

CAROL ANN DUFFY  
**MEAN  
TIME**

ANVIL

APPOINTED POET LAUREATE 2009  
WINNER OF THE FORWARD POETRY PRIZE  
& THE WHITBREAD POETRY AWARD 1993

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## Mean Time Carol Ann Duffy

Winner of the Forward Poetry Prize and the Whitbread Poetry Award 1993 In her fourth collection, *Mean Time*, Carol Ann Duffy dramatizes scenes from childhood, adolescence and adulthood, finding moments of grace or consolation in memory, love and language amid the complexities of life. These are powerful poems of loss, betrayal and desire. Carol Ann Duffy was born in Glasgow in 1955. Her awards include first prize in the 1983 National Poetry Competition; three Scottish Arts Council Book Awards; Eric Gregory, Somerset Maugham and Dylan Thomas Awards in Britain and a 1995 Lannan Literary Award in the USA. In 1993 she received the Forward Poetry Prize and the Whitbread Poetry Award for her acclaimed fourth collection *Mean Time*. On May 1, 2009 she was named the Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom.

## Mean Time Details

Date : Published June 1st 2004 by Carcanet Press Ltd. (first published 1993)

ISBN : 9780856463037

Author : Carol Ann Duffy

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## From Reader Review Mean Time for online ebook

### J.S. Watts says

Carol ann Duffy's 1993 fourth collection is classic Duffy. These poems are mini tales of memory and the complexities of life from childhood to adulthood. Tightly coiled images and precision wording make for some excellent poetry

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### Colin says

Carol Ann Duffy has never been one of my 'go to' poets in the way that Larkin, Hardy, Auden or Simon Armitage are, but I came across a recommendation for Mean Time, Duffy's fourth collection, first published in 1993 in a review of another book. I found it something of a mixed bag - not in terms of quality and inventiveness - but in the way in which some poems engaged my attention in a much more direct way than others. With underlying themes of time and mutability, it's a fairly downbeat collection. The final poem, Prayer, with its litany of unexpected everyday comforts, is much anthologised and one of my favourite modern poems.

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### Beth Kennedy says

Duffy has been one of my favourite poets since I was a teenager. I received The World's Wife as a gift from my feminist English teacher and it remains one of my favourite collections.

So today I decided to read Mean Time. I'm giving this a 3.5 star review as I found it personally to be a bit hit and miss.

However, some of the stand-out poems in my opinion include Before You Were Mine, Valentine, Steam, Havisham, Sleeping, The Grammar of Light, First Love, Small Female Skull and The Good Teachers. So there is plenty to keep you reading!

Perhaps I shouldn't have read The World's Wife first, then!

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### Lea Dokter says

I absolutely adore Duffy and this collection only added to my infatuation. "Valentine" is my personal favourite.

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### Moushumi Ghosh says

Another brilliant collection from Duffy. Some poems stay with you long after you have closed the book.

Personal favourites include 'Valentine' and 'Away and See'. These are timeless poems. Duffy is a national treasure.

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### C.E. G says

I love Carol Ann Duffy! So dark and clever. Favorite poems in the collection: Valentine, Adultery, Drunk.

Look at the smarts:

"On the motorway bridge, I waved at windscreens,  
oddly hurt by the blurred waves back, the speed.

So I let a horse in the noisy field sponge at my palm  
and invented, in colour, a vivid lie for us both."

-Stafford Afternoons

"Wear dark glasses in the rain.  
Regard what was unhurt  
as though through a bruise.  
Guilt. A sick, green tint.

New gloves, money tucked in the palms,  
the handshake crackles. Hands  
can do many things. Phone.  
Open the wine. Wash themselves. Now

you are naked under your clothes all day,  
slim with deceit. Only the once  
brings you alone to your knees,  
miming, more, more, older and sadder,

creative. Suck a lie with a hole in it  
on the way home from a lethal, thrilling night  
up against a wall, faster. Language  
unpeels a lost cry. You're a bastard.

Do it do it do it. Sweet darkness  
in the afternoon; a voice in your ear  
telling you how you are wanted,  
which way, now. A telltale clock

wiping the hours from its face, your face  
on a white sheet, gasping, radiant, yes.  
Pay for it in cash, fiction, cab-fares back  
to the life which crumbles like a wedding-cake.

Paranoia for lunch; too much  
to drink, as a hand on your thigh  
tilts the restaurant. You know all about love,  
don't you. Turn on your beautiful eyes

for a stranger who's dynamite in bed, again  
and again; a slow replay in the kitchen  
where the slicing of innocent onions  
scalds you to tears. Then, selfish autobiographical sleep

in a marital bed, the tarnished spoon of your body  
stirring betrayal, your heart over-ripe at the core.  
You're an expert, darling; your flowers  
dumb and explicit on nobody's birthday.

So write the script - illness and debt,  
a ring thrown away in a garden  
no moon can heal, your own words  
commuting to bile in your mouth, terror -

and all for the same thing twice. And all  
for the same thing twice. You did it.  
What. Didn't you. Fuck. Fuck. No. That was  
the wrong verb. This is only an abstract noun."

-Adultery

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### **Jess says**

I find Duffy bleak and depressing. Her poetry is dull and bland.

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### **Sirhana says**

Some poems really shine upon re-reading.

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### **Rebecca says**

This is my favorite of the three Duffy collections I've read thus far. I'd encountered "Valentine" before. Like "Stuffed," about a sadistic taxidermist, it's gently creepy; an offbeat love poem turns into something almost

disturbing, with vocabulary like “blind,” “fierce,” “Lethal” and “knife.” There’s a subtle chronological progression in the collection: nostalgia for childhood leads into faltering relationships, with a late hint of happy grown-up life in “The Windows.” I especially liked “Caul,” “Havisham,” and “The Biographer.” My two favorites were “Small Female Skull,” about having compassion for one’s self, and the title poem, about a winter night closing in early on the heartbroken narrator.

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### **Fenner Books Skeet haha jk don't write that says**

it was alrite, i liked the one about sleep i forgot what its called

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### **Veronica says**

I wrote my Extended Essay on Carol Ann Duffy's poems. It was actually a poem from this specific collection, but I never actually read any of the others. After reading the whole collection, I still think Valentine is my favorite. But maybe that's only because I analyzed this poem in depth and therefore have a much greater understanding of this poem than of the rest. I adore how Duffy rejects the conventional idea of love by introducing an object such as an onion as a representation of love.

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### **Francesca says**

This volume didn't speak to me at all.

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### **Andy Luke says**

Too removed, too misjudging in assumption, poetryist trappings of self-reference, form and succinct-as-garble, it said little to me about my life. There's cruelty abounding, in 'The Grammar of Light', 'Havisham', 'Never Go Back', 'Adultery'. Yes, many pieces have a choice phrases like 'dustjacket smile', but this was lacking familiarity, intimacy, humour and relevance. Yes there are stellar poems: the hopefully whispering 'Prayer'; the easy yet intimate 'Beachcomber'; the beautiful 'Oslo' and 'Mean Time', playing with social reality to grasp mortality.

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### **georgia ? says**

*"It seems we live in those staggering years  
Only to haunt them"*

i'm currently studying this for school- and duffy just has such a wonderful way with words. i think taking each poem apart and highlighting key themes and ideas has only served to make me appreciate it even more.

*"The way the shy stars go stuttering on".*

i don't absolutely love every poem in this collection- but the ones i do love more than make up for the not-so-great ones.

a few of my favourites: adultery, the grammar of light, confession, never go back, fraud.

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### **Maud says**

I actually really liked these poems, especially after we discussed them in class so they made more sense.

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