

Violence in Sylvia Plath's Poems "Lady Lazarus" and "Daddy"

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ABSTRACT

Violence is ancient, variant, universal, and an essential reality of human life. Violence, in poetry, reflects the poet's state of turmoil and unrest. It is the imagination against the tensions of life. Violence is an expression of a poet's interior mind stimulated by depression. This study demonstrates violence in Sylvia Plath's poems "Lady Lazarus" and "Daddy." In both poems, violence emerges as central part of the poet's life as well as death. Plath presents violence as a dimension of everyday living and as a form of communication. The violent images impressed by painful incidents and experiences appear as a reaction against oppressive modern society. It is a revolutionary violence against the confinement of self and the bondage of social conformity. In both poems, scenes of violence are conjured to perform and examine issues of identity, self-assertion, broken relationships, the meaning of womanhood or manhood, and to expose the roles of villain and victim. The purpose of this study is to examine violence, its reasons, effects, and functions in Plath's two poems. Beside the destructive nature of violence, the research tries to investigate its productive effect on the poet. In "Lady Lazarus," for example, the poet's hidden true self is reborn through the ultimate violence of death. Plath's violent images define the way she perceives her own world. Such images enable her to explore the paradox within her own fragmented self and in her cracked surroundings. Moreover, the study considers violence in Plath's poems as an instrument of creativity and maturity.

Key words: Resurrection, creativity, Violence, Death, Victimization.

العنف في قصائد سيلفيا بلاث "السيدة لازاروس" و "ابي"

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الملخص

إن العنف قديم ومتنوع وعالمي وحقيقة أساسية في حياة الإنسان. يعكس العنف في الشعر حالة الاضطراب التي يعيشها الشاعر. إنه الخيال ضد توترات الحياة. العنف هو تعبير عن العقل الداخلي للشاعر الذي يحفزه الاكتئاب. توضح هذه الدراسة العنف في قصائد سيلفيا بلاث "السيدة لازاروس" و "ابي". في كلتا القصيدتين، يظهر العنف والموت كجزء أساسي من حياة الشاعرة. تقدم بلاث العنف باعتباره بُعدًا للحياة اليومية وكشكل من أشكال التواصل. وتظهر الصور العنيفة المتأثرة بالحوادث والتجارب المؤلمة كرد فعل ضد المجتمع الحديث القمعي. إنه عنف ثوري ضد حبس الذات وعبودية النمطية الاجتماعية. في كلتا القصيدتين، يتم استحضار مشاهد العنف لتقديم ودراسة قضايا الهوية، وتأكيد الذات، والعلاقات المحطمة، ومعنى الأنوثة أو الرجولة، وكشف دور الشرير والضحية. تهدف الدراسة إلى تسليط الضوء على العنف وأسبابه وآثاره ووظائفه في قصيدتي بلاث. وإلى جانب الطبيعة التدميرية للعنف، يحاول البحث معرفة أثره الإنتاجي على الشاعرة. في "السيدة لازاروس" على سبيل المثال، تولد الذات الحقيقية الخفية للشاعرة من جديد من خلال عنف الموت النهائي. تحدد صور بلاث العنيفة الطريقة التي تنظر بها إلى عالمها الخاص. تمكنها هذه الصور من استكشاف التناقض داخل نفسها المجزأة وفي محيطها المتصدع وتظهر الدراسة العنف في قصائد بلاث كأداة للإبداع والنضج.

الكلمات المفتاحية: القيامة، الإبداع، العنف، الموت، الضحية

1. Introduction

Violence is defined in the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* as: "The exercise of physical force so as to cause injury or damage to a person, property, etc., physically violent behaviour or treatment." (2007, p.3535) Neil L. Whitehead explains "Most recent anthropological commentators [...] agree on one thing – that violence is pervasive, ancient, infinitely various, and a central fact of human life." (2004, p.55) The Latin origin of the word violence lies in the words "vis latus", which means to have carried force – and "violare" i.e to violate and desecrate sanctities. (Degenaar, 1990, p.73) This derivation expands the understanding of

violence to include not only the act, but also the social meanings, the intention and consequences. (Degenaar, p.73) In this sense, psychological violence appears as a result of bullying, threatening, and manipulative behavior. (Borghini,2017) As poetry is reflection, reinterpretation, and response to an individual's experience of life, violence can be one of its topics. F.T.Marineti states that art including poetry _ "can be nothing but violence, cruelty, and injustice." (qtd. in Nelson, 2011, p.19)

In this respect, Nigel Rapport, a theorist, finds a link between violence and creativity. For him, Violence's lack of order leaves spaces to creativity and innovation. (qtd. in Whitehead, p.61)Further, Slavoj Žižek, a philosopher, perceives that the use of language is violent, because it "dismembers" and "simplifies," and which is called symbolic violence. (2008, p.61) The categories of Physical, psychological, and symbolic violence are manifested in literature, which is defined by Roman Jakobson as "organised violence committed on ordinary speech." (qtd. in Eagleton, 1983, p.2)

The theme of violence is as ancient as literature. It can be seen in Homer's *Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, *Beowulf*, and in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which frequently depicts rape and sexual violence. However, the notion of violence is used widely in the poetry of the Second World War. In his introduction to, *The New Poetry*, A. Alvarez suggests that the Second World War had destroyed the "old standards of civilization," and had affected everyone "even the most genteel." (1962, pp.21-22) Accordingly, a new style was demanded to convey the modern realities. This novel style is utilized in the poetry of Sylvia Plath, Ted Hughes, and many others, whose poems are violent in content and imagery. However, violence in poetry, whether thematic or imagistic, is important and necessary to reflect the poet's experience of traumatic life. This study demonstrates violence in Sylvia Plath's poems

"Lady Lazarus" and "Daddy," which were written in 1962 and published in 1965. Both poems belong to her posthumous volume of poetry *Ariel*.

Violence, in Plath's poetry, is the outcome of different social, marital, mental, and political circumstances. The loss of her father in an early age, her divorce, her obsession with the idea of suicide, the effects of the Second World War and the German cruelty against the Jews, the fears of cold war politics, and the inherited pursuit of the American Dream, all these factors generate violence in her poetry. In Plath's poetry, violence appears as a reaction against certain failures in her life. Yet, this violence and these failures lead to an ultimate success and creation as far as her poetry is concerned. She needs a violent style to reflect new truths.

2." Lady Lazarus"

2.1 Bright as a Nazi lampshade

The shocking and confusing content of Plath's "Lady Lazarus," reflects the poet's own vision of the upheavals of the twentieth century. Jon Rosenblatt affirms that "Plath found the twentieth century to be an era of dehumanization and violence that requires of the poet an extraordinary openness to suffering [...] The poet becomes representative of the personal crisis in modern life, and his[or her] own experience of confusion and pain becomes exemplary." (1979, p.143) However, as a confessional poet, Plath presents her own subjective experience and feelings explicitly. She often uses the first person in her poems and alludes heavily to her personal life. Hence, "Lady Lazarus" begins with a reference to her attempts to commit suicide:

I have done it again.

One year in every ten

I manage it—— (1-3)

Philip MacCurdy, Plath's friend, states that Plath "tried to cut her throat when she was ten" when she discovered her father's death. (qtd. in

Wilson, 2013, pp. 41–42) As a child, Plath was consumed by a sense of guilt toward her father's death, she wished herself dead instead of encountering the realities of death. Then she faced a series of psychological complexes "which suggested to her that had she not been so vile as a child, her father never would have left her in the first place." (Taylor, 1975, p. 32) However, Plath describes her first clash with death at age ten, as an accident, "The first time it happened I was ten/ It was an accident" (35–36). The word "accident" asserts the poet's childish thinking at that particular moment. According to the persona, her immaturity prevents her from committing a complete suicide, she did not mean it. Yet, Suicide is an act of violence results from the loss of loved ones, interpersonal conflicts with family or friends, and many other different reasons. (Reiss, 1993, p. 101) The loss of the poet's father caused her a sense of frustration that leads to her aggressive and violent deed of suicide.

The second incident of her suicide is displayed in details in which she "[...] meant/ To last it out and not come back at all" (37–38). Now, Plath is an adult person who takes a decision to commit suicide, she "meant [it]." Here, she alludes to her second suicide attempt when she was twenty. On 24th August, 1953, she consumed the entire bottle of her sleeping pills, and she was eventually found in the cellar into which she crawled. (Gill, 2008, p. 10)

I rocked shut

As a seashell

They had to call and call

And pick the worms off me like sticky pearls. (39–42)

The poet's persona describes her state as she becomes close to death. Now, she looks like a seashell, which is a symbol of resurrection as well as power of different sea gods and goddesses. ("Seashells their meaning", n.d., para. 1) Robert Pinsky, an American poet, states that

Plath "suffered the airless egocentrism of one in love with an ideal self." (qtd. in "Sylvia Plath," n.d., para.2) In this respect, she seeks mightiness, strength, and perfection. According to the Bible, "worm is the lowest of creatures, as far removed as possible from God." (qtd. in Ferber, 2007, p.241) She needs to become a powerful goddess, thus they "pick the worms off me," which can be a reference to her new state as a deity. Yet, her wish to become a goddess cannot be achieved for she perceives her worms as pearls, which is an emblem of beauty and wisdom. (Ferber, p. 152) The persona's attempt to reach perfection is failed because she is drained of her powers by her persecutors.

During Plath's years at Smith College, her essential goal was self-improvement. Robin Peel asserts that "the focus on self-development and achievement itself reflects the dominant American ideology of the [post war] period." (qtd. in Gill, p.8) Plath obsessed with this doctrine, and "success or death" became the options. (Gill, p.8) To achieve success, she should free herself from her "inescapable femininity" (Plath, 1982, p.30) and from her "awful tragedy for being a woman." (Plath, p.29) As far as Plath is concerned, her authoritarian father, unfaithful husband, and the male dominated society are her oppressors, who confined her creativity and turn her into a mere "cake of soap/ A wedding ring,/[and] a gold filling" (78-79), a reference to her state as a fragmented poet, woman, and housewife.

Plath's presentation of her damaged psych is hysteric and cruel:

[...] my skin

Bright as a Nazi lampshade,

My right foot

A paperweight,

My face a featureless, fine

Jew linen.

The nose, the eye pits, the full set of teeth?

The sour breath
Will vanish in a day.
Soon, soon the flesh
The grave cave ate will be
At home on me (4-6,7-9, 13-18)

The poet conjures violent metaphors and images to portray her hellish existence and to expose her inner violent feeling towards life. The battle between her and her enemy is delineated in terms of the Holocaust. "Lady Lazarus" alludes to the terrors of the Nazi atrocities perpetrated in the concentration camps. She compares her sense of pain and suffering to that of the Jews, who were oppressed, tortured, and killed by the Nazis during the Second World War. The parts of her body are stolen and reconstructed by the Nazis. Hence, like the Jews whose skins had been experimented and used for lampshades, (Lehnardt, 2016) the poet's skin is also remodeled to be an electric light source. While her foot is used as "a paperweight." She identifies herself with a Jew to convey the depth of her pain and to reflect her state as a marginalized outcast, who has been drained of her identity. Plath's sense of loss, disintegration, and fragmentation is expressed through the horrifying listing of the parts of her featureless face and shattering body:

Ash, ash
You poke and stir
Flesh, bone, there is nothing there
A cake of soap,
A wedding ring,
A gold filling. (73-78)

The poet, here, extends the violent death camp metaphor, the cake of soap is made of the body, the gold is taken from the teeth. She is dehumanized, dismembered, and her body is refashioned into different commodities. She is no more the owner of her body and self, she

belongs to others. According to Van Dyne, "Plath recasts marriage as a criminal act,"

She displays the domestic institution as "a state of confinement and physical dismemberment that robs the poet's voice." (1989, p.134) The catastrophic atmosphere in "Lady Lazarus" relates to Plath's feeling of persecution as a divorced wife, abandoned lover, a single mother, a forsaken daughter, and a tortured artist. Her familial peace has been disturbed since the death of her father, which generates a sense of confusion, unhappiness, and dissatisfaction. She becomes a subject of annihilation. Hence, she must put an end to her zombie-like existence and fight against her persecutors.

2. 2 Dying is an art

Plath was a woman poet in a male oriented culture, in which masculinity was associated with "superior poetic talent and sanctioned High Art." (Helal, 2004, p.78) She was writing during a period, "when a woman was expected to find total fulfillment as wife and mother," therefore, female poets and writers met male hostility, so they should fight "to make their place in the world." (Holland, 1999) Consequently, she "must shriek" against "[a] wind of such violence." (Plath, 1981, p.53) In "Lady Lazarus," Plath's revolt against the torment of men is visualized in terms of death and resurrection. She uses death as a very violent and effective weapon against her enemy:

Dying

Is an art, like everything else.

I do it exceptionally well. (43–45)

As far as James Kaufman is concerned,

Poetry, especially, is seen [as] an art linked to having some sort of a "muse." Even if such a misattribution results from superstition or modesty, it may produce a perceived external locus of control. Poets may mentally assign credit—and, indirectly, their locus of control—to*

such a muse, inadvertently placing themselves at a higher risk for depression and other emotional disorders. And women, especially those suffering from low self-esteem, may be more likely to have external, rather than internal, locus of control. (2002 , p.47)

In this vein, Plath, who blames her father, her husband, "herr Doktor" (65), and other things as the cause for her anguish and misery, grasps death and rebirth as her muse. Moreover, she employs death as a literary device for exposing her anger and frustration.

Death is an instrument to kill the poet's past and to bury her wounds. It is a therapeutic way to rebuild a healthy flourished psyche. She realizes that death is the only means that leads to a new rebirth and novel identity. Her symbolic suicide will provide her with new vision and inspiration that revives her poetic creativity. Referring to Plath's obsession with the concept of death and suicide, Anne Sexton proclaims that she and Plath

Would talk at length about our first suicides: at length, In detail and in depth[...] both of us drawn to it like Moths to an electric light bulb [...] [we] were stimulated by it, as if death made each of us a little more real at the moment.(1970, p.175)

For Plath, death is a passage to reality. She wants to "kill the false self, who represents a death- in- life, and to be reborn as the hidden true self." (Bundtzen, 1983, p.8) Moreover, Ted

* For Kaufman, the "locus of control" is the extent to which an individual believes she/he has the ability to control the events that affect her/ him. A person with an "internal locus of control" thinks that events in life are the outcome of her/ his own action, while a person who has an "external locus of control" blames conditions, certain persons, things, society as the cause for her/ his miserable status.(2001,p.47)

Hughes explains that Plath "shares with Anne Sexton and Robert Lowell the central experience of shattering of the self, and the labour of fitting it together again or finding a new one." (qtd. in Kroll, 1976, p.8) In "Lady Lazarus," Plath destroys severely the shattered self and body, in order to create a new perfect being.

However, the poet's persona performs her "theatrical" (51) battle of self-destruction before "the peanut-crunching crowd," that is waiting to watch the forceful process of annihilation. The crowd can be a reference to her reading public, critics, and the patriarchal society, who observe her torture and death with a morbid and indifferent interest. In this sense, they are like her enemy in their passivity.

What a million filaments.

The peanut-crunching crowd

Shoves in to see

Them unwrap me hand and foot——

The big strip tease.

Gentlemen, ladies (25-30)

Deborah Nelson defines the Cold War as "the pervasiveness of surveillance in ordinary life." (2001, p.80) In this respect, the act of watching, in the poem, may also symbolize the Cold War that violates the American individual's privacy and shatters her/his freedom. The violence of entrapment produces a sense of ease to commit suicide in a "cell," "It's easy enough to do it in a cell." (49). Death, then, is an emancipation of both the caged body and the self.

Plath's poetic persona gives her crisis a universal dimension by comparing herself to Christ at the cross. Her words, "These are my hands/My Knees/I may be skin and bone// Nevertheless, I am the same, identical woman," (31-34) corresponds with Christ's words: "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me have." (Luke 24: 39

King James Version) In other words, the poet elevates her personal pains and suffering to force them into the public realm. This biblical allusion may also affirm the poet's ability to achieve resurrection, which cannot be fulfilled without death. Thus she "melts to a shriek/ [and] turn and burn" (70–71). The scream can be an emblem of the angst of the post war mad and violent society, it is also an expression of Plath's rage and anger. As far as the poet is concerned, the shriek may also be a kind of catharsis, since she declares, "I have a violence in me that is hot as death– blood." (Plath, 1982, p.339) Her inner feeling of violence is translated into a scream then a suicide.

Violence, in the poem, is manifested in the act of suicide. Fire, the means of suicide, is a symbol of destruction, creation, and transformation. Fire consumes but not without providing light and warmth. ("Fire Element," n.d. para.4) The poet persona burns herself, "I turn and burn," (71) in order to be reborn as a powerful and effective woman. She struggles to overcome the limited possibilities of her real nightmarish world. Plath's notions and visions are so violent and horrific. She conceives death as a positive, energetic force; instead of escaping it, she embraces it warmly.

Describing the agony of her second suicide experience, Plath affirms the soreness of rebirth:

A time of darkness, despair, disillusion– so black as the human mind can be [...] symbolic death, and numb shock, then the painful agony of slow rebirth and psychic regeneration. (qtd. in Amos, 1998, p.163)

The poet, then, believes that she must encounter the severity and cruelty of death to be reborn. For Plath, "poetry and death [are] inseparable. The one could not exist without the other." (Alvarez, p. 29) Hence, she must die to accomplish her artistic creativity.

2.3 Resurrection

It seems that death is the dividing line between dystopia and utopia. The poet's persona leaves her torments and suffering behind to start a new better life full of triumph. She becomes a "walking miracle" (4) as she has been saved twice from death. Hence, in Rosenblatt words, "she expects to emerge reborn in a new [powerful] form." (p.39)

Thus she threatens and warns the male figures represented in

Herr God, Herr Lucifer

Beware

Beware

Out of the ash

I rise with my red hair

And I eat men like air. (79–84)

Here, Plath utilizes the biblical story of Lazarus, who was resurrected after death by the miracle of Jesus Christ. She identifies herself with Christ because the rising of Lazarus is stronger than all other forces in the world, even death itself. Besides, Plath wants to restore the ancient place of woman as goddess. And just like the phoenix, "the liberation spirit," the speaker is consumed by fire to rise gloriously from the ashes. Describing Lady Lazarus, Sylvia Plath states:

[...] a woman who has the great gift of being reborn. The only trouble is, she has to die first. She is the phoenix, the liberation spirit, what you will. She is also just a good, plain, very resourceful woman. (qtd. in Rosenthal, 1970, p.70)

The poet challenges the patriarchal world through the process of renewal, regeneration, and resurrection.

In A male dominated society, "[t]he relationship between men and women [is] a form of political dominance, an ingenious form of interior colonization." (Ennis, 2007, p.69)

Therefore, Plath incorporates the male figure with the vicious images of "Nazi" and "Lucifer." She also associates him with "God," since he gives himself the right to control everything in her life, body, and psyche. Hence, Lady Lazarus is "a woman who understands the nature of her enemy and returns to fight back." (Bassnett, 2005, p. 113) Accordingly, she "becomes the master, a master who is crueler than the original because all revenge is appropriate after the humiliations and torments suffered." (Lane, 1979, p.79) After death and resurrection, the poet's persona becomes an empowered female. She gets rid of her passivity to be an active avenger and "eat men like air." The poet's persona turns to be a cannibal that consumes men. Such atrocious image is a normal reaction against men's exploitation and persecution of women. Through this violent image, Plath conveys the fact that women have the ability to resist using men's same violent weapon of oppression. The monstrous behavior of Lady Lazarus reflects her genuine wish to devastate those men, who contaminate the world with their evils. She seeks to purify the society by violence, which she has learned from men themselves.

The rebirth of self is associated with violence and murder. Lady Lazarus restores her dignity and identity by the violent act of cannibalism. The poet's brutal imagination transforms the delicate beautiful woman into a cruel horrible creature. Plath's vision of liberty and emancipation is bloody and provocative. The employment of such savage and ugly womanly spirit is a message for the patriarchal society, which destroys the feminine beauty and innocence by its selfishness, violence, and atrocity. Hence, Lady Lazarus chooses not the way of life, but rather the way of violence and revenge. However, the employment of violence reflects the poet's desire to shock, to upset the patriarchal vision of woman as a housewife, mother, and as an emotional subject.

3. "Daddy"

3.1. A Sense of Victimization

Unlike the title of the poem, which shows warmth, affection, and sentiment, the content suggests rage, violence, and oppression. Violence in "Daddy" lies in the chaotic feelings towards the father and in the lack of logic, since "the daughter searches for a father who both must be killed, and is already dead." (Gill, p.116) Otto Plath's death, when Sylvia was only eight years old, ignited her psychological disorder and her confused sense of guilt and wrath. For Plath, "[h]er father died while she thought he was God," (Melander, 1972, p.29) hence, she was disappointed and shocked. The father's early death leads to the daughter's feeling of victimization and dehumanization.

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. (1-5)

Plath is haunted by her father's image as authoritarian and persecutor. The shoe-foot comparison is very violent and cruel that provides the reader with a sense of estrangement and de-familiarization. The persona describes her feeling of isolation and imprisonment in degrading terms that present her as a foot and her father as a shoe in which she lived her whole life. The space is very small that she cannot make any kind of

movement or speech. She lives a state of suffocation. She suffers an inescapable sense of helplessness and confinement. The poet's persona is enslaved and imprisoned by her unforgiving domineering father, who dominates her psyche and every aspect of her life. Plath views her relationship with her father from a violent perspective. The persona

perceives her father as a Nazi, which provokes a great deal of panic and terror:

I have always been scared of *you*,

With your Luftwaffe, [...]

And your neat mustache

And your Aryan eye, bright blue.

Panzer-man, panzer-man, O You—— (41–45)

The father becomes a symbol of warfare and violent historical events. She envisions him as a bomber in the Luftwaffe the most powerful air force in Europe, which was deeply involved in Nazi war crimes, ("Luftwaffe," n.d.) and as a tank driver, "Panzer-man." The panzer tanks were the striking power during the Second World War. ("Panzer German Tank," n.d.) The father, then, is presented as an agent of death and murder. In this sense, the relationship between the father and the daughter is that of a victim and victimizer.

As in "Lady Lazarus," Plath conjures the Nazi-Jew metaphor to convey the depth of her suffering in a male-dominant culture of the 1950s and 1960s. She alludes to the deportation of the Jews to the concentration camps:

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. (31–35)

The Jews were packed into cattle trucks they were locked in for days as the trains travelled to camps across Europe. They did not know neither their direction nor their destiny. ("Deportation and Transportation," n.d., para.1) The comparison asserts a sense of otherness and inferiority. The persona realizes the truth of her marginalization and exile. Such allusion exposes and responds to an overwhelming sense of pain and

distress, due to the adoption of the patriarchal dictatorial culture, which is, according to the poet, a source of destruction. Additionally, the persona is deprived of her right to express herself and her thoughts, "I never could talk to you/ The tongue stuck in my jaw// it stuck in a barb wire snare." (24–26) Plath's description of the social restrictions is fierce and severe. She "could hardly speak" (28) because the masculine reaction will be either in the terms of Physical violence, " [...] I never could tell where you/ put your foot [kicking]," (23–24) or in the terms of verbal violence, "the language [is] obscene." (30) She is powerless for she suffers a supreme failure of communication. The father and the daughter cannot share the same ground. The daughter is aware of her predicament as an outcast, who has been uprooted from her identity by all brutal means of violence.

The poet's persona sees her father in every Nazi, "I thought every German was you." (29) She associates the Nazis with the darkest evil in the world. Using a very cruel language, she defines her father as [...] 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. (46–50)

The "black shoe" father appears as a black "swastika," a symbol of Nazism, and as a Fascist to affirm his tyranny and cruelty. Adrienne Rich argues that for Plath, the man "if not a dream, a fascination and a terror." (1972, p.36) In Plath's work, Rich explains, the source of fascination and terror "is simply, Man's power– to dominate, tyrannize, choose, or reject the woman. The charisma of man seems to come purely from [...] his control of the world by force, not from anything fertile or life– giving in him." (p.36) Accordingly, "[e]very woman adores a Fascist," a reference to her confused emotions towards her father, who

is presented as an abusive male figure that inspires admiration as well as fear.

Plath breaks the typical image of father–daughter relationship to portray the ambiguous problematic aspects of this relationship. She identifies Otto Plath, the professor at Boston University, with the greatest evil forces in the world:

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. (51–60)

The father is depicted as the "black man," an emblem of evil, fear, aggression, and death. In stories of good versus evil, black and darkness is always symbolic of the villain. Thus she presents herself as "poor and white," (4) a symbol of righteousness, to emphasize her father's viciousness. However, the poet's persona wish for the father's violence to be turned against him, "[a] cleft in your chin instead of your foot." The black man breaks her heart with his departure from this world. Again, and as in "Lady Lazarus," she refers to her suicide attempt, as a violent reaction against the father's death, and as an attempt to join him. After her failure in killing herself, for "they pulled me out of the sack, /And they stuck me together with glue." (61–62) Here, the persona grasps her existence from an oppressive masculine perspective, she seems as a commodity in a sack that she can be repaired after shattering.

The father's death causes the poet's persona terrible pain. Hence, she looks for a rescuer, thus she
[...] knew what to do.

I made a model of you,

A man in black with a Meinkampf look. (63–65)

The father is the woman's first male object of love, her early relationship with him shapes her conscious and unconscious perceptions of what she accepts and what she refuses in her husband. Consequently, Plath, finds similarity between her father and her husband, the British poet, Ted Hughes, who seems a compensation for the lost father. He is a fascinating fearful figure, a "man in black" with Aryan looks. She invokes the title of Hitler and his book "Meinkampf," *My Struggle* to convey the tyranny and cruelty of her husband, whom she considers as her "representative in the world of men." (Kukil, 2000, p.467) Plath is disappointed by her father's early death and by her husband's infidelity. Therefore, she compares her husband to a "vampire" that sucking her blood, for seven years, to get nourishment:

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. (71–75)

The man in black, then, is the vampire, the bringer of death, darkness, terror, and violence. Plath associates the images of both her father and husband with a bloodthirsty creature, "the vampire," to show their negative effect upon her life, which she once describes as a "great, stark, bloody play." (Kukil, p.456) The poet's persona rejects the state of submission and decides to kill the father figure to get free of the tiresome burden that consumes her essence and psyche. Plath's anger

against her father is obviously murderous. Hence, she has stabbed his black heart with a stake:

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. (76-80)

The father's violence against his daughter is "transmitted and the victim being turned into a victimizer." (Travis, 2009, p.291) She may join the avenging villagers, who also represent the vampire's victims, their violent act of dancing and stamping on the staked vampire (Daddy). As in "Lady Lazarus," the poem ends with the persona's triumph over her persecutors, and she declares herself free of the phantom of her father and of the unfaithful husband. She liberates herself from the false self that is in his servitude. Violence, in the poem, appears as a psychic purgation that leads to a new rebirth and evolution. In short, "Daddy" is a poem of revenge and its violence is a reaction against torture and persecution. Daddy is a representation of male and every atrocious behavior in the world.

Conclusion

Violence in Plath's poetry is employed to resist a sense of defeat in actual life. The poet's deep self is full of violence and rage, hence, she projects her innermost feelings to the reader to release her inner private violence. In this sense, violence becomes a kind of self-therapy. The poet dramatizes her internal war and gives it a universal dimension through certain allusions to historical horrors and violent events. Plath meditates violence in terms of Nazis, persecution, dismembered body, corpses, and death. She fashions her art out of distress, breakdown, and violence. Through the chaotic atmosphere of "Lady Lazarus" and "Daddy," the poet establishes a sort of communication with her readers

and her persecutors as well. Violence, in the poems, gives voice to the voiceless victims (women), and put an end to the patriarchal encroachments.

The poems are dominated by a sense of indignation, which produces the violence of the mind. Plath's vision of violence is biased, since she perceives the patriarchal violence against women as a destructive power, while her own violent acts against men are justified and constructive. Thus, in "Lady Lazarus," the persona's death becomes self-invention and rebirth, while the death of the male figure in "Daddy" turns to be damnation and defeat. However, the poet uses acts of violence to articulate issues of gender and identity.

Violence appears to be a kind of resistance against her fragmented identity as well as her physical and psychological boundaries. The fierce vocabulary and images provide Plath with an individualistic style and a distinguished poetic identity. Through violence, Plath violates the patriarchal construction of cultural values and social norms. She wants to hold the first position, thus she becomes godlike in "Lady Lazarus," who has the power to devour "men like air." Nevertheless, violence, which is, basically, a patriarchal behavior, becomes essential to the life of the woman figure in both poems. By violence, Plath shatters woman's shell of passivity and equips her with an active and effective weapon to challenge male domination and to establish her independent world. In this sense, violence turns to be an expression of freedom.

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