

ENGLISH: *BIRTHDAY LETTERS*

The nature of experience as complex and dynamic manifests fluid perspectives on personalities and events. The expression and dialectic negotiation of subjective experience through texts provides a multi-dimensional prism of understanding for individuals. In exploring the complex and often conflicting perceptions of suffering, authors convey the limitations of objective representation, often to subvert and challenge their audience's pre-conceived ideas about accounts of experience. Ted Hughes dialogic collection of poems *Birthday Letters* act simultaneously as a confessional memoirs and an act of public purgation. In "Fulbright Scholars" and "Your Paris" Hughes explores the dichotomy of appearance and reality in representation and the intensely subjective nature of experience. Alan Resnais' *Hiroshima Mon Amour* further explores these notions, engaging more fervently with the act of remembrance as a dynamic influence on the individuals present subjectivity. Both texts are a testament to the complex nature of experience and inform and often subvert expectations to engage responders.

In "Fulbright Scholars" Hughes considers the duplicity of objective representation, challenging the audience's conceptions of truth and absolutism through his intrapersonal conflicting perspectives over the personality of Sylvia Plath. In expressing Hughes' embittered, antagonistic perspective of Plath, through the frozen 'picture' that mediates the poem, he presents a more sophisticated insight to the audience about Plath's personality. Images of performance and 'display' are sustained motifs throughout the poem and indicate the notion of façade. The mute photo Hughes says captured, 'Your Veronica Lake bang' and her 'Long hair, loose waves'. These romantic and sexualised images reflect both Hughes' innocent perception of Plath and the superficial, physical appearance presented to the audience. 'I remember that thought. Not your face. Your Veronica Lake Bang. Not what it hid.' Through asymmetric repetition Hughes remonstrates the superficial representation of Plath in the photo, contrasting it to his dynamic perspective of her personality informed by the sincerity of experience. In this way Hughes gleans an 'au courant' perception of Plath and her 'exaggerated American grin'. Thus Hughes deconstructs the public persona of Sylvia Plath, simultaneously constructing himself as the victim of her deceitful personality beyond the public eye. In highlighting the dichotomy between appearance and reality Hughes juxtaposes his informed perspective to that of the photograph, encouraging his audience to perforate objective representations of complex personalities.

Alan Resnais French New Wave film *Hiroshima Mon Amour* similarly challenges objective representation, juxtaposing the narrators' perspectives over suffering at Hiroshima. Through subverting textual forms he disillusions readers' often-hegemonic perceptions of events, contrasting the culturally informed perspective of the Japanese 'He' character to the naïve and inexperienced French 'She' character. 'The films were made as conscientiously as possible' refers to realist representations of Hiroshima, denounced by Resnais through the ironic meta-textual self-consciousness of the 'He' character. His directional choice to abandon the documentary genre further reflects his ethical opposition to an unmediated, 'true' representation of human suffering. He champions the intensely subjective nature of personal suffering through the repetitive antithetical dialogue between the narrators, the 'He' character's accusations that 'You are not endowed with memory'. Through jump cut editing and a minimalist approach to cinematic technique Resnais concedes the incomplete representation of experience, as texts are limited in their own ability to convey pure subjectivity. Thus Resnais disillusions his readers to the superficial, historicised veneer that often films records of experience. In collocating the perspectives of the native and the outsider, he engages his audience by asserting the indispensability of personal experience in accounts of events.

'Your Paris' demonstrates the culturally divergent perspectives of Hughes and Plath, engaging audiences' through the portrayal of a solipsistic construct. Through highlighting Plath's indulgent idealism, Hughes voices censure over her escapist, idealist personality.

Her intensely subjective view of the world around her Hughes' extrapolates to be solipsistic in nature, dominated and warped by her own values. He inaugurates this notion with, 'Your Paris, I thought, was American', juxtaposing cultural afflictions to illustrate the incompatibility of Plath's artistic perceptions with the refrain of the post-war moment. 'Your Paris was a desk in a pension' highlights further this critique, romantic imagery ravaged with antithesis as Hughes asserts his Paris, 'The capital/of Occupation and old nightmare'. Where Plath sees 'Apollinaire', Hughes sees human suffering, as informed by his English restraint and realist new. Hughes capitulates his criticisms of Plath by referring to her poetry and by extension her artistic paradigm as an 'anaesthetic'. This notion of escapism he challenges, using the same mechanics of mythologising to exaggerate Plath's repressive avoidance of hardship whilst seeking empathy for his victimized experience of suffering. In juxtaposing their antithetical post-war cultural perspectives, Hughes' demonstrates that overly subjective perceptions can be indulgent, and warns his audience through an insight into how those values may distort accounts of experience.

Hiroshima Mon Amour further explores the intensely subjective nature of memory, which is demonstrated to foster intrapersonal conflicting perspectives for the 'She' character's personality. Her attempt to forget her past trauma and retreat from the act of remembrance is comparable to Plath's indulgent solipsistic view, as both choose not to accept the suffering evident in their lives. By distinguishing her own perspectives, one free of suffering and one diminished by hardship, she engenders a personality crisis. This culminates in the most haunting scene of the film, where poetically cinematic shots of Hiroshima fuse with images of Nevers in France. This conflation of place, and more significantly the conflation of her memories, past and present, illustrates the potent and destructive act of reliving experience. The woman is thus stuck in a constant conflict between her own view of her personality past and present. Resnais thus demonstrates how pervading influence of memory can engender conflicting perspectives for individuals. Through juxtaposing the 'She' characters perspectives of her personality, one informed by suffering and one of naivety, he engages his audience, challenging them to confront and overcome personal suffering.

Conflicting perspectives are thus presented to be complex, and enlightening for responders. They expose the potentially reductive representation of memory and the consequences of solipsistic subjectivity. Hughes' Birthday Letters represent a profound and highly textual exploration of what it means to write about personal experience, whilst positioning his audience empathetically. Whilst Resnais Hiroshima Mon Amour empathises with personal subjectivity and champions the intersubjectivity of experience. Both texts are a testament to the complex nature of reality, engaging and informing responders with sophisticated insights about experience through the representation of personalities and events.