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April 26, 2024

American Literature

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Daddy by Sylvia Plath is a 16 stanza poem where she describes her relationship with her father using a great amount of imagery. The author uses powerful metaphors to explain her feelings toward her father to the reader.

In Sylvia Plath's poem "Daddy" she speaks negatively about her father as well as men and male figures in general. Her father died when she was 10 but I think this poem isn't just about him after he passed but about her growing up with him as well. In the fifth stanza she says "So I never could tell where you put your foot, your root, I could never talk to you" (Plath Stanza 5) Perhaps there was a language barrier but I think there was more to it. She never felt comfortable enough to talk to her dad. She was scared to talk to him because she never knew how he would react. In stanza 6, she says "I thought every German was you". She thinks every man is her father because of how she has either been treated, or how she has seen other women have been treated.

When she says "Daddy, I have had to kill you" in the second stanza I think she meant she had to kill their relationship. I took this line figuratively because later on in the poem Plath explains that the relationship she had with her father was never good. "You died before I had time", He died before she had time to fix their relationship so she might've tried to fix the idea of him she had in her head. Describing her father as "Marble heavy, a bag full of God", shows the reader a lot about him as a person. Marbles are very cold and dense symbolizing how cold he was to

her. When playing marbles the goal is to use a big marble to knock the smaller marbles out of the circle. Maybe she felt like he was ruining other relationships in her life. She doesn't really talk about her relationship with anyone else in this poem. The second half of this line confused me. "a bag full of God" could have multiple meanings. God is viewed as the highest power, Plath already related to the Jews so this could be another way she relates to them. Fathers are often looked at as the head of household or in charge of the family which relates to the previous meaning of being viewed as the highest power. God is also a sore subject for some because they feel judged by the authority that they feel is over them. Some feel as though they are judged by their fathers and that they could possibly be a disappointment to the family.

Plath goes on to say "I used to pray to recover you". She was stuck fighting to get her relationship back with her father mentally. Of course, anyone would rather have a good relationship with their father than not, but at the same time no one wants to waste their time. I think she reached a point where she was finally done with how he was treating her and cut off their relationship. The word "pray" is associated with hope, religion, and a different kind of faith. Plath wanted so badly have a better relationship with her father.

Every time i've heard or seen the word "engine" be used it is in relation to a slave or someone doing labor for someone else in different terms. When Plath uses this word I think she is trying to dehumanize her father and his actions. Since Sylvia Path's father was a Nazi in Germany, whenever she saw a Nazi she thought of him. In the 7th stanza she says "Chuffing me off like a Jew" and then lists of 3 concentration camps, Dachau, Auschwitz, and Belsen. She feels like she began to talk like a Jew and think like a Jew. "Chuffing me off like a Jew" sounds like a negative thing. Similar to blowing me off or disregarding me like a Jew. She says she "began to

talk like a Jew. [She] thinks [she] may well be a Jew". I don't think she meant this in a completely negative way. She started to relate to the Jews. Her father hated the Jews and she felt like her father hated her.

Plath's father was a Nazi, which means the Jews were obviously terrified of him. She says in the next stanza "I have always been scared of you". Her father was unpredictable which scared her. She probably saw the way he treated others and knew he could treat her that way if she really was a Jew. "Your gobbledygo" is just another way of saying gibberish. Plath never felt like she never could communicate with her father rather that be because of a language barrier or because she felt like he wouldn't understand what she says.

"Not God by a swastika" Plath's father worshiped a swastika not god. He had faith in the Nazi's not in religion. "So black no sky could squeak through." People say that without religion our souls are black. Without the light of religion peaking through the sky we are dark. In the next line Plath suggests women are drawn to domineering and controlling men. "Every woman adores a Fascist", this is probably because she sees her father in such an authoritative way. Sylvia romanticizes toxic masculinity because that's the only thing she knows. She can't help that she desires dominance. "But no less a devil for that, no not any less the black man who bit my pretty red heart in two." This phrase sounds like she met someone and it didn't end well. This could also be about her father. She tried to open up and be vulnerable but she was shut down. She knew she had a "pretty red heart" but it had been destroyed.

Sylvia Plath went through some serious trauma but she was pieced back together, "But they pulled me out of the sack, and they stuck me together with glue". She found a man that was a "model of you (her father)". "A man in black with a Meinkampf look", she was comfortable

with the way she viewed her father as well as other men. There has always been the saying that women date men that resemble their father and vice versa for women. "If I've killed one man, I've killed two". She father is dead and so is her relationship with her husband. She finally got away from "the vampire who said he was you". This line gave me a sense of self empowerment. Perhaps she was finally starting to take control of herself and shape her own life. She was in this abusive relationship for "seven years". She tells her father "Daddy, you can lie back now." Meaning daddy, you can stop controlling my life, my decisions, my everything. Because she has control now. "Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through." That is the most powerful line in the whole poem. I visualize her screaming this at her father, the passion in her voice telling her father that he no longer is who she wants. She found her worth. That is so motivating to me as a young women.

This poem follows Sylvia Path on an unexpected journey of her finding her self. She had intense feelings of resentment and anger towards her father and men in general.