

Simon armitage in 'harmonium' and james fenton in 'in paris with you'

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In both "Harmonium" and "In Paris with you", a difficult relationship is portrayed though Armitage and Fenton write of two different kinds of relationships, the reader has no problem detecting the difficult relationship. One of the very first things we see in "In Paris with You" is the speaker's inability to say the words 'I'm in love you', frequently he says "I'm in Paris with you" as a replacement, using the city that is associated with love and romance instead. Perhaps Fenton is trying to portray that the speaker was hurt through a relationship in the past which is not allowing him to say the word "love" due to a painful association.

The only times the speaker ever mentions "love" is with negative connotations, he says "do not talk to me of love. Let's talk of Paris", "love" is portrayed in a bad light showing once again that the speaker may have had a less than comfortable encounter with it before. The speaker is likely speaking to a woman and asking for a relationship, and though we never see a response the difficulty of the situation can be seen as the speaker is obviously still in love with his previous lover, still "getting tearful" after "a drink or two".

A similar trait of omission can be seen in Harmonium, though far less subtle, at the end of the poem. The speaker's father has only just mentioned that the next box the speaker shoulders will "bear the freight of his own dead weight". However the speaker doesn't seem to be able to form a reply, "too starved of breath to make itself hear" The relationship between father and son is not shown by Armitage as very open, though a close bond is implied through the Harmonium, the speaker is unable to express his true emotions

in this situation suggesting that their relationship may be distant in terms of empathy.

There is an air of reminiscence in the poem, especially in phrases like " for a hundred years" or " where father and son,/ each in their time", the father and son hold a shared interest in the " Farrand Chapelette" as shown through the specific term, it must have played an important part in their past together for the speaker to remember the brand.

In this way Armitage may be suggesting that they used to have a close relationship, but have grown distant with time and age. The speaker looks back onto, perhaps fonder times where the Harmoniums " hummed harmonics still struck a chord" and " where father and son,/each in their time" had sung, implying that the speaker wants to have the relationship he used to have with his father, however the speaker still is not able to express his feelings clearly enough, only able to " mouth" a " shallow or sorry phrase". In " In Paris with You" there are also mentions of the past, in the very first line the speaker says " don't talk to me of love, I've had an earful" implying that the relationship is purely physical in his mind, this is further implied in the third stanza when the speaker asks to forgo a date.

" Do you mind if we do not go to the Louvre,/ if we say sod off to sodding Notre Dame,/ if we skip the Champs Elysees,/And remain here" in these three lines the speaker is very specific, this implies that going to the Louvre and Notre Dame is something he has done before, perhaps with his last lover, and is purposely trying to avoid doing it again and thereby avoiding a relationship. The speaker asks to skip the date and the romance, the speaker is not asking for love but sex, he says he's " in Paris with the slightest thing
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[she does]", " with [her] eyes," "[her] mouth" and " all points south", all very physical descriptions implying sex.

However though we never see the response, and we never know if the girl is hurt by this at all, that he only loves her body, but we do know that this relationship is fragile and centred on pleasure instead of love. In conclusion, I think that though the types of relationships can vary, the difficulties can be portrayed in similar ways like omission. The poems themselves are very different, one example being the pace, Harmonium is slow paced with lots of breaks in the lines, " gilded finches - like high notes - had streamed out". But " In Paris with You" is fast paced using iambic pentameter, " Don't talk to me of love, I've had an earful.