

Hughes and plath



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Discuss and Compare Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes and their poems in relation to Parenthood. Ted Hughes and Sylvia Plath are greatly renowned and intellectual poets. Their life together however was tragic and subsequently reflected in their poetry more often than not. Plath was a depressive and first attempted to commit suicide in 1953, but succeeded on February 11th 1963, after Ted Hughes's infidelity, which has later been claimed by many feminist groups to be the cause of her death, leaving Hughes as a single parent to their two children Nicholas and Frieda Hughes. However, they also had one miscarriage in 1961. More tragedy and parenting occurred later on in Hughes' life, when his second wife committed suicide and took their child of two years with her. Therefore, both had a great deal of emotions and feelings to release, which they used poetry to convey, as a means of escapism, much like John Keats, another famous poet who was dying and trying through poetry to escape into a different reality. Both Hughes and Plath therefore enable a deepened insight into parenthood and the fears, animosities and issues surrounding it. Plath more so than Hughes writes about in her poetry, yet likewise to all her poems it always seems to relate back to her own issues and traumas, whereas Hughes usually wrote about nature and feelings, but when he does write about parenthood it is in description of others around himself rather than his own self-importance. Plath's poem "Morning Song" is one of the few poems dedicated to her children, although as remarked before, reverts back to her own issues once again.

In this poem parenthood is related to by a Mother addressing and in awe of her new born child and coming to terms with the creation and the mixture of

feelings that may occur when confronted with a new situation. She creates these visual images and penetrating emotions through a variety of colourful techniques. There is a clear stylistic structure to Plath's poem which puts across the idea of a journey, by using six stanzas of a similar length we see the stages she goes through: Shock/fear of the unknown; A detached sense of awe; Unworthy Mother/Fear of desertion; Metaphorical, loving and peaceful; An adjusted, confused routine; Adoration, love, peace and joy. Likewise to Plath's poem 'You're' it is all about a journey but in a physical sense as oppose to 'Morning Song's' psychological battle. However, both are tender, charming, gentle and engaging. Plath's growing adjustment to the baby is apparent and more humane through descriptions 'Gold watch...

statue...moth..

. 'cat'; Alongside this is Plath's insight to the mother 'Visitor in museum..

. 'cloud...cow' here we see Plath take us from a rather ephemeral feel to much more real approach, she creates this change through the use of animals/nature, which can be linked to Hughes and his poetry style, as he communicate thoughts and feelings through the same means, in example, 'The Thought Fox' and 'Bull Moses'.

Plath conveys this all through carefully constructed literary techniques.

Likewise, to a good deal of Hughes poems like 'The Jaguar' and 'The horses', in this poem she uses enjambment to make her poem successfully flow and keep pace, upping the tempo and subsequently the

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excitement. Another way both Hughes and Plath communicate meanings in all of their poems is through either the use of similes, metaphors, Onomatopoeia, repetition or punctuation. Morning Song uses a various amount of these techniques, such as, "New Statue" -an extended metaphor, which carries on to the next line, the use of this shows how separate and distanced she feels from her babe and how they have not yet bonded or found a connection. This is further communicated as a statue is a cold, inanimate object to be admired, untouchable and fragile, ultimately a precious object just how she feels about Nicholas in this poem after her miscarriage a year before in 1961; proving just how powerful and meaningful just two words can be in the world of Plath. The fragile connotation is further linked and explored and the poem completely summed up by the simile "The clear vowels rise like balloons" -Balloons are delicate tender objects that can burst or break easily, but they also hold double meaning as they are a means of celebration and joy but there is also always the fear that you may let them go and never get them back, connecting to a Mother's woes about her spawn growing and claiming future independence. Plath's poems usually emit openly about her emotions and troubles in her depressive, darkened and psychologically unstable mind, this can be supported by her suicide and how she left her two children deserted and alone, begging the question of how much can a woman really love and be attached to her children if she is willing to abandon them. However, others may argue that she was meant to be found and she left them with milk to fuel them for the time they were unsupervised.

Yet although Hughes may not have been the best husband, he was a successful father, as his son Nicholas is said to have also committed suicide due to his father dying and he could not live on without him. Plath would talk about situations that were absurd or outrageous in her era. For example in "Daddy" she calls all men "brutes" and freely refers to "Auschwitz", "Jews" and "Not God but a Swastika". In "Fever 103" she refers to her internal fires of sexual desire "The sin. The sin. Darling, all Night."

"Fever 103" and is an empowering poem, it has also been linked to her and her baby having a fever, "Who wheezes at the gate" which is beyond her comprehension. Whereas in utter contrast, Hughes poems are usually metaphorical, deep and harder to dissect; As though he is refraining his true feelings, wanting to keep his personal life more mysterious and private. There is also the obvious contrast of male and female perspectives and how their poems and parenting styles are opposed due to their sexuality, for instance both of their renditions of "Wuthering Heights" are both entirely different views of the same account, with Plath's much more dramatic and Hughes warmer and serene. Hughes, "Life after death" is a complete juxtaposition to Plath's "Morning song", it is a sadistic, angry and mourning encounter and reminisces on Plath's suicide and the loss of a person and adjusting to the differences rather than gaining one. Another oxymoron is how he describes his child and her feelings, unlike Plath who always describes her own in relation to the thing or person in question.