

Writing a response to your favourite text from the induction booklet

'Daddy' is one of Sylvia Plath's most famous and controversial poems. Written in first person, it is thought to speak of her father Otto who died when Sylvia was aged just eight, this had a profound effect on her and her work to follow, as well as her rocky marriage to poet Ted Hughes. The poem is infamous for its references to the Nazi Germany and imagery of the Holocaust which gives a tremendous insight into the hostility of Plath's relationship with her German-born 'Daddy'.

From the offset the poem is littered with plosive language and enjambment such as 'You do not do, you do not do / Any more, black shoe', which immediately gives an abrupt and fragmented mood to the poem, making it all too easy for the reader to imagine the hurt and confused young woman Sylvia Plath pouring out her years of built up frustration onto the page. In fact, she even goes as far as to describe herself as 'a bit of a Jew' leading us to infer just how oppressed she really felt going through the loss of her father in the prejudiced, unforgiving reality of America behind the glamorous facade juring the years of her short life (1932-1962).

There is also a satirical narrative viewpoint on religion (Christianity in particular) which Plath was said to be cynical towards, claiming after the loss of her father that she would 'never speak to God again'. She says she 'used to pray to recover you', the past tense suggesting that she has since decided that her prayers were futile and given up. Moreover she later goes on to say 'A clerk in your chin instead of your foot / but no less a devil for that', the harsh use of the word 'devil' perhaps acting as a jibe to religion and the God which she feels has not met her wishes in life.

The conflicting thoughts about her father continue in stanza nine where Sylvia first details him as fitting into the Nazi ideology of a 'perfect' man with 'Aryan eye, bright blue', before paradoxically calling him a 'panzer-man' - panzer being a German tank - this perhaps relates to the destruction of their relationship and how the vague and unfamiliar 'man' may in fact apply to other males in her life. We can deduce this from the next stanza where she claims, in perhaps one of the most thought provoking sentences of the entire poem 'every woman adores a fascist, / The boot in the face, the brute / Brute heart of a brute like you.' the man 'like' him likely being her husband who had an affair on Plath.

In addition Plath uses assonance of an 'oo' sound, ending many lines with words including 'do', 'shoe', 'achoo', 'you' and 'Jew'. The 'oo' evoking images of being sneaked up on and surprised as well as a ghost-like link to death which she seems to be immensely focused on, even going on to speak of her first suicide attempt. 'At twenty I tried to die / And get back, back, back to you', this is a definite allusion to the reasons behind her first suicide attempt, as well as haunting hints at her next attempt to take her own life 'So Daddy, I'm finally through'. Plath took her own life shortly after writing the poem. Possibly because of the abandonment and abuse she feels she had been subject to from the men in her life.

Finally, the poem concludes with a building sense of Plath giving up and yet more repetition 'Daddy, daddy' and three lines out of five ending in 'you'. Repetition is poignant as it evinces a lack of progression, not only in the poem but in Sylvia's life and her mental state, from her father's death, to her first suicide attempt, marriage and eventual death at just 30 years old. Therefore the reader can assume that Sylvia never made any progress in moving on from the death of Otto Plath.