

Morning Song

Monosyllables and frequent harsh consonants rob the opening line of any tenderness

Love set you going like a fat gold watch.
The midwife slapped your footsoles, and your bald cry
Took its place among the elements.

Open vowel sounds such as /o/ and /u/ create an empty, 'drafty' feel

Our voices echo, magnifying your arrival. New statue.
In a drafty museum, your nakedness
Shadows our safety. We stand round blankly as walls.

I'm no more your mother
Than the cloud that distills a mirror to reflect its own slow
Effacement at the wind's hand.

All night your moth-breath
Flickers among the flat pink roses. I wake to listen:
A far sea moves in my ear.

One cry, and I stumble from bed, cow-heavy and floral
In my Victorian nightgown.
Your mouth opens clean as a cat's. The window square

Whitens and swallows its dull stars. And now you try
Your handful of notes;
The clear vowels rise like balloons.

Comment [K1]: The melodic and tuneful connotations of -songø suggest some delight in her babies cries, although this may be deeply sarcastic contrasting as it does with -bald cryø

Comment [K2]: The foregrounding of love, creates an initially positive impression that is belied, to a degree, by the inanimate artificial simile which compares the baby to a lifeless mechanical object. This perhaps implies that Plath is mocking the love that she does not feel or it may be another example of her struggle to reconcile contradictory feelings about motherhood

Comment [K3]: This play on words works on a number of levels, the baby is bald, the cry is stark and not a song at all and the baldness suggest the weakness and vulnerability of the child

Comment [K4]: Interestingly itø's place is a part of the natural world, not a loving family unit. It seems to be a lone voice amid the fire, wind, water and earth that make up the planet

Comment [K5]: There is a sense in which the parents also cry: because of labour pains, because of the fear of responsibility, through joy or because they too are alone and isolated and -echoø the babies feelings. The distance of echo and the scientific sounding -magnifyingø do nothing to create a warm friendly environment

Comment [K6]: The pronoun contrasts suggest isolation ø as if the baby is alone and separated from the others, reinforcing the idea of a lack of connection, alienation and vulnerability

Comment [K7]: This is her metaphor for life and the world, cold, empty, unnatural, foreboding

Comment [K8]: Shadows here may imply the baby tries to follow / get close to the safety of the parents. Alternatively the threatening nature of -shadowø suggests that perhaps it threatens their safety, perhaps revealing how, in reality, we are all as vulnerable as the child

Comment [K9]: Deliberate enjambment here breaks the line after the flat refusal / denial of motherhood ø foregrounding it.

Comment [K10]: Scientific words that deny the possibility of a natural connection

Comment [K11]: A complex image that likens their relationship to the non-existent link between a rain cloud and a puddle. The puddle only serves to reflect / throw into contrast the gradual decay of the cloud as it breaks up in the wind as the childø youth, perhaps, highlights the aging and deterioration of the mother or the childø worthlessness and isolation reflects the same truths about the mother

Comment [K12]: Fragile, insignificant

Comment [K13]: The images we do have of nature are deadened and flat or -effacedø like the cloud

Comment [K14]: The fact that she wakes to listen suggests some kind of connection

Comment [K15]: Reflecting the clumsy, cumbersome, ungainly nature of pregnancy, re-emphasising the ideas of restriction found in Metaphors

Comment [K16]: A repressive, enveloping item of clothing which is emphasised by the link to the oppressive ideas of Victorian morality

Comment [K17]: Automatic gesture of need ø no interaction or relationship, animalistic, continual refusal to refer to the child as a human

Comment [K18]: The only example of cross-stanza enjambment, implying perhaps that this goes on for a long time as we switch from night to dawn

Comment [K19]: This relatively positive image, however, suggests there is some connection between Plath and her baby and some feelings of pride, love