

Daddy

Comment [K1]: Initially positive, affectionate title ó rather than father

You do not do, you do not do
Any more, black shoe
In which I have lived like a foot
For thirty years, poor and white,
Barely daring to breathe or Achoo.

Comment [K2]: Accusative pronoun, repetition and absence of modal verbs imply certainty create a strong, strident, assertive tone at the start of the poem ó contrasting with the relatively affectionate father. Do not is also stronger than -will not doø which is the closest English phrase, it also implies a failure to do something

Comment [K3]: Any more is important ó suggests this sense of release is recent

Comment [K4]: Obviously sinister ó suggested regimented and controlled, military connotations ó foreshadows the subsequent Nazi imagery

Comment [K5]: A particularly unpleasant image of restriction

Comment [K6]: Obvious colour contrast to her father ó also, like white flesh, starved of freedom oxygen, sunlight, tex

Comment [K7]: Internal rhyme and repetitive rhythm reinforce this sense of restriction

Comment [K8]: This is something that she has done as an adult ó possibly a result of therapy, she has had to -killøher father ó deal with her dependency on him

Comment [K9]: Image of power and control, creation, judgement

Comment [K10]: Inanimate / unfeeling words ó like her fatherø cold and distant nature

Comment [K11]: Reference to her father stubbing his toe and getting gangrene because he hadnø got his diabetes checked

Comment [K12]: Enjambment suggesting this control is continued

Comment [K13]: A sense of abandonment before ó however a recent change of heart

Comment [K14]: A sense that she has tried to find out about her fatherø past / hometown ó but it was impossible ó again, no connection ó even in this sense of trying to recover some sense of her fatherø past

Comment [K15]: Reference to just one foot after it was amputated.

Comment [K16]: Obvious images of disconnection and inability to communicate

Daddy, I have had to kill you.
You died before I had time --
Marble-heavy, a bag full of God,
Ghastly statue with one gray toe
Big as a Frisco seal

And a head in the freakish Atlantic
Where it pours bean green over blue
In the waters off the beautiful Nauset.
I used to pray to recover you.
Ach, du.

In the German tongue, in the Polish town
Scraped flat by the roller
Of wars, wars, wars.
But the name of the town is common.
My Polack friend

Says there are a dozen or two.
So I never could tell where you
Put your foot, your root,
I never could talk to you.
The tongue stuck in my jaw.

It stuck in a barb wire snare.
Ich, ich, ich, ich,
I could hardly speak.
I thought every German was you.
And the language obscene

Comment [K17]: The German word for -Iøó she cannot say this, i.e. cannot assert herself

Comment [K18]: The guilt of having German ancestry just after WWII

An engine, an engine,
Chuffing me off like a Jew.
A Jew to Dachau, Auschwitz, Belsen.
I began to talk like a Jew.
I think I may well be a Jew.

Comment [K19]: She has no choice ó no control over her father ó she is controlled by him, or by the after effects of what he has made her ó like the Jews being taken off to the concentration camps in WWII

Comment [K20]: Often controversial ó does she have any right to claim this level of suffering ó at the end it suggests persecution, also a sense that she has vilified her father in the strongest way possible and portrayed herself as his victim

Comment [K21]: Austrian ó Hitler was born in Braunau - Austria

Comment [K22]: Again, reference to the atrocities of WWII

Comment [K23]: Similarly persecuted by the Nazis

The snows of the Tyrol, the clear beer of Vienna
Are not very pure or true.
With my gypsy ancestress and my weird luck
And my Taroc pack and my Taroc pack
I may be a bit of a Jew.

I have always been scared of you,
With your Luftwaffe, your gobbledygoo.
And your neat mustache
And your Aryan eye, bright blue.
Panzer-man, panzer-man, O You --

Comment [K24]: Polysyndeton ó indicates a building up of rage and accusation

Comment [K25]: Again this image of a powerful figure ó but the reversal from God to Devil shows how she has changed her opinions of him

Comment [K26]: Image of restriction

Comment [K27]: Is this partly an attack on the crass male assertion that -every woman likes a bit of roughø or -no really means yesø? Is that too early? Either way it also seems partly true ó Plath did have a fascination for destructive male figures

Comment [K28]: Repetition of brute is obvious ó the heart suggests that this evil springs from within and there are no redeeming features

Not God but a swastika
So black no sky could squeak through.
Every woman adores a Fascist,
The boot in the face, the brute
Brute heart of a brute like you.

You stand at the blackboard, daddy,
In the picture I have of you,
A cleft in your chin instead of your foot
But no less a devil for that, no not
Any less the black man who

Comment [K29]: Again ó strong stereotypical image of a male father / teacher

Bit my pretty red heart in two.
I was ten when they buried you.
At twenty I tried to die
And get back, back, back to you.
I thought even the bones would do.

Comment [K30]: Still a powerful force and ó according to Christian mythology ó also a powerful figure in the shaping of women. God made Eve but the Devil tempted her

Comment [K31]: Obviously sinister and threatening

Comment [K32]: Image of violence done to innocence ó especially with 'pretty' ó ambiguous reference to either Otto Plath or Ted Hughes

Comment [K33]: I'm not sure why she lies here because she was eight ó it possibly reflects the idea that she seems to have this fixation with cycles of ten ó e.g. Lady Lazarus, which talks about doing it once a decade, but in fact, as if she's already done it ó possibly continuing this cycle was why she died in 1963

But they pulled me out of the sack,
And they stuck me together with glue.
And then I knew what to do.
I made a model of you,
A man in black with a Meinkampf look

Comment [K34]: Reflects the idea of recover ó the repetition suggests desperation, possibly a reference to going underground to get to his bones

Comment [K35]: The idea that she has been unwillingly put back together

Comment [K36]: This metaphor suggests that it was just a repair job, a quick fix, that she has never been truly mended.

Comment [K37]: Here she seems to be the one in control ó deliberately choosing a husband in her father's image ó this is not what she consciously did but in depths of despair just after she has been abandoned by Hughes, three months before she dies, this may have been how her actions appeared to her in retrospect ó possibly there has been a sudden horrific moment clarity and realisation where she has been able to connect these two relationships (or believes she has) ó the fact that she made the model as well suggests she realises her own role in this self destruction and that perhaps makes it worse ó possibly suggesting the uncontrollable and deep effects that any (male) parent will have over a child?

And a love of the rack and the screw.
And I said I do, I do.
So daddy, I'm finally through.
The black telephone's off at the root,
The voices just can't worm through.

Comment [K38]: Hughes 'tortured' her

If I've killed one man, I've killed two --
The vampire who said he was you
And drank my blood for a year,
Seven years, if you want to know.
Daddy, you can lie back now.

Comment [K39]: Reflection of how her father 'does not do' ó perhaps indicating that she replaced one man with another through marriage ó indeed this is a feminist idea anyway ó that marriage is simply an arrangement between men where they transfer control of a woman from one party to another

There's a stake in your fat black heart
And the villagers never liked you.
They are dancing and stamping on you.
They always knew it was you.
Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through.

Comment [K40]: Important word ó suggests a break, change in tone, conclusion ó although it is odd that there is no break in stanza. Is the break really that clear? The 'finally' emphasises, however, the sense of resolution

Comment [K41]: These pronouns suggest self assertion ó she is now the killer ó these words are active, powerful ó unlike the 'could never speak' or 'trapped' of earlier. Interestingly though 'I' is the agent for most of the verbs ó the father never traps her, is she the one trapping herself? Is that pushing it too far.

Comment [K42]: The breaking off with both Ted and her father

Comment [K43]: This is attributed to Hughes ó but earlier Plath admits

Comment [K44]: The length of her marriage to Hughes

Comment [K45]: This is an image of freedom ó although interestingly she switches back into the metaphor, as if she is not the one who's done this or is celebrating ó although this seems to me a too psychoanalytical / personal interpretation

Comment [K46]: Repetition because there are two of these father figures

Comment [K47]: Interestingly the 'I'm through' initially suggests that she's through with him ó almost a positive image of moving on. But if you actually read it ó she says that 'I'm through' (not even 'You're through') ó this actually suggests that she is used up / exhausted / over ó about to die. Is that the only way to be free of these father figures?