Sharon Olds poem ‘Sex without Love’ is set in the form of questions and it flows on to give the answer to the questions asked. Olds poem is simple and presents clear and detailed view by the use of the style irony. The deep meaning of the poem is done by the use of what we consider normal objects such as the use of new born babies, ice skaters, and runners. In the beginning of the poem Olds posses the question “How do they do It? The once who make love without love. Olds then proceed to answer her question by use of a metaphor. She says “Beautiful… like ice skaters over ice”. Olds compares the act of love making without, love to the act of ice skating.

Ice skaters are just performers who are doing the act of skating just for the happiness and the beauty of it. Similarly she compares sex without love to ice skating and states that the act involves individual satisfaction of happiness. The use of ice-skates on ice is also symbolic of how sex without love is cold and without feelings just like the ice that the ice skaters are skating on. Line six, “wet as the children at birth…..give them away” portrays an abandoned image as she states that the mother are giving them away.

Naturally, children are supposed to bring joy, they are seen as a source of happiness but the scene of the children being abandoned makes the scene seem as cold as the use of ice skaters. Olds could be using this image as a metaphor to portray that sex without love may result to having unwanted pregnancies and unwanted children and the mother, once she gives birth to the child will not see it as a source of happiness. Olds has also used religious connotations when talking about sex without love. “…come to the God…”, “…false Messiah love the priest instead of the God.”

Olds uses these religious connotations to bring out the contradictory nature of the lifestyle of these sex partners who do no love each other. She uses the religious connotation to show that just at the religious people will aim at not believing in a false messiah, the sex partners will always look for love but will always find themselves in loveless partnerships. In line 15, Olds talks of “… are the true religious, the purists, the pros…” in this statement she is referring to the partners that are engaged in the sexual act without love who assume that they are deriving pleasure from themselves and not their partners.

The style of iron is also used in the statement “they do not mistake their…like great runners, they know they are alone.” Olds compares the loveless sex partners to runners who only run for the physical benefit. Similarly loveless sex partners are together just for the benefit of their physical pleasures. The message in the poem may be seen as blunt and harsh but Olds use of simple wording and simple and common objects to clearly portray loveless sex partners is what makes the poem appealing and interesting to read. Olds has majorly used irony to effectively
find answers to his questions. Her choice of words at the end of the poem “Single body, alone in the universe …” leaves the readers with an image of a lonely and loveless person.

Reference