

The Intricate Affection of *Sylvia Plath* toward Her Beloved Father 莊慧瑜

At the activity of oral presentation, when I was writing the script for the drama of our group, I totally could not understand the intricate affection *Sylvia Plath* has toward her father. For example, sometimes the author severely criticizes her father with contemptuous words, and sometimes oppositely, as a little girl, she shows her innocent love and reliance toward her father. To be honest, I got puzzled by her changeable expression of her affection. Therefore, I decide to make my confusions be the subject of my final paper, trying to solve my confusions.

*Plath's* affection toward her father is very complicated. Roughly I divide *Plath's* love toward her father into three levels which are children's attachment, admiration or respect, and fascination. The first level of love is a kind of sense of attachment. It is easy to know that children will tend to be intimate with their parents, and *Plath* is no exception. In her mind, her father is her solid and reliable support. As a result, in stanza one she uses a metaphor with shoe and foot to describe their close relationship because without the shoe, the foot can not walk for a long distance to arrive at the destination, and likewise, without the foot, the shoe will stay at the same place and can not go anywhere. At the second level, in stanza two she shows her admiration and respect toward her father with many imageries. Daddy is her idol as awesome and

lofty as God and as majestic as a ghastly statue that she always could only see his toe when she was little. However, when love accesses to the third level, fascination, the love is a little morbid. In the field of psychology, we call it "Electra complex." Unlike the preceding two levels of love, this kind of love can not be explained with any reasons. It just happens by itself naturally. For example, in stanza ten Plath describes her father as a Fascist and herself as one of the crazy women who blindly adore him. On the other hand, when Plath's father died of diabetes, her love becomes hatred because she loves him too much to accept the fact that he had gone to the paradise and would not be with her any more. As a result, in stanza four to ten she uses two imageries to accuse how cruel her father is for his leaving (passing away). One is the imagery of Jewish people who were severely tortured by Nazi. She imagines herself as a Jew persecuted by Nazi, stands in Jew's position to look on the social phenomena at that time (ethnocentrism and racial discrimination), and tries to realize sufferings they had experienced. Another one is the imagery of devil and vampire. For Plath, her father's sudden leaving when she was eight years old is a biggest torture just like a cold-blooded vampire who is sucking blood of human beings. In stanza 17 the lethality of such kind of torture is so strong that it can make a lively person to die. Although in this poem, Plath's affection changes constantly, undeniably, she loves her father very much. In stanza 12, we can tell how strong Plath's love toward her father

is so that she is willing to sacrifice her youth and life in order to follow the step of her father after he died.

On earth, love is a special thing that is hard to explain. The reason why Plath was painful is on account of love for her father. When the fact contradicts her imagination, intricate affection occurs to her. Though I had analyzed her work in detail and know the change of her affection, my confusions still stay. But I think I do not need to force myself to understand because just like I say before, love is hard to interpret.

## Reference

Website:

<http://suite101.com/article/sylvia-plaths-daddy-a63376>

<http://www.sylviaplath.info/biography.html>

<http://www.neuroticpoets.com/plath/>

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/87098354/Poem-Analysis-of-Daddy>

## Appendix- *Daddy*

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.

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 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

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.

The snows of the Tyrol, the clear beer of Vienna  
Are not very pure or true.  
With my gipsy 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--

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

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.

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

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.

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.

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.