


The Use of Silence and Punctuation as Stylistic and Interpretative Devices in Carol Ann Duffy's Selected Poems

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ABSTRACT

The role of silence in present-day poetry is a peculiar expressive mode, in which emotionalism, psychologicality, and socio-political criticism can be usefully spoken to. Punctuation, spacing, visual form and function in a feminist and cognitive-stylistic constructivism of silence is material construction in the poetry of Carol Ann Duffy. Utilizing a well-constructed silence as a form of communicative effort, Duffy creates a space of silence that discloses trauma, undermines patriarchal speech, asks questions of identity and invites the reader to actively interpret these questions. Drawing on feminist theory, stylistics and discourse analysis, this paper examines how Duffy develops a distinctive grammar of silence and punctuation function in a selection of Duffy's poems and redefines the expressive possibilities of contemporary poetic language.

KEYWORDS

Femininity; Feminist Poetics; Identity; Subversion; Voice

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1. Introduction

Silence has traditionally been perceived in literary studies as an absence, what remains when speech fails or meaning collapses. The recent critical paradigms have, however, re-conceptualized silence as a dynamic semiotic force that influences meaning, affect and moral reaction. The silence in poetry is not thematic but material: it is marked using punctuation, lineation, caesurae, and white space serving as a stylistic and interpretive choice. These formal silences lead to rhythm; control affects and engages the reader in a participatory meaning making process. The poetry of Carol Ann Duffy has a major place in this changing critical scene. Her poetry has always challenged identity, gender, trauma, power, and marginalization and in many cases by disrupting the normative forms of poetic expression. Instead of

working solely with the explicit articulation, Duffy uses silence as a communicative presence, which reveals emotional suppression, moral indecisiveness, and feminist opposition.

Duffy uses the punctuation of the ellipses and dashes, abrupt line breaks, and using white space to make silence a grammar of its own, which can communicate what is impossible to articulate directly. The literature on Duffy has been comprehensive in nature but thematic. In foregrounding her poetic self-fashioning and opposition to canonical authority, Brown (2020) also considers her engagement with gender, narrative, and political discourse as revisionary, Akkoyun (2021) and Öztürk (2023) discuss her writing. The recent feminist research also emphasizes the subversive treatment of a female identity, satire, and voice by Duffy (Abdulrahman, 2024; Ali, 2024). Although such works have much to say, silence is usually discussed as a conceptual state of women who are silenced, traumatized, or erased in history, but not as a formal device of style that works on the principles of punctuation and visual composition.

Stylistic and cognitive approach is the most appropriate to fill this gap. Cummings (2020) claims that punctuation in modern poetry acts as a gesture and an emotional tool by defining the way the reader experiences rhythm and emotion instead of structuring the syntax. In terms of cognitive-stylistic, Stockwell (2009) proposes gaps and pauses trigger inferential processing that caused readers to fill silences with meaning in terms of emotion and concepts. The theorist of trauma also highlights the fact that silence might serve as a testimonial space, which indicates the boundaries of language in describing pain and ethical witnessing (Brooke, 2017). The views are especially applicable to the poems of Duffy where silence often marks trauma, displacement, and moral indecisiveness in such poems as *War Photographer*, *Foreign*, and *Standing Female Nude*. The interpretative power of silence and symbolism in modern and contemporary texts has been also emphasized in the related scholarly literary texts other than that of Duffy. Recent studies on modern drama further reinforce this view, showing how silence, memory, and emotional fragmentation function as stylistic strategies that shape affect and interpretation in twentieth- and twenty-first-century texts (Sharma, 2023). These works support the fact that silence is a defining method of interpretation in the literature of all eras, which proves the topicality of a stylistic approach to silence in the poems by Duffy. Following and more recent interdisciplinary studies have also indicated the pedagogical and cognitive importance of close stylistic analysis of literary text. Sharma (2025) claims that integration makes literary work more interpretative and more aware, as it makes readers focus on form, structure, and implicit meaning.

This insight, pedagogical in nature, is valuable to the current study since it reinforces the focus of the present study on silence as a thinking and interpretative stimulus and not a decorative element. Nevertheless, an apparent gap in Duffy research is that the systematic understanding of how punctuation, spacing, and visual pauses constructively build silence as a sense in an integrated feminist and cognitive-stylistic system is still lacking. Most of the available literature gives precedence to theme

over form or is descriptive of its interpretative impact. The current research paper fills that gap by discussing silence as a stylistic choice applied deliberately that can be applied at the same time at the micro-structural (punctuation), meso-structural (lineation and stanzaic form), and macro-thematic (identity, power, and voice) levels in the chosen poems by Duffy.

This study pinpoints the poetry of Duffy in the context of larger discussions in poetics of the present day, feminist dissent and cognition of the reader by foregrounding silence as expressive power. It claims that meaning in the work of Duffy is created not just in the words but in the spaces between the spaces that require ethical concern, emotional involvement, and interpretative care on the part of the reader.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

1. To examine how silence is formally constructed in Carol Ann Duffy's selected poems through punctuation, line breaks, caesurae, and white space as deliberate stylistic devices.
2. To analyse how these forms of poetic silence function interpretatively to convey emotion, negotiate identity, and articulate feminist and ethical meanings.

1.3 Research works based on Carol Ann Duffy's poems

The subject of scholarly interest in the poetry of Carol Ann Duffy has been broad-based based especially on gender, identity, political voice, and feminist subversion. Brown (2020) predicts the poetic self-consciousness and resistance to the canon of Duffy and how artistic identity and voice is negotiated in a contemporary poetic discourse. Comparative feminist readings also place Duffy in the company of other women poets; Akkoyun (2021) compares Duffy with other poets of her era (Anne Sexton and Margaret Atwood) through revisionary strategies of myth, narrative re-writing, and gendered resistance to remake poetic tradition. The argument of Poetry as a form of national and civic intervention is carried over by Öztürk (2023) into the political arena, where Poet Laureate Duffy poetically responds to the political climate at the time of her writings. A more current wave of feminist-critical work expands on these themes of subversion and representation: Abdulrahman (2024) discusses how satire is used by Duffy to deconstruct stereotypical constructions of femininity, and Ali (2024): how *The World Wife* breaks the gender roles of patriarchy using irony, re-voicing, and intertextual resistance. Together, these works shine light on the thematic devotion of Duffy to gender politics, power, and voice, but they tend to give above all the thematic and ideological interpretation over formal stylistic analysis. The current research, however, moves the critical emphasis to the material construction of meaning, that is, the role of silence, punctuation, and visual form as a stylistic and interpretative element, hence taking a critical approach to an underresearched aspect of Duffy literature.

2. Methodology

The research employs a qualitative interpretative research design, interpreting close textual analysis, combined with the analysis of stylistics, feminist literary theory, and cognitive poetics. The cognitive stylistics approach perceives gaps, pauses, and formal disruptions as triggers of inferences and emotional involvement for the reader (Stockwell, 2009), and the approach of trauma poetics conceptualizes silence as response to experiences that cannot be fully expressed, inform the analysis (Brooke, 2017).

The corpus comprises of the chosen poems by Carol Ann Duffy the War Photographer, Mrs Midas, Valentine, Standing Female Nude, Foreign, Little Red-Cap and The Diet, the works of which she pays special attention to the intense use of punctuations, spacing and visual arrangement. The research is carried out at three levels of analysis. At the micro level, the punctuation marks used include full stops, commas, ellipses, and dashes, which are studied as expressive gestures that form rhyme and influence other people, not only syntax (Cummings, 2020). Line breaks, caesurae, enjambment and white space are considered at the meso level to learn how visual silence forms perception and meaning. On a macro level, these stylistic trends are observed regarding gender, identity, power, and resistance as a feminist discourse (Khalaf, 2023).

This approach by integrating stylistic analysis, feminist and cognitive approaches facilitates an analytical analysis of silence as both a figure of form and an interpretation strategy in the poetry of Duffy with a view to anticipating its emotional, ethical and ideological processes.

3. Analysis and Discussion

3.1 Silence as Stylistic Grammar: Punctuation and Emotional Meaning

Manipulation of punctuation in such a way that it can create a certain kind of silent grammar is one of the most characteristic aspects of Duffy's poetic dexterity, as it creates the effect on the reader, controlling the rhythm by pauses, breaks, and breaths. Instead of being syntactic symbols, the punctuation marks are expressive symbols that control rhythm, inflection, and emotional tone. According to Cummings (2020), punctuation is used in modern poetry as expressive silent grammar, and it not only determines the grammatical format but also the affective and interpretive direction of the reader. Punctuation in the poems by Duffy cannot be separated from meaning.

3.1.1 Full stops as emotional restraint and ethical pause

The use of short and end-stopped sentences can lead to the effect of tension or inhibition. In *“War Photographer,”* there are lines like “He has a job to do.” which creates emotional abruptness and

restraint. The full stop creates a space of silence, which is a manifestation of the emotional

compartmentalization of the photographer. There are ethical consequences of silence, as it causes an interruption where the reader is forced to contend with the ethical burden of observing violence through a prism. The last line, “He earns his living, and they do not care.” is a clear example of ethical pause vividly used in her writing.

3.1.2 Commas as hesitation and ambivalence

Comma is common in Duffy to create softer silences, the moment of hesitation, reflection, or even vulnerability. In the poem “*Mrs Midas*,” there is a comma in the line, “the kitchen filled with the smell of itself, relaxed,” which separates perceiving and interpreting. The comma is a joint between physical and emotional. The term of uncertain emotionality, “as we are, / for as long as we are,” in “*Valentine*” provides a comma to indicate the fragility of the relationship between them. Commas used in this poem create hesitation and ambivalence in the reader, thereby evoking curiosity.

3.1.3 Ellipses and dashes as markers of fragmentation, trauma and instability

Ellipses (...) are one of the most powerful devices of silence used by Duffy to denote hesitation in the emotions or the loss of words due to trauma or fear. The use of ellipses in “*Psychopath*” makes the voice of the monologue unstable and traumatic, providing the fear of manipulation, avoidance, or a psychological collapse. They denote withheld information and psychological manipulation to demonstrate the character of the speaker when he is silent than when he speaks. Dashes (-) frequently interrupt and fragment the flow of thought as a silence of shock or disjuncture, both of which happen in “*Psychopath*” and “*Standing Female Nude*”. In “*Standing Female Nude*”, the speech of the model is interrupted by the strain of objectification. The final line, "It does not look like me," is a short sentence that gives a traumatic, unstable ending to the poem. Ellipses create an awkward silence, which makes the reader wonder what is being hidden. Such silences operate symbolically, generating meaning through omission rather than explicit narration, a technique similarly observed in Hawthorne’s use of symbolic gaps and moral silence (Sharma, 2022). Duffy uses ellipses and dashes as symbolic representations of society's disregard for unaccepted elements.

Ellipses also help express the language being worn out through emotion in “*Silence*.” The trailing phrases indicate the mind that cannot be fully articulated, maybe because of grief, trauma, or existential fatigue. These silences indicate the boundary of language itself, repeating the so-called “unspeakability” of some experiences as defined by trauma theorists (Brooke, 2017).

3.1.4 Ellipses as reader invitation and epistemological silence Ellipses also transfer interpretive responsibility to the reader. Duffy leaves the thoughts incomplete, thereby asking the reader to be involved in the construction of meaning. The silence creates a common ground between the poet and

the reader. Cognitive stylistics recognizes this influence: a gap makes the inferential processes operate, providing deeper involvement.

At this moment, silence becomes epistemological, that is, towards the limits of knowledge and memory, and emotional comprehension. The silence is filled by the reader in his/her cognitive and emotional structures. Stockwell.P. (2009) emphasizes that silence is not just lack of sound but often a purposeful action or outcome within social and political contexts.

3.2 Structural Silence: Line Breaks, Caesurae, and White Space

It is the silence that is created by line breaks and caesurae, which cannot be created by punctuation and evokes internal fractures to the line of the poetry. They create the visual and rhythmic organization of the poem, dictating the way of thought process and the way of emotion distribution or suppression. Line breaks in the poems by Duffy can be interpreted as a change in perception or an emotional recalibration. They do not make silence as emptiness but as interpretative space.

3.2.1 Line breaks as emotional pivots

The changing consciousness of the adolescent speaker in “*Little Red-Cap*” is dramatized with the line breaks that are well placed. The breaking of the lines is also often used as the point of transition between thoughts and emotions, when the speaker is led to meet the wolf who will guide her poetical awakening. At every break, there is a momentary silence, which reflects the character changing his or her understanding. These silences reflect her inner conflict, anticipation, or realization. Line breaks in the form of a “*War photographer*” slow down the pace of the reader to force him to reflect on scenes of suffering. The restraint of the poem is enhanced by the lack of speech at the end of the lines, which serve as ethical pauses, the points when the reader might have to think of violence instead of absorbing it as narrative spectacle.

3.2.2 Caesurae as fractured voice

The model in “*Standing Female Nude*” is interrupted by caesurae several times: a verbal simulation of an emotional disruption. The gaze of the painter is not the only one that intrudes on her, and so does the structure of the poem. This division depicts her vulnerability, objectification, and repressed resistance. In “*Foreign*,” caesurae are the fragmented personality of a migrant who must negotiate in foreign linguistic and cultural places. Pauses are moments when the speaker makes a transition between languages, memories, or emotional states. Such pauses act as liminal spaces of identity negotiation, resonating with interdisciplinary studies that associate silence with psychological rupture and emotional transition in modern literary texts (Sharma, 2025). The silence in the line is used as a symbol of displacement. Thus, these breaks make the voices of Duffy more embodied. Silence is not an abstract

thing; it relates to breath, hesitation, and the weight of unsaid experience.

3.2.3 White space as erasure, mourning and resistance

Silence in the poetry of Duffy, however, is not just an emotional phenomenon; it is entangled in feminist discourse, is displayed in the silence of women in patriarchal cultures, and the mechanisms women use to reclaim silence as a resistance. In *“The Diet,”* the white space and slowly decreasing lines make the shrinking of the speaker, both physically and psychologically. As the woman is reducing herself, the poem becomes anorexic. Silence turns out to be a visual metaphor for erasure- social and self-imposed. The poem is a critique of bodies that are driven by media by literalizing the process by which women are forced into disappearance.

On the same note, in *“Mrs Lazarus,”* silence is mourning, but recovery. The gaps between the stanzas mark stages of grief and emotional transformation. The white space between lines highlights the efforts of the narrator to create identity in the aftermath.

3.2.4 Feminist implications of visual silence

In the poem *“Standing Female Nude,”* the silence is a show of its own- it is how the speaker can save face and preserve her independence with her objectified body. The pauses of the woman oppose the efforts of the painter to define the woman, the right to not be transparent. In her poems, silence turns out to be identity work. It is a sign of tensions between self and society, voice and representation, autonomy and control.

3.3 Silence, Power and Feministic Resistance

Silence in Duffy’s poetry frequently intersects with themes of power and authority. Pauses, omissions, and structural gaps reveal the workings of dominance, oppression, or institutional control. At times, silence exposes the fragility of authority; at other times, it illuminates the vulnerability of those subjected to power.

3.3.1 Silence as suppressed voice

In *“Education for Leisure,”* the silence is used to enhance the disturbing psychology of the speaker. The clipped lines and short lines, followed by a lack of dialogue, indicate emotional instability and alienation. The coldness in the poem is an indication of a character who does not feel acknowledged, appreciated, or in control. The breaks are tense, and silence becomes a witness to the slow loss of moral and social principles by the speaker.

In *“Foreign,”* powerlessness is expressed by silence. The difficulties in communicating a new language form some areas of speechlessness that are indicative of cultural and linguistic

marginalization. These are silences that are reminiscent of the social invisibility and displacement of the speaker. In comparison to Nathaniel Hawthorne’s “*The Scarlet Letter*,” silence is a tool against the Puritan social control mechanism.

3.3.2 *Silence as relational conflict*

The silence in the context of “*Mrs. Midas*” is used to represent the emotional distance between husband and wife. The voice of the wife is more like a series of punctuation with pauses and breaks as Mr. Midas withdraws into his golden obsession. These silences are grief, disbelief, and anger, the emotions that can be gestured by language, but not completely enclosed. The increasing gap between their views is symbolic of a relational gap that becomes too hard to bridge.

Table 1 Types of Silence and punctuation effects in Carol Ann Duffy’s poetry

Type of Silence / Punctuation	Stylistic Function	Interpretative / Emotional Effect
Full Stops	Create abrupt closure; halt rhythm	Convey emotional restraint, finality, suppressed trauma (“He has a job to do.”)
Commas	Introducing soft pauses and hesitation	Suggest ambivalence, reflection, or vulnerability; slow emotional processing
Ellipses (...)	Indicate trailing thought or fragmentation	Represent trauma, speechlessness, withheld information and psychological instability
Dashes (—)	Interrupt or fracture syntax	Signal shock, intrusion, rupture in voice or thought; highlight tension or conflict
Line Breaks / Enjambment	Control pacing; create visual and rhythmic pauses	Act as emotional pivots; mark transitions in perception; invite reflection
Caesurae	Insert mid-line silence within a sentence	Reflect internal conflict, hesitation, or divided identity (“Standing Female Nude,” “Foreign”)
White Space / Stanza Gaps	Shape visual silence; create conceptual space	Symbolize erasure, agency, mourning, empowerment, or emotional transition

3.3.3 *Silence as resistance and refusal*

On the other hand, silence can act as a means of resistance. The fragmented speech and pauses of the model in “*Standing Female Nude*” disrupt the authority of the painter, who tries to define and represent her. Her silences confuse his control of narrative, suggesting that the withholding of speech can be used as an agency claim. By using these illustrations, Duffy shows that there is a political aspect to silence.

There is no such thing as a neutral pause; it can give out signals of compliance, resistance, erasure, or defiance. The power relations in her poetry are as vivid as the silent forms of her poems.

3.3.4 Feminist reclaiming of silence

In “*Little Red-Cap*,” the protagonist’s coming-of-age narrative involves reclaiming her voice through poetic creation. Silence at the poem’s beginning signals innocence, inexperience, or suppression; by the end, silence becomes a poised moment of empowerment, the stillness before a new creative voice emerges.

3.4 Cognitive and Ethical Dimensions of Poetic Silence

Cognitive stylistics can be of great help to comprehend the way silence and punctuation are interpreted by the readers of Duffy’s poetry. Silence makes reading slow, reflective, and forces the reader to devise meaning out of what is not being said directly. The results of these interpretative processes are a more active work with the text.

3.4.1 Silence as a cognitive prompt

According to Stockwell (2009), silence in poetry can be viewed as a sort of mental stimulus, a means for a poem to trigger the mind to become more active by breaking the habit of reading. In cases where Duffy breaks a line, uses an ellipsis, or isolates a phrase, the reader must fill the gaps with imagination and inference. This enhances emotional appeal and interpretative investment.

3.4.2 Reader participation and interpretative openness

Probably, most significantly, silence involves the reader as a co-creator of meaning. The interpretative imagination of the reader is triggered by empty spaces, pauses, and omissions. The poem is interactive; silence is a place of cooperation. By doing so, the poetry of Duffy is an example of fundamentally dialogic relations between the poet and the reader. Ambiguity is usually brought about by silence. Loopholes allow a variety of understandings as opposed to a single meaning. This openness aligns with Duffy is interested in describing complex human experiences, such as trauma, love, identity, and exile, which cannot be easily explained. The fact that these complexities stay open-ended because of silence is indicative of the flux of lived experience.

3.4.3 Silence of testimony and moral witnessing

Duffy’s repeated interest in silence reflects an ethical dimension: the recognition that some experiences cannot or should not be fully articulated. Silence bears the moral weight of witnessing trauma, violence, or injustice. According to the trauma literature, silence may be part of the testimony (Brooke, 2017).

Silence can presuppose inadequacy of language to represent some types of pain instead of evasion. This moral attitude is reflected in Duffy's quiet and disciplined poems on violence. The poet resorts to silence as opposed to sensationalism.

3.4.4 Ethical pauses in War Photographer and Education for Leisure

In "*Education for Leisure*," there is the use of silence. The quiet, pensive breaks exuded by the speaker give shivers to her feelings and display of non-emotions and moral decay. Silence is a better way of expressing the psychological violence than it would have been through speech. The poem plunges the reader into the query of silence in society, abandonment, solitude, exclusion, and everything that results in such hopelessness.

In "*War Photographer*", Duffy emphasizes the complicated issue of ethical silence by pointing out the conflict between the photographer's need to remain detached from society and the audience's passive viewing of the images. The "silence" acts as a strong criticism of society's lack of concern for social issues. So, the silence of the poetry of Duffy is not only at an aesthetic plane but also an ethical one. The moral stances present in the poems are restraint, omission, and pause.

3.5 Silence across Duffy's Oeuvre and Poetic Traditions

Besides separate poems, the silence is a form of stylistic hallmark of the whole of Duffy. It gives her depictions of love, loss, identity, memory, and gender an emotional touch. The frame of the interior world of the speaker, the creation of the poetic atmosphere, is a simultaneous action of an emotional texture, a strategy of communication.

3.5.1 Silence as emotional texture across poems

In poems such as "*Mrs Lazarus*" and "*Before You Were Mine*," silence plays a subtle yet powerful role. Pauses between stanzas mimic emotional transitions, phases of mourning, recollection, or reconciliation. These pauses allow emotional weight to settle, imparting a contemplative rhythm. Silence becomes a mediator between past and present, grief and acceptance.

In jagged syntax and abrupt pauses, emotional fragmentation is expressed in "*Havisham*". The breaks between the lines are vibrating with anger and frustration. The uncouthness of the poem is not just produced by using words but also by the pauses which interrupted and stopped the voice of the speaker. The reader is presented with a voice, which is unable to sustain progress in narration but instead

speaks through the ashes of abandoned passion. In "*The Way My Mother Speaks*," the way a child enters adulthood is through silence. Leaving home is an emotional distance that is expressed through pauses. In this case, silence is a practice of identity negotiation, the negotiated domain of time.

3.5.2 Psychological fragmentation and identity

The conflict between the seeing and the remembering process in “*War Photographer*” is conveyed by the exact moments of silence. The inner turmoil of the photographer is depicted with the help of sentence fragments, controlled pauses, and held diction. The tonal silence of the poem can be associated with the numbness of emotions usually caused by trauma. Silence in “*Foreign*” is what can be viewed as the struggle to express displacement. The disjointed syntax and wavering rhythm of the poem resemble the disjointed identity of the speaker, being an immigrant who is moving on unknown linguistic terrain.

3.5.3 Metapoetic Silence

Other poems by Duffy make silence itself a topic and directly address the issues about the sufficiency of language and the limits of expression of poetry. Silence is not merely a means but an end in these metapoetic moments, something the poem not only does, but also thinks. In “*Silence*,” Duffy looks at the extremes of verbal communication. The reduced language, plain imagery, and the simple structural plan indicate a philosophical reflection on what is beyond the language. Minimalistic style of the poem foregrounds the absence; silence is the center of gravity around which the poem revolves. The poem is an enactment of silence, as opposed to a description of it; it makes use of white space and extreme caution in phrasing to show what is not to be said.

This metapoetic aspect places Duffy in line with the literary tendencies that doubt that language can ever be an accurate reflection of the intricacies of human life. Her poems tend to suggest that speech is not the sole way of communicating - silence can be, especially when circumstances are emotionally or ethically, or existentially weighty. Silence is not a failure in language in these works, but the needed complement.

3.6 A Brief comparison: Modernist, postmodern and feminist silence

Carol Ann Duffy’s use of silence as a device can be learnt as a combination of feminist political resistance, self-reflection on postmodern linguistics, and modernist techniques in poetic form. Duffy’s use of pauses, gaps, and irregular syntax to portray social displacement and psychological stress echoes modernist practices of formal fragmentation. However, Duffy's effective use of silences is deeply rooted in a gendered experience, which contrasts with modernist silence. It is also linked to cultural collapse or instability of knowledge and meaning. From a postmodern perspective, her work negotiates linguistic limitations without compromising sense. In Duffy's poetry, silence does not erase meaning; instead, it highlights moments that are difficult to express emotionally, morally, or historically. Most importantly, feminist theories make it possible to analyse Duffy's silence as an expression of agency rather than an absence. As ways to resist patriarchal ideas, deliberate retention, gaps in poetic structure, and unspoken

words help oppressed women challenge and change the stereotypical social stories. Given that, silence functions as a dynamic aesthetic and political force in Duffy's poetry, reconsidering it as an active and evolutionary poetic technique. It is postmodern in cognisance, feminist in intent, and modernist in style.

Conclusion

Silence in the poems of Carol Ann Duffy is not a non-presence but rather a strong expressive tool that has been created through punctuation, spaces, pauses, and structural discontinuity. Throughout her work, silence is used to convey the message which words fail to: trauma in the poems such as *War Photographer* and *Foreign*, emotional tension in the *Mrs Midas*, *Havisham* and *Mrs Lazarus*, and the dynamic between oppression and resistance in the *Standing Female Nude* and *The Diet*. Silence dismays romantic traditions even in *Valentine* by disclosing what is under the sentimental facade. The fact that Duffy is strategic in playing with silence in her poems as well as in the way she does adds not only an emotional layer to her poetry but also involves the reader in the cognitive process of reflection and inviting them to play a role in the construction of meanings. Silence, aesthetically, is what forms the rhythm, the pace, the visuality of the poem; in an ethical, political way, it reveals the marginalization, emphasizes withheld truths, points to reclaimed agency. Finally, Duffy reinvents silence as a primary creative asset- one that expresses and presents vulnerability, desire, resistance and the challenges of human experience. Her poems show that meaning is created not only by the words but also by the gaps between them where silence is also a powerful location of expression and interpretation.

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The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Declaration

This manuscript is original work and has not been submitted or published elsewhere in full or in part. The research, analysis, and arguments presented in this article are the author's own. AI tools, if used, were solely for language refinement, grammatical clarity, and formatting assistance. No AI tool was used for generating the core ideas, analysis, interpretations, or findings of the research.

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