



Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Unresolved Paternal Loss in Sylvia

Plath's selected poem

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Abstract

Sylvia Plath is widely regarded to be one of the most celebrated writers within the canon of twentieth-century American literature. Being one of the progenitors of poetry alongside other prominent fellows, she, in her literary endeavours, embedded autobiographical elements. The paper conducts a critical examination of "Daddy" under the diagnostic umbrella of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) theory. PTSD symptom clusters include intrusive memories, stressful dreams or flashbacks; avoiding reminders of the traumatic events, such as people, activities, situations or places that may trigger distressing memories; changes in mood or cognition; changes in reactivity and arousal. In light of this framework, this study argues that the poem anatomises a chronic traumatic memory rooted in childhood bereavement. The analysis is augmented by epidemiological findings from the WHO World Mental Health Surveys, which identify the bereavement to be a leading factor for developing PTSD. The unexpected death of Plath's father leaves Plath with unhealed trauma that will haunt her throughout her life, shaping her personality, relationships, and literary oeuvre. In reading the poem through PTSD, the study finds compulsive repetition and intrusive imagery that orient the poet to re-experiencing trauma. It also finds that the speaker's fractured identity and relational patterns magnify negative alterations in cognition and mood. Additionally, the violent metaphors are used to embody hyperarousal. Finally, the oscillation between yearning for and rejection of her father signals persistent avoidance. Accordingly, through close textual reading, this paper posits that "Daddy" documents the unresolved psychological trauma of Sylvia Plath resulting from the death of her father. And despite the fact that the traumatic event has been divulged across her poetry, still she endured the chronic suffering till the very moment of her suicide in 1963.

Keywords: PTSD, Sylvia Plath, "Daddy", and trauma

اضطراب ما بعد الصدمة وفقدان الاب في قصيدة مختارة لسيلفيا بلاث

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تعتبر سيلفيا بلاث على نطاق واسع واحدة من اشهر الكاتبات في الادب الامريكي في القرن العشرين. وبصفتها واحدة من رواد الشعر الى جانب زملاء بارزين اخرين، فقد ضمنت مساعيها الادبية عناصر سيرة ذاتية. تجري هذه الورقة فحصا نقديا لقصيدة "ابي" في اطار تشخيص اضطراب ما بعد الصدمة. تشمل اعراض اضطراب ما بعد الصدمة ذكريات متطفلة او احلاما مزعجة او ذكريات الماضي المؤلمة وكذلك تجنب المثيرات التي تذكر الاحداث الصادمة مثل الاشخاص او الانشطة او المواقف او الاماكن.



التي قد تثير ذكريات مؤلمة، تغيرات في المزاج او الادراك، تغيرات في رد الفعل . في ضوء هذا الاطار تناقش الدراسة بأن القصيدة تحلل ذاكرة صادمة مزمنة ومتجذرة في فجيرة الطفولة. يتم تعزيز التحليل بالنتائج من مسوحات الصحة العقلية العالمية لمنظمة الصحة العالمية والتي تحدد الفجيرة كعامل رئيسي في اضطراب ما بعد الصدمة. ان وفاة والد بلاث غير المتوقعة تركتها بصدمة نفسية لم تشف تلازمها طول حياتها وتشكل شخصيتها وعلاقتها ومسارها الادبي . قراءة هذه القصيدة من خلال اضطراب ما بعد الصدمة وجدت الدراسة تكرارا قهريا وانماط علائقية تضخم التغيرات السلبية في الادراك وتستخدم استعارات عنيفة لتجسيد فرط الاستثارة. اخيرا فأظن التذبذب في الشوق الى والدها ورفضه يدل على استمرار سلوك التجنب، من خلال قراءة نصية متأنية للقصيدة تفترض هذه الورقة ان قصيدة "ابي" توثق الصدمة غير المعالجة لسيلفيا بلاث الناتجة عن وفاة والدها. وعلى الرغم ان الحدث الصادم قد كشف عنه في قصائدها فأنها استمرت في تحمل المعاناة المزمنة حتى اللحظة الاخيرة من انتحارها عام 1963.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اضطراب ما بعد الصدمة ، سيلفيا بلاث، "ابي"، الصدمة

Introduction: Sylvia Plath

Sylvia Plath (1932–1963) was a prominent American novelist and poet whose work significantly shaped twentieth-century literature. She was the daughter of Otto Emil Plath, who died in 1940, and Aurelia Frances Schober. Her enduring literary reputation is founded largely on her meticulously composed poetry collections, notably *The Colossus and Other Poems* (1960) and *Ariel* (1965), as well as her semi-autobiographical novel *The Bell Jar* (1963), published only a month before her death. Her posthumous volume, *The Collected Poems* (1981), further consolidated her canonical status. This volume earned her the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1982 (Kihss, 1982).

She is a defining voice in the confessional poetry movement that emerged in the post-war period. This movement marked a radical departure from the impersonal dogma of High Modernism. Poets who are categorised under this heading includes, among others, W. D. Snodgrass, George Starbuck, John Berryman, Theodore Roethke, Robert Lowell, Anne Sexton (1928-74, committed suicide), and Sylvia Plath. The term "confessional poetry" was introduced by the Critic M. L. Rosenthal in his review of Robert Lowell's *Life Studies* (1959). He observed that many poets traditionally disguise their personal identities behind artistic masks. However, Lowell abandoned this protective façade and foregrounded his personal experience. In this literary style of poetry, the pronoun "I" is critical to the structure, development, and meaning of a poem. What distinguishes confessional poets is their striking candour in addressing intensely private subjects. These topics, according to Rosenthal, "rather shameful" personal topics (Mambrol, 2025).

The confessional movement emerged in the mid of the twentieth century when America had just been through the second world war. In the shadow of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the escalating tensions of the Cold War, public consciousness was increasingly troubled by the prospect



of human self-annihilation through nuclear warfare. The persistent threat of global destruction generated a climate of fear and instability that inevitably shaped literary production. In this climate of fear, poets retreated inward, "internaliz[ing] their uncertainty only to re-envision the endemic alienation and procedural dehumanisation in their writing" (Mambrol, 2025, para. 6). Yet confessional poets did not tackle these geopolitical anxieties in a direct or overtly political manner, as did many of their socially and morally committed contemporaries. Instead, they redirected their attention to the private sphere. They probed the complexities of the self through examinations of family relationships, mental illness, and intimate trauma.

In sundry ways, confessional poets were the heirs of Modernism due in part to their shared themes such as alienation and the depiction of a vast wasteland. However, their technique marked a radical departure. In contrast to the Modernist doctrine of impersonality, which advocated the effacement of the poet's personal presence from the text, confessional poets cultivated a distinctly different aesthetic grounded in personal expression. They frequently combined "dense poetic language with autobiographical insight written in such a frank, colloquial tone that it felt like a confession between friends" (Gill, 2005, p. 59). Such an orientation in poetry marked a clear divergence from New Criticism that was dominant in the 1950s, which privileged the text to be a self-sufficient object and deliberately debarred the writer's biography from critical consideration. Instead, this genre focused on everyday life and topics such as marriage, parenting, love, work, and faith. Plath's oeuvre epitomises this turn inward, transforming personal anguish into meticulously crafted art.

For most of her adult life, Plath was clinically ill with depression, especially in the aftermath of the death of her beloved father, who was like a beacon of hope she followed. In effect, she was treated many times with early versions of electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) (Firestone & Catlett, 1998). But in the end, she ended her life, committing suicide in 1963 by putting her head in the oven. Her father unexpectedly died when she was only eight years old. His untimely death is due to the undiagnosed diabetes, after a leg amputation. He has often been described as a strict and authoritarian figure. In the aftermath of this calamitous loss of her father, she avowed, "I'll never speak to God again" (cited in Brown & Taylor, 2017). The burden of the loss lingered and shaped her identity throughout her life. Additionally, in a prose piece titled "Ocean 1212-W", she reflected that days of her life before this loss were "sealed themselves off like a ship in a bottle—beautiful inaccessible, obsolete, a fine, white flying myth" (cited in Brown & Taylor, 2017).

Plethora of scholars have perceived her to be schizoid who wishes to be dead throughout her life. Others have speculated that her abuse at the hands of an infidel husband influenced her mental health. In 1956, Sylvia Plath married



prominent poet Ted Hughes in London. The couple moved to the United States briefly in 1957 before returning to England in late 1959. The marriage was often volatile and boisterous. On many occasions, Plath claimed that Ted Hughes has subjected her to domestic abuse. The couple got divorced in 1962. In an unpublished letter, Sylvia Plath made specific allegations that Ted Hughes had beaten her just two days before she suffered the miscarriage of their second child, and also claimed that he had expressed a desire to kill her (Kean, 2017). Nonetheless, her husband, Ted Hughes, noted that her life was full of glee and to his amusement that she took her own life suddenly. Acquaintances and friends of hers have articulated analogous shock that she could have committed suicide. A friend of the family, Alvarez, affirms his belief that she, by no means, had ever had the intention to take her own life:

I am convinced by what I know of the facts that this time she did not intend to die. Her suicide attempt ten years before had been in every sense, deadly serious. She had carefully disguised the theft of the sleeping pills, left a misleading note to cover her tracks, and hidden herself in the darkest, most unused corner of a cellar, rearranging behind her the old firelogs she had disturbed, burying herself away like a skeleton in the nethermost family closet. Then she had swallowed a bottle of fifty sleeping pills. She was found late and by accident, and survived only by a miracle. The flow of life in her was too strong even for the violence she had done it. This, anyway, is her description of the act in *The Bell Jar*; there is no reason to believe it false. So she had learned the hard way the odds against successful suicide; she had learned that despair must be counterpoised by an almost obsessional attention to detail and disguise (cited in Mambrol, 2018, para. 4).

As such, all she wanted was to be taken care of, not to succeed at her trial. Her first suicide attempt at the age of 21 is not, after all, so unusual given the enormous academic pressures. It undoubtedly does not designate a permanent drive to end her life. At any rate, before the successful attempt of committing suicide in 1963, Sylvia endured a lot of other types of massive pressures. Likely, it seems that these pressures were the direct source of the despair that led her to commit suicide.

Multiple times, in her works, she expresses her wishes to commit suicide. For instance, her seminal novel *The Bell Jar* is a novel about a suicide attempt that fails. A poem entitled "Tulips", which was composed on 18 March 1962, relates the experience of being a patient in hospital who feels dulled by the daily routine. "Fever 103°", composed in 1962, is a poem about a descent into the fiery depths of hell. *Three Women*, a poem composed for BBC radio in 1962, relates the story of three women who epitomise three different moments of the childbearing process. What she criticises in this poem is that childbirth brings



another human being who suffers the horrors of this world. Cut to the chase, she harbours a death wish throughout her life, which is evident across her literary works. Although the poem is extensively analysed through feminist, psychoanalytic, and mythological frameworks, little attention is given to the study of "Daddy" through the diagnostic lens of PTSD. Thus, it is of pivotal significance to shed light on one of her most famous poems, which touches on themes such as death and distressing trauma of her relationship with her father. All of this and more is to be studied under the umbrella of post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD.

Theoretical Framework: Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD

Many people experience some kind of trauma during their lifetime, such as calamities, abuse, virulence, the loss of a beloved ones, natural disasters, war, or other frightening events. Sometimes, people escape these experiences without long-term problems. But for millions of others, those experiences linger and might be developed to a chronic mental illness termed post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD.

Documentation of mental disorders which are related to trauma dates back to the ancient Greeks. Notably, Samuel Pepys has documented intrusive and stressful symptoms of trauma ensuing the 1666 Fire of London (O'Brien S (1998, p.7). Terms like "shell shock", "neurasthenia", "combat neurosis" and "war nerves" were used by physicians and medical institutions to designate the condition related to trauma during the world wars (Herman, 2015, p. 9). The term "post-traumatic stress disorder" (PTSD) emerged in the 1970s, largely in response to the psychological diagnoses of U.S. military veterans who served in the Vietnam War (Klykylo, 2012). The American Psychiatric Association officially recognized the disorder, in the third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III) in 1980, to be PTSD (Friedman, 2013). The DSM-5 defines the traumatic event to be the "exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violation" (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 3).

PTSD is not a sign of weakness. It's a biological response to trauma: a malfunction in the systems the brain normally uses to cope with danger. When one feels threatened, the brain's fight-flight-freeze response turns on: a survival mechanism that prepares us to defend ourselves. The brain's hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) system sends signals to the autonomic nervous system, flooding the body with stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline. Thus, there is a rise in number of the heart's beats, quickening of breathing, and muscles tense; all designed to protect us. In most people, hormone levels return to normal within days or a few weeks. But in PTSD, the stress response persists long after the end of the danger. In effect, The brain remains reactive to daily life situations the same manner it reacts to hazard, even without real menace.



The dysregulation is essential to the disorder, for the "traumatic memories are often stored in a fragmented and sensory manner, making them prone to intrusive recall" (Kessler et al., 2017, p. 2).

PTSD symptoms commonly fall into four broad categories. Intrusive thoughts and memories, flashbacks, upsetting dreams. Avoidance of anything that reminds someone of the trauma. Negative changes in mood and thinking, fear, shame, guilt and disconnection. Hyperarousal/reactivity, irritability, difficulty sleeping, exaggerated startle response. Not everyone has all symptoms, and intensity varies from person to person. Triggers, sights, sounds, smells, or even feelings associated with the original trauma can out of the blue reignite the stress response. For instance, the smell of smoke may remind a survivor of a house fire and trigger a full physical panic response. People with PTSD may withdraw, avoid social contact, or struggle to feel safe again. It is sometimes called the hidden wound because symptoms are internal and not visible to others, even though they deeply affect daily life. One should bear in mind that "delayed presentation (sometimes years later) is common" (Bisson et al., 2015, p. 2). The delayed presentation is relevant to understanding how trauma may appear later in life long after the event had taken place. All that is needed to heal trauma is understanding and support from friends, family, and professionals. Effective treatments include psychotherapy like cognitive behavioural therapy or EMDR, medication, mindfulness practices, and creating supportive environments. The psychodynamic therapy will help in "understanding the meaning of the trauma and its impact on one's identity and relationships" (Kessler et al., 2017, p. 4). Such a process is relevant to confessional poets like Plath, whose work insistently broaches topics related to traumatic loss.

Chronic PTSD may be developed from experiencing trauma in childhood. Kascakova et al. (2023) avow that "Exposure to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) represents a significant risk factor for the development of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)" (p. 1). During childhood which is a formative stage of life, emotional abuse, neglect, and the loss of a parent are certainly impactful factors for developing PTSD. Such a phenomenon is known as "biological embedding", where stress alters neurological and physiological systems durably (Kascakova et al., 2023, p. 2).

The WHO World Mental Health Surveys found out that "70.4% of respondents reported lifetime exposure to one or more traumatic events" (Kessler et al., 2017). Nonetheless, not all people who experience this kind of traumatic event would have PTSD. Instead, the type, timing, and relational nature of trauma are decisive factors. The WMH Surveys identify the death of the loved ones to be the most reported traumatic event worldwide. According to Kessler et al. (2017), "the unexpected death of a loved one accounts for nearly



one-fifth of all PTSD cases globally"(p.7). Moreover, PTSD is often persistent and cumulative, especially when trauma occurs early in life. When it occurs early in childhood, during formative years, "trauma exposure significantly predicts subsequent traumatic events and later PTSD onset" (Kessler et al., 2017, p. 9). As such, unresolved childhood trauma may have structured the mindsets, emotional vulnerabilities, adult relationships and recurrent suicidal ideation of those who develop such chronic conditions. That being said, now the framework is to be adapted to critically read the poem "Daddy" by Sylvia Plath to show how the memory of the deceased father has haunted the mind of one of the most admired literary figures of the twentieth century worldwide not only in the English-speaking world.

PTSD Symptomology in Sylvia Plath's "Daddy"

"Daddy" is a quintessential confessional poem. It was composed in 1962, one month before her divorce from her husband, Ted Hughes, and four months before her suicide. "Daddy" was posthumously published in Ariel in 1965, alongside many of her final poems, such as "Lady Lazarus" and "Tulips". It has since become one of the most widely anthologised poems in American literature. Traditionally, criticism has focused on its dark tones, violent imagery, and shocking use of Holocaust metaphor to explore the poet's fraught relationship with her deceased father and her failing marriage. In this paper, however, the study builds upon that foundation beside arguing that "Daddy" sheds light on the psychic mechanisms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). In this framework, the speaker's fraught relationship with the spectre of her father and the ghost of her marriage is structured by intrusive re-experiencing, avoidance, dissociation, cognitive distortions, and hyperarousal.

The title of the poem sets its mode from the very inception. "Daddy" is a colloquial term a child uses for a father. Frustration and despair are ostensibly omnipresent from the very first line with repetitive sounds. This is a typical example of a child in an incantation. The poem thus starts:

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. (Plath, 1965)

From its opening lines, the poem contains an incantatory seizure. It instantly plunges the reader into the intrusive recall characteristic of PTSD. The compulsive repetition of "you do not do, you do not do" mimics the cyclical nature of traumatic memory. Here, trauma is "relived" rather than remembered



(Van der Kolk, 2014). The father's presence is inexorable. He is the "black shoe" in which the speaker has lived "like a foot / For thirty years.../ Barely daring to breathe or Achoo" (Plath, 1965). The imagery here conveys the perpetual hypervigilance and constriction of her life suffocated by fear, in which the self is crushed and immobilised within the relic of the perpetrator, which is all she has. To be shaped by a traumatic memory, she feels "persistent, distorted blame of self or others about the cause or consequences of the traumatic event" (APA, 2013). Plath is framed as a passive object within her father's dominating world. Conversely, her father was, before his death, acceptable to her since she declares "anymore". In fact, she composed the poem just before turning thirty. Plath rejects the life her daddy fashioned for her. According to her, this life, which she thinks has been chosen for her, offers no opportunity to enjoy its treasures. In the poem, she describes her father as Black and herself as white. Simultaneously, she refuses to be poor any longer and, ostensibly, white. The poem is replete with discrepancies, such as the fact that she really needs her absent father, yet denounces him at the same time.

The second stanza marks a turning point for the narrator, who discards the role of a victim and affirms ferocious vengeance on her father. She declares, "Daddy, I have had to kill you" (Plath, 1965). Yet she could not have her way through, since the narrator states, "You died before I had time" (Plath, 1965). Her confession that she had to kill her father means that she wants to eradicate the source of her ache. Yet, this agency is instantaneously aborted by the admission that the father did die before she had time to execute her revenge. The death of her father, not by her own hands, leaves the child with no recourse for confrontation or closure. It seems as if her father has tricked his daughter so that even death cannot take him away from her. Likewise, the reader himself is deceived too. One, after reading the line, assumes that the daughter has committed patricide only to find out that she wants to kill his traumatic memory. In fact, her father died when she was only eight years old, and they were very close to each other, and this untimely death haunted her.

She refers to Nauset, the old name for the city in which her father used to live when he arrived in America from Germany: "beautiful Nauset. I used to pray to recover you" (Plath, 1965). For sure, the conflation of wishing to "kill" her father and "recovering" him at the same time is a testament to her chronic condition of dysregulation. The speaker says that she could not find the roots of her father in war-torn Europe. As such, she herself lacks roots. And when she attempted to talk to her father, she could not speak since her tongue had been stuck in her jaw: "I never could talk to you. / The tongue stuck in my jaw. / It stuck in a barb wire snare" (Plath, 1965). Here, speech inhibition becomes somatic. Language itself is rendered ensnared in images of wartime violence. It is lifelong psychic numbing and dissociation related to the trauma, where she suffers from aphasia, a freeze response that silences the victim. Likewise, there



is stammering "Ich, ich, ich, ich", which is the sound of a shattered self trying and failing to articulate an identity outside of the traumatic relationship. Here is the first allusion to Holocaust:

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. (Plath, 1965)

This is intrusive re-experiencing of trauma enacted through the catastrophic imagery of the Holocaust. Her father metastasises from a personal ghost into a totalising figure: German, God and devil. Thus, her father is an domineering German, and she is the helpless Jewish victim. These extreme metaphors further correspond to PTSD-related hyperarousal. The father figure is repeatedly transformed into a figure of absolute power and terror. It amplifies affective manifestation of the PTSD condition, where survivors often resort to exaggerated or catastrophic metaphors in order to articulate psychic states that exceed ordinary language. Plath adapts the Holocaust imagery in a desperate attempt to articulate an unspeakable personal trauma through a historically legible vocabulary of annihilation.

At any rate, the German language itself is so overwhelmingly "obscene" that it upsets the speaker. It is like an engine which pulls its victims to the death camps. The German language, in effect, triggers unwanted trauma and transports her back to a victimhood she identifies with. Kessler et al. (2017) note that trauma is "stored in a fragmented and sensory manner", prone to intrusive recall (p. 2). The sound of an engine, the obscenity of a language, and the iconography of fascism all activate the sensory receptors. It is like a flashback that simulates a mind besieged by invasive associations. As the poem progresses, Plath nonetheless declares that she has always been "scared of you," since she is a victim of her father. Now she taunts her father as a Fascist: "Every woman adores a Fascist, / The boot in the face, the brute / Brute heart of a brute like you" (Plath, 1965). She compares her father to a fascist; 'fascist' here is symbolic vocabulary for domination and fear. She feels helpless victim in the presence of her father. What is more, Plath scathingly indicts patriarchal patterns which normalizes the dominance of the male sex.

Next, she explains that her father is a "devil" and the root of all her miserable ache: "Bit my pretty red heart in two" (Plath, 1965). Since his early death



instigated the destruction of her life, she is in a perpetual fight-or-flight response, long after the actual threat has passed. The autobiographical elements in the poems are plenty and ubiquitous. For instance, Plath relates that at twenty years old she tried to take her own life to "get back, back, back to you" (Plath, 1965). Attempting to get back to her father by committing suicide would be a flight toward the source of trauma to escape its incessant psychic presence. All other avoidance strategies have failed to remove the detrimental impact of trauma from her life. Death for the disparate daughter becomes fantasised since it is the only final escape. The harsh "ack" sound is repeated to make it clear that she is disparate to get back to her beloved father. She is sad; thus, she tries to be reunited with her father, taking her life if she must: "I thought even the bones would do" (Plath, 1965). Death for her is not an escape but a window through which she would be in union with her beloved father, who is the source of both her agony and relief.

The speaker is vehemently angry again since her attempt to kill herself at twenty has failed, and she has been prevented from being united with her beloved father. The need for a paternal figure and daddy issues obliges her to be in a relationship with a man who is a replica of her father. She explains that her husband to be, "a model of you, / A man in black with a Meinkampf look / And a love of the rack and the screw" (Plath, 1965). As such, when she chooses a husband like her father, she relives her own retraumatisation. In fact, childhood trauma significantly predicts later relational dysfunction and chronic PTSD. Her relationship with her husband is a continuation of the original traumatic bond that she felt with her father. Indeed, Ted Hughes's betrayal of her was the straw that broke the camel's back and orchestrated her grotesque death. The poem is composed in the aftermath of her separation from her husband because of another woman. Even though she perceives her husband as evil, too, she is no longer a victim. She has killed this "vampire-like" husband whom she lived with for seven years, as if she had murdered her daddy. She seems victorious because she metaphorically could take her father's life with a stake: "There's a stake in your fat black heart" (Plath, 1965). Since she is unable to kill her father, maybe in killing her husband, she might finally be free from her traumatic bond with her deceased father. The speaker has eliminated the fear from her life, and in the last scene she depicts in her poem she asserts her triumph over the memory of her father: "Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through" (Plath, 1965). It seems as if she is jubilant for ending her relationship with both her husband and her father. Cut to the chase, it means that she was done with her life, given the fact that she committed suicide a few months later. Thus, the past is never laid to rest, and the wound is still open.

Conclusion



Sylvia Plath's "Daddy" is a landmark of confessional poetry because of its shocking candour and its documentation of psychological trauma. The paper has demonstrated that the poem reproduces the main symptom clusters associated with PTSD, which include invasive re-living of traumatic experience, avoidance and speech inhibition, undesirable changes in mood, hyperarousal, and repetition compulsion. The poem is an elegy that Plath wrote expressing her sorrow for the sudden death of her father, Otto Plath. As a result of this traumatic event, the poet's neurological and psychological character is haunted. According to the WHO World Mental Health Surveys, bereavement is globally a major catalyst for PTSD. In "Daddy", Plath translates this clinical reality into art. The father's memory is invasively relived. In the poem, the father is portrayed as a "black shoe" that suffocates his daughter. He is also portrayed as the "Frisco seal" of a ghastly statue and as a "Fascist" whose omnipresence is so devastating to her. He is oppressively ubiquitous in the poem because the trauma refuses to go into oblivion. On purpose, Plath conflates the personal loss with the Holocaust and the father with a husband. In so doing, she means to articulate a trauma that has besieged her psyche for so long to the degree that she has lost the capacity to distinguish reality from hallucinations.

When she announces killing her father, committing suicide and resuscitation, and the final exorcism, "I'm through," Plath represents traumatic re-enactments meant to achieve agency over her traumatic loss. However, no resolution is realised; there is only showing, and the trauma persists as long as the poetess breathes air. In this regard, the poem leverages acting out over working through because of the unescapable presence of trauma. By this token, the poem itself is a ritual, in which the wound is incessantly reopened in a paradoxical effort to heal but without realisation.

The employment of PTSD as an umbrella under which the poem "Daddy" is a critical choice for articulation of clinical reality through the art of poetry. Her poem "Daddy" and poetry in general still resonate with anyone who grapples with quandaries related to the shadow of the past. The poem is a literary conduit through which she therapeutically divulges the spectra of the past. Here lies gravity. This mode of poetry registers experiences that ordinary language may not be able to articulate.

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