

Stafford Afternoons - Carol Ann Duffy

Summary

How many times in our childhoods are we asked the question: 'Where are you going?' And here in Carol Ann Duffy's evocative recollection of an afternoon adventure, we re-enter the liberating, yet unsettling territory of childhood. Childhood perhaps on the brink of Blakean experience, where innocence is sacrificed to worldly knowledge and threat.

Structure

- Six stanzas
- Written in quatrains
- No rhyme scheme
- The poem tells the story of innocence being lost and the stanzas get progressively darker as we read it- the first three are very positive images of childhood while the final three are more negative and dark.
- 'invented, in colour, a vivid lie for us both.'
Parenthesis
This line suggests that the persona is imagining fantasies of herself and the horse. 'In colour' suggests that the persona has a vivid imagination, as most children do.
- 'I knew it was dangerous'
Statement
Suggests the persona was aware that what they were doing was wrong but did it anyways-an act of childhood curiosity?
- 'The way the trees
drew sly faces from light and shadow, the wood
let out its sticky breath in the back of my neck
and flowering nettles gathered spit in their throats.'
Asyndeton
Emphasises the negativity of the place and it makes the tone feel much darker than the previous stanzas.
The list also suggests that there are countless or many terrible things in this wood, another possible example of vivid imagination.
- 'Too late'
Minor sentence
Suggests that the persona regrets what happened but cannot go back and change it.
- 'Touch'
Imperative and italics
This suggests that another person is talking to the persona.
The imperative suggests control and force.
- 'birds, a distant lawnmower,
his hoarse, frightful endearments'
Tripling and enjambment
The persona is torn from her fantasies and imaginations back into reality. However it does not come all at once, hence the enjambment.