

Reading Plath at Nineteen

Nancy Freeman, Colorado

Two years after my father's sudden death, I remember reading Plath on my nineteenth birthday. He suffered from childhood diabetes, and had lost both legs below the knees at 48 years of age. He couldn't find work. And so my mother had to work two jobs to help us get along. My father felt like a failure, and so he shot himself to death in our garage. He left a long and apologetic note.

I don't think that Plath was talking about her father in "Daddy," since its imagery is about men in general. I could never write anything like that about my father. I think she loved her father, but remained angry at his death. I have the same feelings today: love and anger.

And so I read Plath's earlier poetry, with its love of nature. I take pleasure in her sometimes humor, and "The Moon and the Yew Tree."

I've been reading essays in your journal and I think they spend too much time talking about her suicide, and not enough time talking about her belief in re-birth, finding peace in nature, sometimes, or her relentless search for a self, free from that anger.

Today, I ride horses. I named one of them "Poppies."

