Carol Ann Duffy: Language In Poems To Express Feeling

Love is a universal experience that many artists grapple with in their work. Carol Ann Duffy is one of these artists who explores the vehement emotions that arise from the experience of falling in love in her poem titled “You.” Duffy challenges the idealised representation of love by exploring the conflicting emotions of sexulaised lust and love, the loss of control and resulting vulnerability of falling in love and the role of the persona’s imagination. These thematic concerns are common in Duffy’s body of work, particularly in her poem Valentine which similarly highlights the negative and chaotic elements of love. Duffy’s distinctive voice is characterised through evocative metaphor, imagery, form and structure to reinforce the overwhelming nature of falling love.

Duffy strategically adapts the Sonnet form in the poem “You” to support the thematic concern of falling in love. The persona quickly displays emotions suggesting she is beginning to falling in love during the poems opening two lines “ so I went to bed dreaming you hard, hard, woke with your name” Through figurative language of alliteration and the connotation of hard Duffy begins to place an emphasis on the sexual side of love and the persona’s own desires. This further shapes the distinctive character voice that Duffy is trying to build by exploring the conflictive emotion of lust over love.

In addition, Duffy employs evocative metaphors and unusual structure to represent the chaotic nature of falling in love. In stanza 2 the persona states “ falling in love is glamorous hell; the crouched, parched heart”. An oxymoron is used to open to second stanza and enhance the personas torn vision of falling in love. The use of the evocative verb crouched and the syntax of parched heart suggests that the persona is longing for an idealised love which means exposing her emotions and becoming vulnerable to the cruel side of love. Similarly, Duffy highlights the chaotic and harsh reality of everyday love in her poem valentine.

Duffy's distinctive voice is characterised by provocative language which highlights the persona’s overwhelming imaginative desires which often conflict with the reality of love. This is expressed through the final stanza when the persona states “There you are on the bed, like an untouchable gift, Like an untouchable dream”. The repetition of the simile is used to portray the persona’s overwhelming emotions of falling in love into imaginative desires, this is further supported by repetition the adjective untouchable.

Similarly duffy creates a distinctive voice in valentine by using provocative language and repetition.

In conclusion Carol Ann Duffy’s distinctive voice of grappling with the complexities of falling in love is achieved through mimicking the sonnet form, specific structure and language techniques such as metaphors and provocative language. Like Valentine, the poem “You” effectively represents Duffy’s concern with the human experience of love.