

# Wendy Cope Serious Concerns

Poetry



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## Serious Concerns Wendy Cope

Wendy Cope's first book of poems and parodies, **Making Cocoa for Kingsley Amis**, went straight into the bestseller lists. Its successor, **Serious Concerns** has proved even more popular, addressing such topics as 'Bloody Men', 'Men and Their Boring Arguments', 'Two Cures for Love', 'Kindness to Animals' and 'Tumps' (Typically Useless Male Poets).

## Serious Concerns Details

Date : Published March 18th 2002 by Faber Faber (first published January 1st 1992)

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Author : Wendy Cope

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## From Reader Review Serious Concerns for online ebook

### Isabell says

I really enjoyed this little book of poetry.

A favorite was I Worry, and I think it's a great example of Wendy Cope's overall style. Witty but not cynical, poignant but light:

"I worry about you-  
So long since we spoke.  
Love, are you downhearted,  
Dispirited, broke?

I worry about you.  
I can't sleep at night.  
Are you sad? Are you lonely?  
Or are you all right?

They say that men suffer  
As badly, as long.  
I worry, I worry,  
In case they are wrong."

In their honesty, most poems are very personal and some are moving.

I especially enjoyed the pieces in which she replies to/comments on reviews of her own work and/or pokes fun at poets, writers, publishers, the whole bunch of them.

somewhere between 3 and 4 stars.

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### Bryn (Plus Others) says

This had more poems that I felt strongly about than her first collection, so all in all I think I like it more. As always, some do not work for me, but many did, and some of the love poems in particular are very moving.

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### Laura says

If you think you don't like poetry - euuuh,  
We had to do it in school.  
Try this - you'll never look back.

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## **Edward says**

### *Acknowledgements*

#### **I**

- Bloody Men
- Flowers
- Defining the Problem
- The Aerial
- The Orange
- Some More Light Verse
- As Sweet
- Loss
- Another Unfortunate Choice
- Valentine

#### **II**

- Serious Concerns
- An Unusual Cat-Poem
- A Christmas Poem
- The New Regime
- Kindness to Animals
- A Green Song
- The Concerned Adolescent
- Goldfish Nation
- Roger Bear's Football Poems
- Roger Bear's Philosophical Pantoum

Two Hand-Rhymes for Grown-ups,

- 1 The Shrink
- 2 Publishers

#### **III**

- The Uncertainty of the Poet
- Tumps
- Poem Composed in Santa Barbara
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- The Poet's Song
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- Variation on a Lennon and McCartney Song

--English Weather  
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--the homeless hammer

Ahead of My Time,  
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--Perplexity  
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## V

--Faint Praise  
--Men and Their Boring Arguments  
--I Worry  
--Two Cures for Love  
--Advice to Young Women  
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## VI

--Letter  
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--On a Country Bus  
--After the Lunch  
--In The Rhine Valley  
--New Season  
--Legacy  
--Names  
--For My Sister, Emigrating  
--Leaving

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### **Anna says**

an unmitigated delight!

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### **Warwick says**

Cope's second collection came out in 1992, a full six years after her first. It's another slim volume, Cope never being the most prolific poet – nevertheless, it was this that cemented her reputation, and when Ted

Hughes died in 1998 she was the popular choice to replace him as Poet Laureate. Instead it went to Andrew Motion. (Cope's name came up again when Motion stepped down in 2009, but this time Liz decided – probably rightly – on Carol Ann Duffy.)

The poems here reflect her increasing celebrity, with a few responding directly to critics. After a review in the *Spectator* commented – with magisterial condescension – that she writes primarily ‘to amuse’, Cope tossed off this:

Write to amuse? What an appalling suggestion!  
I write to make people anxious and miserable and to worsen their indigestion.

Elsewhere she seems to have been going through a more challenging time in her personal life, with many poems revolving around break-ups and general frustration with men, although her alertness to humour prevents her ever from slipping into cynicism. (This is indeed one of the uses of humour in life, as writers like Wendy Cope can teach you.)

### **Loss**

The day he moved out was terrible—  
That evening she went through hell.  
His absence wasn't a problem  
But the corkscrew had gone as well.

Some other titles alone give the flavour – ‘Bloody Men’, one of her most famous; or ‘Men and their Boring Arguments’. The final stanza of ‘I Worry’ will summarise the general mood:

They say that men suffer,  
As badly, as long.  
I worry, I worry,  
In case they are wrong.

Also falling into this category is one of her most anthologised poems, the short and awesome ‘Two Cures for Love’, which runs in its entirety:

### **Two Cures for Love**

1. Don't see him. Don't phone or write a letter.
2. The easy way: get to know him better.

Overall this is a wonderful book of poetry, perhaps her best. For some reason the one that always sticks in my head from this collection is 'Kindness to Animals', a poem she wrote for a fund-raising anthology produced by the World Wide Fund for Nature.

### **Kindness to Animals**

If I went vegetarian  
And didn't eat lambs for dinner,  
I think I'd be a better person  
And also thinner.

But the lamb is not endangered  
And at least I can truthfully say  
I have never, ever eaten a barn owl,  
So perhaps I am OK.

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The poem was, Cope notes, 'rejected as unsuitable'.

### **Rosemary says**

Excellent read for cheering anybody up on a rainy day, whether real or emotional rain. I think my favourite verse is the first one from "Men and Their Boring Arguments":

One man on his own can be quite good fun  
But don't go drinking with two -  
They'll probably have an argument  
And take no notice of you.

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### **Sophie says**

Yesterday was a tough day and I fancied a sprinkling of poetry.

I picked up two of Cope's collections after stumbling across one of her poems online. There are some real gems in this collection that I fell head over heels for, and then some that I didn't even finish reading. But I will read the collection I have of hers.

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### **Virginia Clay says**

I read this anthology because it had The Orange in it which is one of the most beautiful love poems I have read in its everydayness. However, I felt the rest of it was rather trite and my enjoyment inconsistent, I genuinely didn't like the way she talked about male poets - not because it's sexist which it is, but more

because I don't like trite generalisations forced into a rhythm and rhyme. Now and again though there would be the odd gem that caught me by surprise. For instance, the following very short poem about the death of her cat made me laugh uncontrollably and I immediately wanted to reach back through the pages and tell her.

### An Unusual Cat Poem

My Cat is dead.  
But I have decided not to make a big tragedy out of it.

It still makes me laugh now, writing it out. I am not at all sure why. Genius!

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### Sarin says

My favorite poet.

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### Lady Jane says

I will admit that I did not read the entire collection of poems; however, I very much enjoyed the poem "Bloody Men," which I shall post here and explain why henceforth.

Bloody men are like bloody buses;  
You wait for about a year,  
And as soon as one approaches your stop,  
Two or three others appear.

You look at them flashing their indicators,  
Offering you a ride.  
You're trying to read the destinations;  
You haven't much time to decide.

If you make a mistake, there is no turning back.  
Jump off, and you'll stand there and gaze  
While the cars and the taxis and lorries go by  
And the minutes, and hours, and days.

Wendy Cope (1945-)

I found this modern poem in one of the didactic handouts my classics and medieval literature professor gives us. I loved it because it's so true! This poem is soooo characteristic of the period in one's life when one is trying to choose amongst the suitors, and what happens when the person chooses the wrong suitor and is forced to get off the bus.

Before I got married, I used to think about the dating game as that part of the game show "The Price Is Right" when you are made to choose one of two closed doors while having no idea what's behind them... but after making the choice, if you make the wrong choice and it turns out the other door was the better choice,

you can't change your mind. The indecision of youth used to remind me so much of that game!

This poem can also be read by a man as "Bloody Women,", because the struggle of finding "the right one" is universal. I may be on the right bus now, but heaven knows it's hard as hell to find the right bus stop! I know it's a universal truth, and I know most of my friends would agree.

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### **Olivia says**

The humour, pathos and exquisite observations on women, relationships and the great journey that is life make this collection of poems fantastic. I think I'd go as far to say that Wendy Cope is my favourite poet of all time. Her poems are restrained but perfectly capture charming and often tragic moments of life and her level of skill is reflected in her tight stanzas which very often rhyme. A beautiful collection ??????????

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### **Zuberino says**

Moderately diverting collection of mostly comic poems. Cope is obviously quite skilled, etc - she can spin out arcane formats like pantoums and triolets - but five-sixths of this book is mere versifying. It is only in the final group of poems that we see anything approaching a poetic vision.

For the most part though, this is undemanding stuff that neither works hard nor asks it of the reader. Not sure I understand the reasons behind her one-time celebrity; God knows what it says about her audience.

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### **Robin Helweg-Larsen says**

This follow-up volume to Wendy Cope's brilliant "Making Cocoa for Kingsley Amis" is sad and disappointing. Lacking the scintillating parodies and bright spirits of the earlier volume, this collection of poems feels negative and repetitious. Her lines still bite, as in the couplet Two Cures for Love:

1. Don't see him. Don't call or write a letter.
2. The easy way: get to know him better.

But that couplet, which is a poem and gets a page to itself, exemplifies the sense of this volume being thin and bitter, by a poet disappointed and disappointing.

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### **Erica Zahn says**

I thought this was genius! It's rare to see a collection of poetry where all the poems are great (usually you end up saying something along the lines of "I liked some poems, but not others" – this doesn't make for a compelling review), but to my mind this is now only second to Ted Hughes' Crow in favourite collections of poetry. The poems are all extremely witty, relevant, and often biting and brutal on top.

Obviously Wendy Cope is a comedic poet, but I was pleasantly surprised by how vicious it was at times (and

I think it would annoy a lot of men! I feel one would get some cries of ‘misandry’ if one posted *Bloody Men* and *Men and their Boring Arguments* etc. on Twitter), and that she was confrontational enough to respond in poetic form to reviewers’ comments on her work directly within the text. I particularly loved the Houseman poem (called *Another Unfortunate Choice*) since I felt I could relate (!), and I’ve already memorised a few, including this one.

Apparently she drinks a lot too.

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