

Standing Female Nude

The poem "Standing Female Nude" by Carol Ann Duffy is written from the point of view of a nude model. The poem describes a day in the life of the dissatisfied model, which clearly shows that she finds her profession uninteresting. The tone at times is sombre although it is evident that towards the end of the novel the poem becomes more light-hearted. The grammar used in the poem is short and snappy adding to the feel of a visage of a very unenthusiastic model.

The model begins by informing the reader that she feels underpaid for the work that she does. "Six hours like this for a few francs." Since this is also the opening lines of the play we are left an impression of her uneasiness for the job, and we are left wondering whether this depressing attitude will continue. Her opening point of view is glum, yet it leaves us wondering why she has chosen a job that she is so unhappy about.

We gain great insight into the nature of her character in the next line. "Belly nipple arse in the window light." The sentence helps us to understand that her revealing job leaves her feeling exposed to the public, where all can see her through the "window light." Using language such as "arse" develops the overwhelming impression that she does not act like a stereotypical lady and is of a very lower-class background.

This is also a good example of imagery in the poem as it is easy to imagine her been overlooked while she sits naked whilst being painted. Our feelings of her humble upbringings are confirmed when she calls herself a "river-whore." This implies that she is a prostitute and she believes that because she is a prostitute that people will "coo" and make a fuss at her in the painting.

"They call it Art," strongly suggests that even though some people appreciate the works of the artist, that she does not consider it to be art, just merely smuttiness. "He drains the colour from me," suggests that the artist is taking away her vitality and interest, and she is left sitting bored and lack-lustre whilst he paints her.

In the second paragraph we learn that the relationship between the artist and his model is very distant since he is only concerned with "volume, and space." While the model is more concerned about her limited finances, and how she could afford her next meal. The way that the artist talks to her is polite since he refers to her as "Madame" although it is sterile and the way in which he says that she is becoming thinner must be frustrating for the model.

Her mind is in turmoil and the endless posing for the artist leads her to foresee the future. When prophesising, she has an image of the queen looking at her portrait and calling her "magnificent" and then moving on. She laughs, because she

imagines that one day the queen will look upon her, which is very unlikely. The laugh is therefore quite bitter. The “moving on” is on a separate line that emphasizes the fact that the queen is too important for her. This line brings comedy to the tone of the poem, since she is saying in a sarcastic way, why should the queen ever bother with me, as I am merely a model. She thinks that they are from too different cultures to integrate, and the thought that one day the queen might praise her brings about a bitter laugh.

“They tell me he’s a genius,” implies that she sarcastically does not think that he is as clever as other people say. She then says that he “stiffens for my warmth” which means that he longs to sleep with her. Although she replies in her monologue that “you’ve not the money to buy my arts.” The word “arts” in this sentence is a pun on words, since the major theme of this poem is art and the arts that she is referring to is concerned with her prostitution. She believes that the artist cannot afford to sleep with her because he is very poor. The way in which she describes the artist, it sounds as she looks down on him by calling him a “little man,” and I also think she enjoys the fact that this man wants to have her but she won’t let him. Her views of the artist convey that it is like he is a different world from hers. Her very down-to-earth language portrays great contrast with the fussy artist who is more concerned in how the model poses. For example the artist tells the model, “you’re getting thin...this is not good,” which clearly shows the artist is very much a perfectionist and is not concerned with the feelings of the model.

The last paragraph shows a contradictory tone to her earlier depressing mood, we learn that she enjoys having a good time. The contrasting characters of the model and the artist in this final paragraph change our earlier beliefs on the model. She says that the artist takes himself too seriously when in contrast we learn that she enjoys going to bars and drinking and dancing. It is perceived that she is glum all day at work although is able to return to normality by going out to bars and enjoying herself. This mention of her night-time antics and the fact that she now “smiles,” lifts the tone of the poem and brings relief from the previous dreary atmosphere.

She says, “It does not look like me.” When the painting is finished she shows no enthusiasm and cannot really be bothered about how the painting looks. She is only concerned about the money and is very demanding in the way that she says, “I say twelve francs.” It seems as if she is desperate for her money and wants back her freedom from a prison-like environment. She really has no feelings towards the artist and in a very orderly fashion she demands her money, and offers no compliment or thought to a painting that she has been modeling for. The way in which she says, ‘get my shawl,’ shows her feeling of superiority towards the artist as she talks to him in such a degrading manner.

The grammar throughout the poem is very abrupt and there is little emotion conveyed. Each point is quite blunt and is not necessarily related to the previous sentence. The way in which she speaks to the artist is not in the way of a friend, and the short sentences sometimes support the view of hostility towards her field of work. Sentences as short as the word, “maybe” create a feeling of uncertainty and helps convey unhappiness. Even though the poem is a monologue the random points don’t make it feel very personal, since the poem tells a story rather than conveys feelings. The sentence “Belly nipple arse in the window light,” has no commas or pauses within the words. This helps emphasize the harsh reality of her job as she is constantly in the eye of the public.

Each paragraph is unique and there is no strict scheme that is followed. It is unusual in the way that a sentence continues with no full-stop or comma between paragraphs, but that yet again adds the feeling that the model is not coherent. An example of this could be when the poem reads “his name is Georges,” between paragraphs. This sense of incoherence is carried throughout the poem and from as early on as the title, “Standing Female Nude.” The title is a sequence of words that are in quite an illogical order, although we understand the basic message, the fact that these words do not make proper sense give a feeling of incoherence or dysfunction. This unclear thinking could be attributed to her boredom since in the passage she also daydreams about the queen seeing her portrait.

The poem “Standing Female Nude” by Carol Ann Duffy is an interior monologue in which the model describes her unsatisfying job. Her relationship with the artist is obviously very distant, and at times it seems like the model feels a sense of superiority since she knows that he wants to sleep with her although she doesn’t let him. The tone is sombre although become more positive when she laughs about the queen and talks about visiting bars at night. The view of her job certainly conveys no interest, and she feels exposed to the public, and the short sentences give the impression of a very sterile, unemotional atmosphere. The last line states “It does not look like me,” can be used to sum up the poem since it shows no remorse or kindness. It reiterates that the model takes no care in her job, or the artist that paints her, and cares solely about her personal interests that are mainly to do with money.