

ENGLISH ADVANCED

Birthday Letters

Your Paris Speech

Prior to looking at the poem, analysing the context and roots of Sylvia Plath, and Ted Hughes, the reader is able to observe and justify the dichotomy of the poem "Your Paris". Plath's views Paris in a stereotypical fashion of a tourist, and is enthused by its aesthetics. A true Englishman, Hughes lucid views are concentrated on the reminiscence of war and the sentimental views are contrasted to the shallow perceptions of Plath, create the confliction of perspectives.

The title itself gives credit to the division "Your Paris" this implies that this is Hughes's perspective of Plath's perspective- identifying the fact that both do not share a common view. This same element is carried throughout the opening of the poem, affirming that there are separate views by the dominating use of personal pronouns such as 'you' and 'your' contrasted to 'I' and 'Me'.

The first line – "Your Paris, I thought was American" shows the contrast of language in 'your' and 'I' on the appreciation upon Paris. Also 'I thought' is another way of saying 'in my opinion' or 'from my perspective' implying that this is Hughes' view. This also implies that in hindsight, saying 'thought' in a past tense indicates that his thoughts may have been wrong, and that Plath's views may have developed deeper than that just of a western tourist. Furthermore in the following lines he alludes back to this in 'Out of the Hotel des Deux Continents'. This in translation means hotel of two continents. As the reader, we know that Hughes is of English decent and he makes a point of stating 'American' in the first sentence symbolising clearly the divide between his British view of the world and her American perspective.

'I kept my Paris from you'. This is the cardinal line which highlights the differing perspectives, and contrasts with the opening line. It is implied that his Paris was more valid than hers, and his appreciation was vastly different.

Hughes describes his Paris as being 'a post-war utility survivor' a Paris that is characterised by the scars of WWII. 'Old nightmare', 'bullet scar' and 'stink of fear' are examples of the emotive language which are indicative of his recollection of war and the contrast to Plath's 'anecdotal aesthetic' appreciation which she embraces.

Hughes describes Plath's view of Paris being confined to its iconic image of romance and cafe lifestyle. Her discordant 'Shatter of exclamations' and fascinations of 'impressionist paintings'- relating to the image of Paris – was thought by Hughes to be justified by her 'American' culture. This poem essentially deals not just with perspectives, but between appearances and reality. This also ties in with the previous symbol of the hotel of two continents, perhaps also hinting at the duality of Plath's personality or the idea that Hughes and Plath were experiencing separate realities. In conjunction with his first 'thought', Hughes now sees that the 'Shatter of exclamations' was only a facade, and was to cover up a hidden reality of Plath.

Hughes describes her as speaking in a 'lingo' which was personal to her, and incomprehensible to him. Through the distance of time, Hughes now realises she was trying to hide the link she had made between the Nazis and her father, and introduces a third perspective, paradox to his initial view. She used the lingo to conceal her true self and demons, "to protect you from spontaneous combustion". She feigned bliss, and Hughes now refers to her as 'still hung waiting, for your torturer' an indication that their presence in Europe has reminded Plath of her father's roots, and has re-awaken the emotional 'torture' of which she felt. 'Daddy' by Sylvia Plath outlines that she 'thought every German' was her father. A subconscious implication, associated with the oppression she felt as a child. Relating her father to 'Not a God but a swastika', a Nazi, and herself as feeling

as if she was a Jew. Forms a symbolic representation of the fear of which she felt, 'Daddy' expresses this through "I never could talk to you, the tongue stuck in my jaw" and indication of the oppression she felt, and why now in response to Paris her tongue would not stop.

Hughes constructs an image of himself as a 'Mere dog...Happy to protect you', Hughes didn't understand firstly what was wrong with her at that time, but outlines 'Like a blind dog loyal to your stumbling', indicating he had no idea of what she was doing, and that she could not see either. Regardless he makes himself the point of sympathy and a victim. To this, Plath writes in 'Daddy', 'The Vampire (Hughes) who said he was you, drank my blood for a year, seven years'. In this perspective she orientates the readers eyes to her sympathy that she was victimised in the marriage and that he was sucking the life from her.

The sympathetic views to the point of egoistic loyalty to thy self is portrayed in both poems, symbolic use of loyalty associated with a blind dog, contrasted to the dark and wickedness with the imagery of a vampire shows conflicting imagery. The Hotel portrays the duality of not just continents as its obvious representation but the differences in reality and Plath's personality. The poem's title outlines the idea of 'Your Paris' not mine, in which Hughes constructs a division of both 'Yours' and 'My'. Finally through the furthered context of time, the third perspective is indicative of the truth which comes from perspective in hindsight, and the changing nature of views juxtapose to the paradox to what His initial 'thought' believed.