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Sylvia Plath's *Daddy* and Ozu's *Late Spring*:
Rage and Defiance, According to Whom?

Daughters and their relationships with their fathers are infamous for their complexity in the flesh, but their representations in poetry and film leave a single-sided, anecdotal presentation of one daughter and one father. Sylvia Plath's *Daddy* is the poetic representation of a woman cursing the loss of her father and processing her grief.

Adversely, Yasujiro Ozu's *Late Spring* tells the story of a post-war Japanese widowed father and his daughter, as well as the role that she herself takes up in place of her late mother.

Within Plath's *Daddy*, there is a distinct loss of her father that becomes apparent with the use of language and imagery that evoke authoritarianism, evident of the rage that is otherwise misdirected within Ozu's *Late Spring* by Noriko to her father, Shukichi. Opposite to Plath's rage, Noriko's dotting relationship with her father puts her in a position of power that allows her to live the life she wants, until her father deceives her with the prospect of remarriage, displacing her of that position and leaving her with no option but rage as she chooses to get married to Satake.

In Plath's *Daddy*, the use of repetition and accusatory language sets the stage for the speaker regarding her father in a negative light. Utilizing "you, you, you" repeatedly

serves the same purpose as a jabbing finger to a person, enforced by a cleverly utilized anaphora to drive home the rage that she develops the further the poem goes on. She accuses her father of leaving her, calling him a cruel man with crueler features akin to a Nazi and traits that are ideal to those supporting the Third Reich; blue eyes, a strong jawline, and an unyielding and imposing sense of self, as “everyone loves a Fascist.” Plath as the speaker then compares herself to a victim of the Holocaust, particularly as being Jewish and Romani, but this knee-jerking comparison begs more than a gawking stop from the contemporary reader, but also horror?

Plath as the speaker presents herself as the victim to her father’s presence in life that remains even in his death, as this dead man continues to haunt every moment of Plath’s life. Her relationship with her father, and his continued presence that she feels has warped her impression of other men, as she “made a model of [her father],” which alludes to her marriage to her husband and the traits that she compares with him.

The rage within the poem and Plath’s victimization of her father’s death differs greatly from Ozu’s *Late Spring*. While there is rage and defiance within this film, the motivation is far from the same, violent illusion presented in *Daddy*.

In *Late Spring*, Noriko takes great pride in caring for her widowed father Shukichi in the absence of her mother. Taking on the role of a caretaker comes as second nature to her, which, during the postwar era of Japan, is seen as extremely feminine and graceful. However, this is at the cost of Noriko’s youth as she would be classified as a “spinster” by Western standards. Even as she cares for her father, she takes upon roles that are usually for the wife, and as she serves the household, she treats her father as if

he is helpless and unable to care for himself despite his still sharp mind and clever planning later in the film to coerce Noriko into marriage with the handsome young man, Satake.

As Shukichi seeks to have his daughter married to Satake, he has to come up with a plan that would drive his own daughter away from him and into the arms of the other. This results in him seeking out marriage once more - a concept that Noriko frowned upon greatly considering the prior discussion earlier in the movie where she clearly disapproved of the concept in the presence of family friends.

Once the plan begins, Noriko's position in the household is threatened by the prospect of another female figure, particularly one that would control her father's attention. This then drives her into agreeing to marry Satake, as her own rage drives her away from her father and into her own independence, at the cost of her relationship with her father and the joy she felt in caring for him. The defiance ultimately is a controlled experience orchestrated by Shukichi, an act that still shows his authority over her despite Noriko's believed independence.

The rage shared between both *Daddy's* speaker and Noriko is one that seeks out the love of their fathers, even as their fathers push them away. While Plath's poem represents her father as a cold, cruel soldier that imposes on her psyche, the rage deep within her core suggests that she will never receive catharsis despite swearing him off entirely. This same lack of catharsis is reflected by Noriko as well, particularly as she refuses to be second to a woman that would be her step-mother. While her malice towards her father is minimal in comparison to the rage felt in Plath's poem, it is

through a cultural and historical lens that Noriko's own defiance manifests itself, as she chooses to set out and become her own person, using her nurturing abilities towards someone who would appreciate her nurturing even more - the exact thing her father wished her to do. In the end, both women are subject to their father's will, in the present moment and in their memory.