first stanza with the word ‘loved’, which is explained through a caesura and is also given up a pause. This examines a clean fortune of what's going to come at the earliest and every girl in the poem is severely affected by male love and wanted an attention from the male spectator. Duffy also writes about the other female figure Cleopatra. She begins this stanza by the seclude in the durability of Cleopatra’s era, “She never aged” (Duffy 9). And again, Duffy begins with the pronoun ‘she’ and ‘aged’ directly denotes women’s beauty vanish with time. Duffy may reciprocate against this idea, and Cleopatra remained the same forever. The poet also picturizes Cleopatra as a dumb creature and all the character and status were assigned to her by the male around her. As Freidan quotes “women were a strange, inferior, less-than-human species . . . who existed to serve man (Freud 101)”. The poet explains that Cleopatra chose ‘Beauty’ as a tool for destructing and to overrule men in politics.

“The camera loved her, close-up, back lit,

Her sleepy, startled gaze” (Duffy 12).

Duffy has a lot of nostalgia about the sexualizing of Marilyn, she depicts that from the very first line. And she also adds to the sense of assault. The camera follows her, capturing her from every possible angle. Even when she was ‘sleeping’ her ‘frightened face’ (Duffy 12). was instantly captured. Duffy presents the chaos of this setting; the constant use of caesura disrupts the flow of the poem. And this figures the chaos in Monroe’s life, constantly being watched by cameras because of her beauty. The repetition of the movie reinforces this idea, a camera constantly directed at the beautiful woman. The fact that the whole of boogie America proves just how harassed Monroe was, with everyone knowing the intimate details of her life as she lived it. Aside from the innate eroticism of Duffy’s language here, she also exudes violence. Monroe is a curated commodity, investors’ gold. Duffy suggests how people take advantage of her beauty. Indeed, his eyes are ‘hit by a banker’s thumb’, with violent images covered in fake ‘jade’ and ‘platinum’ to conceal the terror, horror of his mistreatment. Monroe is manipulated and controlled by men those who are

around her, she is also being turned into a money-making machine and her human emotions were not valid.

Finally, Duffy discusses the beautiful Princesses of Wales, Diana. woman Di was addressed as the People's Princess, and she was a much-loved figure within the U.K. In 1981 she got engaged to Prince Charles and married later that year. when the couple's separation in 1992, the media sought-after details of their matrimonial difficulties. Diana was brutally afraid by the media, eventually dying in an exceedingly automotive crash whereas fleeing the paparazzi in 1997. Her ceremonial occasion was televised and brought in millions of viewers in the U.K., with millions additional looking round the world. The use of italics in the sixth stanza reflects the voice of the media. Also, her use of expletives, 'fuck and pussy, demonstrates his cruelty and disrespect towards Diana. They only use it for photos, they hate it while they make a living out of it. She is treated badly, the command 'act like a damn princess' demonstrates the idea that she was forced to embody a certain type of human. The caesura to 'smile, bitch' emphasizes the swear word, defines the anger behind the media who were after him.

"Dead, she's elegant bone  
In mud, ankles crossed,  
Knees clamped, hands clasped,  
Empty head. You know her name" (Duffy 13).

Diana's shock, her 'big blue eyes' testify to a feeling of vulnerability. Subsequently, she cannot "take it all on herself" with the constant abuse of the media. Although she loved 'acres of flowers', the male presence was stronger. Duffy ends the poem by focusing on 'the fetid breath of history on his face' and embodying the story. Also, a disgusting image shows how women are exploited and how the disgusting world capitalizes on their images. The last words, "her face," centre the poem on the female experience. Duffy has given examples of many women throughout history who have been abused and asked the question: When will this come to an end.

### **Conclusion:**

This paper sums up objectification theory based on reduction to body and reduction to appearance on various limitations to its general belief and regardless of this theory and it also indicates that marginalizing a woman by objectifying her on the basis of body and appearance is crueller to womanhood. The sexually objectifying gaze thus, by influencing women into habitual self-monitoring of their physical appearance, the sexually objectifying gaze also serves as a particularly potent way to limit women's social roles and behaviours and cage them without any awareness around them.

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