

# Daddy

Notes summarised from **'The Boot In The Face; The problem of the Holocaust in the Poetry of Sylvia Plath' – Al Strangeways**

- The title of this poem is an affectionate term, and is suggestive of a close relationship, an adoration. This is ironic given the content of the poem.
- The poem serves as a monologue, addressing the father figure directly, beginning with a scolding and continuing with the expression of a dissatisfying relationship between a father and daughter.
- The repeated "oo" sound throughout the poem makes it sound like a sinister, twisted nursery rhyme, filled with holocaust imagery and allusion.
- In Kendall's essay on Plath, he discusses the Freudian idea of acting out repressed memories. The repetition of words and phrases by Plath is merely an extension of the repetition of acting out over and over again, in this case it is the father figure who has to be killed again and again.
- Although the father is dead, the memory of him isn't properly in the past, it remains a contemporary experience.
- Critics see this poem (along with 'Lady Lazarus') as a performance, with strong Freudian links between pleasure and pain.
- Strangeways concludes that: "Plath does not simply reduce the atrocity of the holocaust to metaphor, but draws attention to the ambiguous and potentially dangerous interrelationship between myth, history and poetry in the post-Holocaust world."
- Freedom for the archetypal "feminine" figure in 'Daddy' is freedom from the authoritarian father figure.

Notes summarised from: **'Sylvia Plath's Selected Poems: Musings of a Tortured Soul'**

(<http://neoenglishsystem.blogspot.com.au/2010/12/musings-of-tortured-soul-daddy-sylvia.html>)

- A feature of this poem is the extraordinary imagery Plath uses to describe a child's devoted relationship with her father, as indicated by the title. This soon changes as Plath stomps like a "black shoe" on her dead father. It also becomes a vitriolic outburst towards her husband, and subsequently becomes an eruption about patriarchal power, neglect and abandonment.
- It is a complex poem full of confusion and emptiness, where hyperbole, parody, allusion and repetition are used to emphasise the complexity.
- 'Daddy' is about monsters and victims where Plath includes war and the horrors of the Nazi's towards the Jews to highlight her pain at the hands of ominous male power.
- The contrast between the "I" and "you" provide the reader with a disturbing portrait of the suffering voice.