

only poem to directly mention bombing of Hiroshima
 1902 — search for son
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Fever 103°

loss of purity / innocence — metaphorical q's
 Pure? What does it mean? — metaphorical q's
 The tongues of hell — metaphorical q's
 repetition: Are dull, dull as the triple — simile
 images: Tongues of dull, fat Cerberus — metaphorical allusion
 snakes — Who wheezes at the gate. Incapable
 Of licking clean — repetition

The agency tendon, the sin, the sin. — repetition
 The tinder cries. — start of fire / personification
 The indelible smell — death
 Of a snuffed candle! — metaphor for a mythical creature
 Love, love, the low smokes roll — simile of Isadora Duncan
 From me like Isadora's scarves, I'm in a fright — emotive confession

death of vulnerability
 But rundle round the globe — wide reach of nuclear holocaust
 Choking the aged and the meek, — effects of atomic destruction
 The weak — science taking over nature

Hobhouse baby in its crib — emotive
 The ghastly orchid — emotive
 Hanging its hanging garden in the air, — effects of radiation
 Devilish leopard! — speed of its effects
 Radiation turned it white
 And killed it in an hour.

Greasing the bodies of adulterers — simile comparing the
 Like Hiroshima ash and eating in. — act of Hughes to the bomb
 The sin. The sin. — emphasis
 Darling, all night
 I have been flickering, off, on, off, on. — ambivalence and insecurity
 The sheets grow heavy as a lecher's kiss. — simile to describe the effects of the fever

Three days, Three nights. — time suffering of her
 Lemon water, chicken — allusion to Holy Water
 Water, water make me retch. — religious imagery

I am too pure for you or anyone. — declaration of self-worth
 Your body — comparison: the world of science to God's world
 Hurts me as the world hurts God. I am a lantern — metaphor
 My head a moon — shining light on the world
 Of Japanese paper, my gold beaten skin — direct ref. to Japan
 Infinitely delicate and infinitely expensive. — repetition; emphasizing her value/product

Does not my heat astound you. And my light. — imagery of the bomb
 All by myself I am a huge camellia — metaphor
 Glowing and coming and going, flush on flush. — metaphor
 I think I am going up, — mercury rising; metaphor
 I think I may rise — addressing Hughes?
 The beads of hot metal fly, and I, love, I — addressing Hughes?

Am a pure acetylene — explosive gas, metaphor
 Virgin — religious allusion to Virgin Mary
 Attended by roses, — imagery of tenderness!
 By kisses, by cherubim, — imagery of purity
 By whatever these pink things mean. — lips/tongues
 Not you, nor him — purity of her soul compared to others?

Not him, nor him — discarding impure elements
 (My selves dissolving, old whore petticoats) —
 To Paradise. — irony
 20 October 1902

Final stanzas → shift from introspection/reflection to directly addressing of third party
 → defiant assertion of femininity

Main ideas
 * cleansing the soul of impurities; self-assertion
 * Mood — Fear + defiance

* the poem gives an abstract expression to the notion of a soul being cleansed of impurities.
 * Plath reflects upon the fever she is suffering as a purifier of sin → then she considers the purity of her soul compared to the soul of others.

* assertion of femininity
 * abstract expression of loathing and disgust → suggestive of the inhumanity and hysteria pervading everyday life in the cold war context.