
The Poetics of Sex Analysis

Across all cultures and civilizations, in every species and genus, sex is a pivotal biological activity that is practiced universally. There are hundreds of stigmas surrounding sex; some believe it has religious value, others believe it is merely for reproductive purposes. American society's overall views on sex have become more lenient over the past decades. However, one taboo that still exists is that of the mistreatment of individuals who practice homosexual sex. Even though this occurs even amongst animals in nature, many traditional religious members of society feel as if heterosexual sex is the only appropriate form and that homosexual sex is wrong. While there is scientific proof that homosexuality is often biological, this taboo still exists and homosexual couples are looked down upon and treated unequal by the society in control. *The Poetics of Sex* is a telling narrative that deals with these judgments imposed by society, as well as the stereotypes associated with homosexuality. Jeanette Winterson bluntly confronts and challenges the "normal" society in order to make them take a look at what they do not understand. She also solidifies her relationship with her girlfriend as being just as- if not more- passionate than heterosexual couples.

Winterson's narrative is filled with graphic details of her romantic relationship with Picasso, her female lover. She purposefully uses "vulgar" words and graphic imagery to slap society in the face, so to speak. There are many stereotypes that suggest that homosexual relationships revolve solely around sex. Instead of directly challenging those claims (which would likely be ignored), Winterson mocks them. She endeavors to be as offensive to traditional society as possible, forcing them to take a look at her and acknowledge her relationship. She wants to rock the boat and ruffle the feathers of her society. These attributes account for the postmodern era in which *The Poetics of Sex* was written. The postmodern movement endeavored to challenge the norm and create binary opposition between order and disorder. If "order" was heterosexuality, then "disorder" was homosexuality. Winterson purposefully created tension to point out the conflict between the two. This is an example of postmodernism. She also revealed of times when she and Picasso were mistreated and scorned for being 'different.' She recounts, "The world is full of blind people. They don't see Picasso and me dignified in our love. They see perverts, inverters, tribades, homosexuals. They see circus freaks and Satan worshippers..." Being the minority automatically invoked feelings of perversion in Winterson's peers. Instead of acknowledging that everyone is different, society creates standards of who is "right," who is "normal." It then compares everyone to those standards and outcasts anyone who does not fit into them.

Winterson also deals with specific women's issues in her narrative. In postmodernism, anything "non-male" is grouped into the genre of disorder. Society places women at a substandard to

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men. "Stay inside, don't walk the streets, bar the windows, keep your mouth shut, keep your legs together, strap your purse around your neck...don't risk it, don't try it." Women are taught from a young age to live in fear, that we are somehow the weaker sex. At the same time, young men are raised to be independent and strong and to fear nothing while protecting their female counterparts. These ideologies have cast women into the role of weakness, of being victims. We do face more violent crimes than men in many respects, but this is largely due to ideas that we are easier to overcome than men, so men are more willing to pursue victimizing women because they believe women are easy targets. This perpetuates the subjugation and oppression faced by women. These ideas need to be changed so that women no longer live in fear and can gain the due respect as strong, valuable members of society who are capable of surviving without men.

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