



The World's Wife's Personas through the Psychoanalytic Lens: An Analysis of Mrs. Beast, Mrs. Lazarus, Mrs. Midas, Mrs. Quasimodo and Queen Herod

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Abstract— This study aims to analyze the personas of *The World's Wife* women. Carol Ann Duffy uses the *Monologues* to express the voice of the women who were kept silenced in history and myths, and each persona of this poem collection expresses her suffering and desires in a different manner which can be seen as unorthodox through the lens of the social norms. This study focuses on the individual personas as characters and their psychological disturbance. All of the personas face a troubling environment, which she has to face in a certain manner and behavior. Through this study, we can specifically locate the psychological disturbance of Mrs. Beast, Mrs. Lazarus, Mrs. Midas, Mrs. Quasimodo, and Queen Herod.



Keywords— Psychoanalytic, Mrs. Beast, Mrs. Lazarus, Mrs. Midas, Mrs. Quasimodo, Queen Herod.

Carol Ann Duffy's contributions to literature have been recognized with numerous awards and honors. In addition to being the first female Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom, she has received prestigious accolades such as the T.S. Eliot Prize, the Whitbread Poetry Award, and the Forward Prize for Best Collection. Duffy's impact on contemporary poetry extends beyond her writings. She has been an influential figure in promoting poetry in schools, supporting emerging poets, and advocating for the power of language and imagination. Duffy's poetry often explores themes of love, relationships, gender, and social issues. She is known for giving voice to marginalized perspectives and challenging traditional narratives. Her collection *The World's Wife* reimagines the stories of famous women from history and mythology, presenting them from a feminist perspective. This groundbreaking work received widespread acclaim for its witty and subversive approach to reinterpreting well-known narratives. In addition to her poetry, Duffy has also ventured into playwriting and adapting classic works. She has written plays such as "Everyman" (2015), which is a contemporary adaptation of the medieval morality play, and "The Christmas Truce" (2014), based on the historical event

during World War I. Her versatility as a writer extends beyond poetry and demonstrates her ability to experiment with different genres and forms. (Dowson, 6)

Today, Carol Ann Duffy continues to inspire and captivate readers with her poignant and thought-provoking poetry. Her ability to combine accessibility with profound insights has earned her a dedicated following and secured her place as one of the most significant voices in contemporary British literature. Duffy's work remains an enduring testament to the power of poetry to engage, challenge, and illuminate the complexities of the human experience. (Abdulkhadim, 178)

Carol Ann Duffy's poetic style is often praised for its accessibility and ability to resonate with a wide range of readers. She has a remarkable gift for using everyday language and imagery to capture profound emotions and ideas. Duffy's use of colloquialism and conversational tone creates an immediate connection between the reader and the poems, drawing them into the worlds she constructs. Her language is deceptively simple, but her careful selection of words and imagery reveals layers of meaning and invites readers to engage with her work on multiple levels. One

notable aspect of Duffy's style is her skillful blending of the personal and the universal. She often draws from her own experiences, memories, and observations to explore broader themes and emotions that resonate with a broader audience. This ability to bridge the personal and the universal allows her poetry to touch readers deeply, evoking empathy and introspection. (Dowson, 21)

“Duffy insists that it is ‘emotional truth’ rather than autobiographical fact that informs the poems. Primarily, she is the rare order of professional poet: “Yes, it is a vocation, to give your life, your imagination, to language; to offer up your experience of being human”. (Dowson, 7) Duffy's poetic voice is characterized by its authenticity and honesty. She fearlessly tackles a wide range of subjects, including love, loss, sexuality, and social issues, with a refreshing directness. Her poems often exhibit a rawness and vulnerability that add to their emotional impact. Through her candid exploration of human experiences, Duffy captures the complexities of the human condition and offers readers a space for reflection and empathy. (Dowson, 23)

Her poems are replete with individuals engaged in a struggle to articulate their sense of alienation within modern, urban landscapes. As a result, a significant number of her love poems depict love as a burdensome terror rather than a liberating release. While the critical theory concept of the amorous flâneur may revel in the boundless erotic possibilities hidden within the city's bustling crowds, Duffy's narrators often react to the urban environment as if it were a type of pornography, teasing with promises of fulfillment but constantly delaying its actualization. Rather than embracing the postmodern notion of fleeting romance intertwined with consumer culture, her poems celebrate steadfast amorous commitment. These expressions of loyalty are influenced by surrealism, disrupting bourgeois norms through their exuberant celebration of love amidst the confines of office buildings, telephone booths, and train stations. (Rowland, 200)

The World's Wife represents a significant departure from Carol Ann Duffy's earlier poetry, as it features female narrators who consistently critique men and masculinity. This critique is further intensified by the explicit portrayal of homoerotic relationships between women in the collection, highlighting a sense of sisterly bonding that is celebrated, particularly in poems like 'from Mrs. Tiresias,' which also explores lesbian sexuality. Duffy has often been labeled as a 'lesbian' poet, primarily due to media attention and discussions surrounding her appointment as the Poet Laureate. Such a label may create certain expectations regarding her love poetry, potentially anticipating an exploration of relationships between women in the vein of

Adrienne Rich and Daphne Marlatt. However, even though Duffy's early love lyrics depict the pains caused by wayward or neglectful male partners, *The World's Wife* demonstrates that men and masculinity continue to be subjects of critical examination and negotiation within the realm of love and relationships (Rowland, 199)

Viner's Inviting summary outlines the book's varied sources 'The World's Wife is a joyous, exuberant book of poems about women usually excluded from myth and history: wives, such as Mrs. Pilate, Mrs. Aesop, Mrs. Darwin, Mrs. Faust, Mrs. Quasimodo; women usually defined by their men – Delilah, Anne Hathaway, Eurydice; and re-telling's of old stories in which the lead changes sex- Queen Kong, The Kray Sistes and Elvis's twin sister , the nun . for Duffy, the monologues drawing on the bible stories from her catholic upbringing , the history lessons at school, and the pop music and films she imbibed are costumes for ‘naked’ emotions and insights. (Dowson, 11)

The World's Wife by Carol Ann Duffy is a collection of poems that offers a unique and feminist perspective on well-known stories and figures from history, mythology, and literature. Through the voices of female characters, Duffy subverts traditional narratives and reclaims their stories, shedding light on the often marginalized and silenced female perspectives. The collection explores themes of gender, power, identity, and agency, presenting a diverse range of women who challenge and defy societal norms. One of the notable aspects of *The World's Wife* is Duffy's skillful use of language and poetic techniques. Her poems are rich with vivid imagery, clever wordplay, and striking metaphors, which not only enhance the storytelling but also convey the emotional depth and complexity of the characters. The use of persona poetry allows Duffy to delve into the inner worlds of these women, providing them with a voice and agency that has been historically denied. (Rahman, 88)

Moreover, the collection offers a critique of patriarchal power structures and societal expectations imposed on women. Duffy's female characters often challenge traditional gender roles and subvert the dominant narratives. They refuse to be defined solely by their relationships with men and instead assert their individuality and autonomy, (Michelis, 26). By giving voice to these women, Duffy offers a powerful commentary on how women have been marginalized throughout history and calls for a reevaluation of their contributions and experiences. Another intriguing aspect of *The World's Wife* is Duffy's

exploration of the concept of myth-making. Through her reinterpretation of well-known myths and legends, she exposes the constructed nature of these narratives and questions their validity. By presenting alternative perspectives and filling in the gaps in existing stories, Duffy challenges the notion of a singular truth and highlights the importance of diverse voices and interpretations. (Das, 105)

The World's Wife by Carol Ann Duffy is a thought-provoking and engaging collection of poems that reimagines female characters from history, mythology, and literature. Through her skillful use of language, feminist perspective, and exploration of myth-making, Duffy challenges traditional narratives and empowers women to reclaim their stories. The collection offers a compelling critique of gender norms and power structures while celebrating the resilience, agency, and complexity of women throughout history. (Michelis, 26)

From a psychoanalytic perspective, the persona of Mrs. Midas in *The World's Wife* can be analyzed through various lenses, including the concept of castration anxiety. Mrs. Midas experiences a profound transformation when her husband turns into gold, which can be seen as a metaphorical castration, representing her fear of losing her husband's affection and sexual intimacy. In the poem, Mrs. Midas grapples with conflicting emotions of desire and anxiety. On one hand, she yearns for her husband's love and attention, as any person in an intimate relationship would. This desire where she seeks to fulfill her emotional needs through her husband became an obsession. However, the transformation of her husband into gold introduces a psychological conflict. She simultaneously desires him and fears the consequences of this desire, as it threatens to disrupt their relationship and the sexual bond they share. Mrs. Midas' anxieties can be seen as a manifestation of castration anxiety, a psychoanalytic concept associated with fear of loss or lack. Her fear of losing her husband's physical and emotional presence is symbolized by his transformation into an inanimate object. This anxiety reflects her unconscious fears of abandonment and the disruption of the intimate connection they once shared. (Winterson, 1)

Separate beds. in fact, I put a chair against my door,

near petrified. He was below, turning the spare room

into the tomb of Tutankhamun. You see, we were passionate then,

in those halcyon days; unwrapping each other, rapidly,

like presents, fast food. But now I feared his honeyed embrace,

the kiss that would turn my lips to a work of art. (Duffy, 9)

Moreover, Mrs. Midas' response to her husband's transformation can be analyzed through the lens of denial and repression. Psychoanalytically, denial is a defense mechanism that allows individuals to cope with threatening or distressing realities by refusing to acknowledge them. In the poem, Mrs. Midas attempts to maintain a semblance of normalcy despite the extraordinary circumstances. She sets the table for dinner as if everything is ordinary, avoiding a direct confrontation with the reality of her husband's transformation. This can be interpreted as a form of denial, a psychological attempt to protect herself from the painful truth and maintain a sense of stability.

The persona of Mrs. Midas in *The World's Wife* can be analyzed through the concepts of castration anxiety, denial, and repression. Her desires, anxieties, and psychological dynamics are intertwined, as she grapples with the fear of losing her husband's love and intimacy while attempting to maintain a sense of normalcy. Through this analysis, we gain a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between desire, anxiety, and psychological defense mechanisms in the persona of Mrs. Midas. She at last tried to accept the fact of losing him for his selfishness, and moved on with her life with the living memory of the intimacy of her husband:

What gets me now is not the idiocy or greed but lack of thought for me. Pure selfishness. I sold

the contents of the house and came down here.

I think of him in certain lights, dawn, late afternoon,

and once a bowl of apples stopped me dead. I miss most,

even now, his hands, his warm hands on my skin, his touch. (Duffy, 10)

Mrs. Beast in *The World's Wife* offers insights into the human psyche's complexities, including the interplay between attraction and repulsion, the search for inner balance, and the negotiation of the id, ego, and superego. Mrs. Beast's attraction to the Beast can be viewed through the lens of psychosexual development and the concept of the unconscious desires for the forbidden or the monstrous. The Beast represents a symbol of the uncanny, embodying both attractive and repulsive qualities. Mrs. Beast's attraction to the Beast may arise from her unconscious desires for the forbidden or the repressed aspects of her own psyche. This attraction represents the pull towards the id,

the primal and instinctual desires that exist within the unconscious mind. (Winterson, 1)

Duffy subverts the male tradition of dirty talk, playing Poker games and cards as she asserts, “We were a hard school, tough as fuck” (47). She justifies her abuse towards the beast (“turfing him out of bed”) as an act of vindication on behalf of the “tragic ladies” from history and myth. (Rahman, 93)

Simultaneously, Mrs. Beast's feelings of repulsion or ambivalence towards the Beast reflect the influence of societal norms and the superego's moral judgments. The superego, representing internalized societal and cultural values, imposes a sense of shame or guilt for desiring something unconventional or perceived as monstrous. Mrs. Beast's internal conflict arises from navigating between her own desires and societal expectations. She faced her thoughts with her desires and chose the satisfaction of being with the beast over the social norms :

**Is better. Myself, I came to the House
of the Beast**

**No longer a girl, knowing my own
mind,**

My own gold stashed in the bank,

My own black horse at the gates

**Ready to carry me off at one wrong
word,**

**One false move, one dirty look. (Duffy,
66)**

Mrs. Beast represents the struggle to integrate and accept the contrasting aspects of one's psyche, including the light and dark, the beautiful and the monstrous. Her journey can be seen as a quest for self-acceptance and reconciliation of her desires, embracing the complexity and contradictions within herself. Additionally, Mrs. Beast's narrative in *The World's Wife* can be interpreted as an exploration of the uncanny and the fear of the Other. Psychoanalytically, the uncanny refers to something strangely familiar yet unsettling. Mrs. Beast's attraction to the Beast, despite his unconventional appearance, taps into the unconscious fears and desires associated with the uncanny. The uncanny represents the psychological discomfort that arises when encountering something that blurs the boundaries between the known and the unknown. Her final resolution sums up her struggle she chose to be with the beast and amuse herself rather than accept the normal standards of a “Prince” **“I turned to go back inside. Bring me the Beast for the night. /Bring me the wine-cellar key. Let the less-loving one be me.” (Duffy, 68)**

The persona of Queen Herod in *The World's Wife* can be analyzed through the lens of power dynamics, the influence of past traumas, and psychological projections. Queen Herod is depicted as a power-hungry and manipulative character who orders the massacre of children. Her thirst for control and dominance can be examined through the psychoanalytic concept of the will to power. Queen Herod's desire for power can stem from unresolved psychological conflicts or traumas that drive her need for control. It can be inferred that her actions are an attempt to exert power and authority, compensating for perceived vulnerabilities or powerlessness in her own life. Additionally, Queen Herod's actions can be viewed as a projection of her own fears and anxieties onto others. Psychoanalytically, projection is a defense mechanism whereby individuals attribute their own undesirable traits, impulses, or feelings to others. In the case of Queen Herod, her ordering of the massacre can be seen as a projection of her own internal conflicts and fears of innocent children. By externalizing her fears and anxieties onto others, she attempts to distance herself from confronting her own psychological turmoil. (Rahman, 91)

Furthermore, Queen Herod's character can be analyzed in relation to the concept of the superego, the internalized moral conscience shaped by societal and cultural norms. Her extreme actions, such as the massacre, may represent a rebellion against or defiance of societal expectations and moral constraints. From psychoanalytic perspective, Queen Herod's actions can be seen as a manifestation of her unconscious desires or a rejection of the superego's constraints. (Abdulkarim, 181) The persona of Queen Herod is an overprotective parent who is trying to force her power by any means possible to protect her daughter. This tough love can be interpreted as her personal issues arising from her unresolved issues, whether her issues are from her parents or from her husband. The main issue that Duffy wanted to make it clear in this poem is the motherly love. She personified this love in the fierce attitude of a queen who has the power to overprotect as she pleases. The Queen Herod persona took her duty as a mother to an extreme level showing no regrets for her bloody actions :

We do our best,

**we Queens, we mothers,
mothers of Queens.**

**We wade through blood
for our sleeping girls.**

We have daggers for eyes.

Behind our lullabies,

the hooves of terrible horses

thunder and drum. (Duffy, 7)

The World's Wife provides a rich ground for psychoanalytic interpretation, exploring themes of power, control, psychological conflicts, and the projection of fears and anxieties. Through this analysis, we gain a deeper understanding of the psychological motivations, dynamics, and underlying conflicts within Queen Herod's character, shedding light on broader themes of power dynamics, the human psyche, and the influence of past traumas. The Queen Herod poem personifies the violent attitude of a mother to protect her child and how compassion for other people can be overlooked to achieve this protective duty.

Mrs. Lazarus in *The World's Wife* offers insights into the processes of grief and mourning, as well as the psychological dynamics involved in coping with loss. This persona at the end of her grief where she moves on with her life and gets acquainted with other men she surprisingly faces her late husband who is supposedly dead, which she states in the first lines her deep sadness for:

**I had grieved. I had wept for a night
and a day
over my loss, ripped the cloth I was
married in
from my breasts, howled, shrieked,
clawed
at the burial stones until my hands
bled, retched
his name over and over again, dead,
dead.** (Duffy, 44)

Mrs. Lazarus's journey can be analyzed through the lens of the stages of grief, as outlined by psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross. The poem explores her experience of loss and the subsequent mourning process after the death of her husband. Mrs. Lazarus moves through various stages of grief, including denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Each stage represents her attempts to come to terms with her husband's death and find a sense of emotional resolution. Psychoanalytically, Mrs. Lazarus's mourning can be seen as a representation of the complexities and conflicts inherent in the process of letting go. Her struggle revolves around the tension between holding onto the memory of her husband and accepting the reality of his absence. The poem portrays her deep emotional attachment to her husband and her difficulty in detaching from their shared past.

Denial is obvious in her words “**Retched his name over and over again**” and we can see the anger in her shouting “**Dead, Dead**”. Her bargaining stage appeared with when she tried to cope with the loss and accept the death of her husband by any means possible:

**noosed the double knot of a tie around
my bare neck,
gaunt nun in the mirror, touching
herself. I learnt
the Stations of Bereavement, the icon
of my face
in each bleak frame; but all those
months
he was going away from me, dwindling
to the shrunk size of a snapshot.** (Duffy, 45)

Her depression is clear when she starts going forth and back in her thoughts of missing him and being unable to choose whether she misses him or misses human intimacy:

**Then he was gone. Then he was legend,
language;
my arm on the arm of the
schoolteacher-the shock
of a man's strength under the sleeve of
his coat-
along the hedgerows. But I was faithful
for as long as it took. Until he was
memory.** (Duffy, 45)

This schoolteacher became also her acceptance stage which appeared in her last lines where she accepted her loss fully and moved on with another man, and when her late husband appeared again she resented him for appearing after all she had been through “**croaking his cuckold name, disinherited, out of his time.**”

Furthermore, Mrs. Lazarus's character can be analyzed through the concept of melancholia. In psychoanalytic theory, melancholia is a condition characterized by intense mourning and self-blame. Mrs. Lazarus's feelings of guilt and self-blame can be seen as a manifestation of her unconscious identification with her deceased husband. Her mourning process becomes intertwined with a sense of personal loss and a questioning of her own identity and purpose without her husband. Additionally, the persona of Mrs. Lazarus can be explored in terms of the concept of the uncanny. The uncanny represents something strangely familiar yet unsettling. Mrs. Lazarus's struggle to let go of her husband can be seen as an encounter with the uncanny, as she grapples with the paradoxical feelings of familiarity and unease associated with his absence. The poem delves into the psychological discomfort that arises when confronted with the presence of absence, blurring the boundaries between life and death.

She experiences the need for his presence after she mourns him and starts noticing his absence fully with the disappearance of his smell from the house “**His scent went from the house.**” Her acceptance stage is clearly shown in her refusal of his coming back to life. She resented him after she mourned him in the first lines, to appear in the last lines as someone who is unhappy with his return (Rahman, 92) :

He lived. I saw the horror on his face.

I heard his mother's crazy song. I breathed

his stench; my bridegroom in his rotting shroud,

moist and dishevelled from the grave's slack chew,

croaking his cuckold name, disinherited, out of his time.(Duffy, 45)

Mrs. Lazarus in *The World's Wife* can be analyzed psychoanalytically, examining her grief, mourning process, and psychological dynamics. Through this analysis, we gain a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between attachment and loss, the stages of grief, the concept of melancholia, and the experience of the uncanny. Mrs. Lazarus's character sheds light on the profound emotional journey of mourning and the psychological complexities involved in coping with loss.

The persona of Mrs. Quasimodo in *The World's Wife* provides insights into the themes of self-image and self-acceptance, shedding light on the psychological struggles faced by individuals whose appearances deviate from societal norms. Mrs. Quasimodo's character can be analyzed through the lens of self-image and body image issues. Psychoanalytically, individuals develop their self-image based on internalized perceptions of their own physical appearance and how they believe others perceive them. Mrs. Quasimodo embodies the internalized shame and societal pressures individuals face when their physical appearance deviates from the societal norm of conventional beauty. Her journey can be seen as a quest for self-love and self-acceptance despite external judgment. Mrs. Quasimodo's desire to be seen and loved for who she truly is reflects the human need for validation and acceptance. Psychoanalytically, this desire can be linked to the development of a healthy ego, which involves integrating and accepting all aspects of oneself, including physical appearance. (Rahman, 93)

Most of her poems in *The World's Wife* can be cited as examples of using harsh, abusive words by women. I am quoting how Mrs. Quasimodo revenges herself upon her husband who is attracted to a slim gypsy: ‘I should have known./Because it’s better, isn’t it, to be well

formed./Better to be slim, be slight,/your slender neck quoted between two thumbs;/[...]/And given sanctuary/But not betrayed./Not driven to an ecstasy of loathing yourself:/banging your ugly head against a wall,/gaping in the mirror at your heavy dugs,/your thighs of lard,/your mottled upper arms;/thumping at your belly--/look at it--/your wobbling gut’. (Das, 119)

Moreover, Mrs. Quasimodo's persona can be examined through the concept of body dysmorphia, a psychological condition characterized by an excessive preoccupation with perceived flaws in physical appearance. The poem explores Mrs. Quasimodo's struggles with self-perception and her internalized belief that she is repulsive and unworthy of love. Her feelings of self-disgust and unworthiness can be analyzed through the psychoanalytic concept of the superego, the internalized moral conscience that shapes one's self-judgment based on societal norms and expectations. Mrs. Quasimodo's journey towards self-acceptance can also be seen as an exploration of the role of the unconscious mind in shaping self-perception. Psychoanalytically, the unconscious mind holds repressed desires, fears, and beliefs that influence one's perception of oneself and the world. Mrs. Quasimodo's transformation from self-loathing to self-acceptance represents the liberation of these repressed desires and a recognition of her own worth beyond societal beauty standards. Her liberation is transformed into violence behavior toward others, she transformed her anger and lack of confidence due to the betrayal of Quasimodo to action which led her to action: (Das, 119) “**When I was done,/ and bloody to the wrist/ I squatted down among the murdered music of the bells / and pissed**” (Duffy, 65)

Mrs. Quasimodo in *The World's Wife* can be analyzed from a psychoanalytic perspective, exploring themes of self-image, self-acceptance, and the psychological struggles faced by individuals whose appearances deviate from societal norms. Through this analysis, we gain a deeper understanding of the psychological dynamics, societal pressures, and the journey toward self-love and acceptance experienced by Mrs. Quasimodo.

Mrs. Quasimodo, Mrs. Midas, Mrs. Lazarus, Queen Herod, and Mrs. Beast serve as rich representations of complex female personas, each navigating their own unique psychological conflicts. Carol Ann Duffy's exploration of these characters allows us to delve into the intricacies of the human psyche and the diverse range of experiences and emotions that women can embody. By presenting a variety of female perspectives, Duffy

highlights the multidimensionality and complexity of women's inner lives. Each of these personas embodies different aspects of the human psyche, offering distinct psychological insights. Mrs. Quasimodo represents the struggle with self-perception and self-acceptance, encapsulating the longing to be seen and loved beyond external appearances. Mrs. Midas delves into desires and anxieties within intimate relationships, portraying the fear of losing love and the consequences of unchecked desires. Mrs. Lazarus explores the profound psychological journey of grief and mourning, unveiling the stages and complexities of the grieving process. Queen Herod embodies the psychological dynamics of power and control. Her character illustrates the intricate interplay between desires for dominance, societal expectations, and rebellion against established norms. Through her actions, Queen Herod allows us to examine the darker aspects of human nature and the consequences of unchecked power. Mrs. Beast confronts the paradoxical nature of desire, encapsulating the conflicting emotions of attraction and repulsion. Her character explores the fear of the unknown, the acceptance of one's unique identity, and the complexity of integrating contrasting aspects of the self. By delving into these psychological conflicts, Duffy prompts us to reflect on our desires, fears, and the intricate nuances of human nature. Across these personas, common themes emerge, such as desire, power dynamics, grief, self-image, and the search for self-acceptance. These themes are integral to the human experience and reflect the universal struggles and aspirations we all face. Through these characters, Duffy offers a profound exploration of the human condition, inviting readers to examine their psychological conflicts, desires, and the quest for self-understanding and acceptance. the personas of Mrs. Quasimodo, Mrs. Midas, Mrs. Lazarus, Queen Herod, and Mrs. Beast in *The World's Wife* embody the complexity of female experiences and grapple with various psychological conflicts. Each character represents different aspects of the human psyche, while collectively exploring themes such as desire, power dynamics, grief, self-image, and the search for self-acceptance. Through these multifaceted portrayals, Duffy offers profound insights into the intricate layers of the human psyche and invites readers to contemplate their psychological journeys. (Das, 114)

Mrs. Quasimodo, Mrs. Midas, Mrs. Lazarus, Queen Herod, and Mrs. Beast can be understood as representations of unconscious desires and fears. Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory posits that the human mind consists of three components: the id, ego, and superego. The id represents the instinctual drives and desires, the ego mediates between the id and external reality, and the superego encompasses internalized moral standards and

societal expectations (Freud, 19). In the poems featuring these personas, their actions and behaviors provide insights into the interplay between the id, ego, and superego. For instance, Mrs. Quasimodo's longing for acceptance and love despite her physical appearance reflects the id's desire for gratification and connection. Her struggles with societal expectations and her internalized beliefs about beauty showcase the influence of the superego. Similarly, Mrs. Midas's transformation of her husband into gold reflects the manifestation of unconscious desires and fears. The id's desire for material wealth and power is expressed through her actions, while the superego's moral standards are challenged as she grapples with the consequences of her actions. Mrs. Lazarus's journey through grief and mourning also involves the interplay between the id, ego, and superego. Her stages of grief can be seen as the ego's attempt to navigate between the overwhelming emotions of loss represented by the id and the superego's expectation of acceptance and moving forward. Queen Herod's actions, driven by her thirst for power and control, reflect the id's desire for dominance. Her defiance of societal norms and expectations demonstrates the ego's negotiation between her inner desires and external reality, while the superego's moral standards are pushed aside in her pursuit of power. Mrs. Beast's conflicting emotions of attraction and repulsion embody the id's complex and contradictory desires. Her internal struggles with accepting her unique identity and integrating opposing aspects of herself demonstrate the ego's attempt to balance these conflicting forces, influenced by the superego's judgment. The personas of Mrs. Quasimodo, Mrs. Midas, Mrs. Lazarus, Queen Herod, and Mrs. Beast can be interpreted as representations of unconscious desires and fears. Their actions and behaviors reflect the interplay between the id, ego, and superego, as they navigate their desires, societal expectations, and internal conflicts. By examining these characters through a psychoanalytic lens, we gain insights into the complexities of the human mind and the intricate dynamics that shape their thoughts, actions, and emotional experiences.

Mrs. Quasimodo's character in *The World's Wife* delves into the complex dynamics of self-perception and self-acceptance. She embodies the experiences of individuals who face societal judgment and rejection due to their physical appearance. Through Mrs. Quasimodo's journey, Carol Ann Duffy shines a light on the struggle and pain that comes with feeling marginalized and deemed unworthy solely based on external appearances. Mrs. Quasimodo's story represents the internal battle that many individuals face when confronted with societal beauty standards. Her character is burdened by internalized shame, a deeply ingrained belief that she is inherently repulsive and

unlovable due to her physical features. This internal struggle is a reflection of the psychological impact of societal pressures and the damaging effects they can have on an individual's self-perception. As Mrs. Quasimodo embarks on her journey toward self-acceptance, the poem underscores the importance of overcoming external judgments and embracing one's true self. Her transformation is not just a physical one but an emotional and psychological evolution. It highlights the profound need for individuals to cultivate self-love and acceptance that extends beyond the surface level and reaches the core of their being. Through Mrs. Quasimodo's experiences, the poem challenges society's narrow definition of beauty and prompts readers to question the damaging effects of such rigid standards. By delving into her struggles and ultimate triumph over self-doubt, Carol Ann Duffy encourages a broader understanding of beauty—one that encompasses individuality, uniqueness, and the strength to rise above societal expectations. Mrs. Quasimodo's journey towards self-acceptance offers a message of empowerment and resilience. It emphasizes the importance of recognizing and valuing one's inherent worth beyond physical appearances. By rejecting the external judgments imposed upon her, Mrs. Quasimodo reclaims her agency and challenges the notion that beauty should be the sole determinant of one's self-worth. Her story serves as an inspiration for individuals who grapple with similar challenges, reminding them that self-love and acceptance are within their reach. Mrs. Quasimodo's character in *The World's Wife* serves as a poignant exploration of self-perception and self-acceptance. Her journey represents the struggle faced by individuals who are judged and rejected based on their physical appearance. By overcoming internalized shame and societal pressures, Mrs. Quasimodo highlights the significance of embracing one's true self and finding self-love and acceptance beyond external appearances. Her story serves as a powerful reminder of the resilience and strength that can be found in challenging societal norms and embracing one's unique identity.

Mrs. Midas serves as a character who delves into the complex realm of intimate relationships. Through her transformation of her husband into gold, she explores the desires and anxieties that can arise within the context of love and affection. Her act of turning her husband into an inanimate object reflects the underlying fear of losing the emotional and physical connection that defines a romantic relationship. Mrs. Midas's story can be examined through the lens of castration anxiety. This concept, derived from Freudian psychoanalysis, refers to the fear of losing or being deprived of a desired object or quality. In Mrs. Midas's case, her anxiety centers around the fear of losing her husband's love, affection, and sexual presence, which is symbolically

represented by his transformation into an unfeeling, golden statue. Furthermore, Mrs. Midas's narrative touches upon the themes of the Oedipal complex. This psychological concept, also rooted in psychoanalysis, involves the unconscious desires and conflicts that arise within familial relationships. Mrs. Midas's actions can be seen as a manifestation of her unconscious desire for control and possession over her husband, reminiscent of the Oedipal struggle for dominance and affection within the family structure. As Mrs. Midas turns her husband to gold, her actions can also be interpreted as a defense mechanism to protect herself from the painful truth of potential loss and rejection. Denial, a psychological defense mechanism, allows individuals to avoid or minimize threatening or distressing thoughts or experiences. Mrs. Midas's transformation of her husband can be seen as a way for her to deny the possibility of losing him, shielding herself from the emotional pain associated with abandonment or the deterioration of their relationship. Ultimately, Mrs. Midas's character highlights the complex dynamics that exist within intimate relationships and the anxieties that can arise when confronted with the possibility of losing love, intimacy, and sexual connection. Through her transformation of her husband and her psychological struggles, Carol Ann Duffy delves into the profound fears and desires that shape our understanding of romantic relationships and the defense mechanisms we employ to cope with those anxieties. Mrs. Midas in *The World's Wife* offers a poignant exploration of the desires and anxieties associated with intimate relationships. Her transformation of her husband into gold represents the fear of losing love, intimacy, and sexual connection. Through a psychoanalytic lens, her character grapples with concepts such as castration anxiety, the Oedipal complex, and defense mechanisms like denial. Through Mrs. Midas's story, Duffy invites readers to reflect on the complex dynamics of love, desire, and the profound fears that can shape our relationships.

Mrs. Lazarus serves as a poignant portrayal of the psychological processes associated with grief and mourning. Her character provides insights into the various stages of grief as she navigates the emotional journey of losing her husband. From denial and anger to bargaining, depression, and eventual acceptance, Mrs. Lazarus's experiences mirror the well-known stages of grief proposed by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross. Mrs. Lazarus's character embodies the intricate and complex nature of the grieving process. Letting go of a loved one is a profound psychological challenge, and Mrs. Lazarus's journey portrays the internal conflicts and struggles associated with this process. Her character encapsulates the multifaceted aspects of grief, including the longing to hold on to the past and the pain of separation. Furthermore, Mrs. Lazarus's

identification with the deceased plays a significant role in her grieving process. In her attempts to cope with the loss, she may find herself adopting aspects of her husband's identity, incorporating them into her own sense of self. This psychological phenomenon, known as identification, allows her to maintain a connection with her late husband, blurring the boundaries between their identities. Mrs. Lazarus's struggle to redefine her own identity without her partner is a central theme in her narrative. After the loss, she confronts the challenge of rebuilding her life and forming a new sense of self that is independent of her marital role. This process involves grappling with questions of self-identity, purpose, and personal growth, as she seeks to establish her own individuality and navigate the world as a widow. Through Mrs. Lazarus's character, Carol Ann Duffy sheds light on the universality of grief and the complex psychological terrain it encompasses. Her journey invites readers to reflect on their own experiences of loss and the emotional rollercoaster that accompanies mourning. By delving into Mrs. Lazarus's story, Duffy explores the intricacies of human emotions, the resilience of the human spirit, and the transformative power of acceptance and healing. Mrs. Lazarus in *The World's Wife* delves into the psychological processes of grief and mourning. Her character experiences the stages of grief, including denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance, as she copes with the loss of her husband. From a psychoanalytic perspective, she embodies the complexities of letting go, the identification with the deceased, and the struggle to redefine her own identity without her partner. Through Mrs. Lazarus's story, Duffy offers a poignant exploration of grief, inviting readers to contemplate the universal experience of loss and the profound psychological journey of healing and self-discovery.

Queen Herod emerges as a character embodying a relentless pursuit of power and control. Her actions and decisions reflect a deep-seated desire to dominate and assert her authority over others. By examining Queen Herod's character, readers are invited to explore the complex dynamics of power and the ways in which individuals can be driven to extreme measures to maintain control. Queen Herod's behavior can be understood as a projection of her fears and insecurities onto others. Her relentless pursuit of power may stem from deep-rooted anxieties about losing control or being vulnerable. By exerting dominance and manipulating those around her, Queen Herod attempts to ward off her own fears and assert her strength and superiority. Queen Herod's character also challenges societal norms and expectations. Her actions can be seen as a rebellion against the established order and the constraints placed upon women in positions of power. By defying expectations and embracing aggression as a means of

maintaining control, she challenges the traditional gender roles and expectations placed upon women, highlighting the complexity of power dynamics and the ways in which they intersect with gender. The interplay between Queen Herod's unconscious desires for dominance and her internalized moral conscience adds depth to her character. On one hand, she is driven by an insatiable thirst for power, which represents her unconscious desires. On the other hand, her internalized moral compass may create a sense of conflict and tension within her psyche, resulting in aggressive and morally ambiguous actions. Through Queen Herod's character, Carol Ann Duffy explores the darker aspects of human nature and the complexities of power dynamics. Queen Herod serves as a cautionary figure, illustrating the destructive consequences that can arise when power and control are prioritized above empathy and compassion. Her character challenges readers to examine their own relationships with power, shedding light on the potential for both liberation and corruption within the pursuit of dominance. Queen Herod in *The World's Wife* represents the persona driven by power and control. Her extreme actions and manipulation can be analyzed through the lens of power dynamics, projection of fears, and rebellion against societal norms. From a psychoanalytic viewpoint, Queen Herod's character explores the interplay between her unconscious desires for dominance and her internalized moral conscience, resulting in a manifestation of aggression and defiance of societal expectations. Through her portrayal, Duffy prompts readers to reflect on the complexities of power, the effects of unchecked ambition, and the ways in which societal expectations shape and influence our behaviors.

Mrs. Beast's character serves as a compelling exploration of the tension between attraction and repulsion. She embodies the complexities of desire, where the allure of the unknown and the forbidden coexist with a fear of the unfamiliar. Mrs. Beast's narrative invites readers to reflect on the paradoxical nature of desire and the internal conflicts that arise when confronted with conflicting emotions. Mrs. Beast's story delves into the theme of self-acceptance. Her character grapples with accepting and embracing her own identity, which encompasses both light and dark aspects of her psyche. By portraying Mrs. Beast's struggle, Carol Ann Duffy invites readers to contemplate the complexities of the human condition and the journey toward self-acceptance, including the acknowledgment and integration of contrasting elements within oneself. Psychoanalytically, Mrs. Beast's character represents the internal struggle to reconcile contrasting elements within the psyche. She embodies the archetype of the shadow, which encompasses the repressed or hidden aspects of an individual's personality. Mrs. Beast's journey involves confronting and

integrating her shadow self, symbolizing the process of embracing the suppressed or rejected aspects of her being. The uncanny, a concept explored in Mrs. Beast's narrative, plays a significant role in her character's development. The uncanny refers to the strange or unfamiliar that is both intriguing and unsettling. Mrs. Beast's experiences and encounters with the unknown evoke feelings of fascination, fear, and discomfort. Through this exploration of the uncanny, readers are encouraged to confront their own fears and examine the duality of attraction and repulsion within their lives. Mrs. Beast's character offers a profound reflection on the complexities of human desires and the quest for self-acceptance. Through her story, Duffy delves into the depths of the human psyche, inviting readers to explore their desires, fears, and the journey towards embracing the complete spectrum of their identities. Mrs. Beast serves as a reminder that true self-acceptance requires acknowledging and integrating the contradictory aspects of one's being. Mrs. Beast in *The World's Wife* embodies the tension between attraction and repulsion, exploring themes of desire, the fear of the unknown, and self-acceptance. Her character delves into the uncanny and the complexities of embracing both light and dark aspects of one's own psyche. From a psychoanalytic viewpoint, Mrs. Beast represents the struggle to integrate and accept the contrasting elements within oneself. Through her portrayal, Duffy encourages readers to embrace the paradoxes of their desires, confront their fears, and embark on a journey of self-acceptance that encompasses the full spectrum of their identities.

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