

Sylvia Plath's "Daddy" as Autobiography

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Abstract

Sylvia Plath's *Ariel* collection of poems placed her among the United States' most important confessional poets of the twentieth century. Almost all the poems in *Ariel*, which were written during the last few months of Plath's life and published after her death, are "personal, confessional, felt" (Lowell, 1996, p. xiii). Several events that are mentioned in these poems make reference to the poet's own life experience. Plath, indeed, "transformed her own life into writing" (Bassnett, 2005, p. 5). Analyses such as these have led some critics to consider much of Plath's poetry to be an eloquent expression of her own factual experience. "Daddy", one of the best-known poems in the *Ariel* volume, incorporates several autobiographical details worthy of note. The first part of this research paper is an investigation into the diverse autobiographical elements present in "Daddy"; the second part is an analysis of Plath's faithfulness in transforming details about her private life into art.

Keywords: confessional poetry, autobiography, personal reality, Confessional School

Introduction

Sylvia Plath is considered one of the prominent figures of the confessional school of poetry. Both her prose and poetry are marked by the confessional mode. Because the purpose of this paper is to explore the way Plath handles and unmasks very personal life details directly in her poem “Daddy”, it will be crucial to shed some light on the confessional style adopted in her poetry. Confessionalism, which emerged in the late 1950s and early 1960s, is the style adopted by the contemporary American poet Plath in her poems to lay open her life experiences, often in an autobiographical manner. Her writings are consistently drawn from her personal experiences and her personae are usually related to her self. Confessional poetry, indeed, is “dedicated to, and preoccupied with, the ‘self’ with the larger world” (Stratman, 2015, p. 239). Christopher Beach elucidates in the *Cambridge Introduction to Twentieth Century American Poetry* (2003) that the confessional mode “allowed poets to articulate feelings, thoughts, and emotions that challenged the decorum of an era marked by its containment of psychic needs and desires” (qtd. in Gale). Poems become spaces for the authentic display of the poet’s bittersweet life experiences and memories. “Describing the poetic characteristics of the confessional mode, Beach states, ‘the poems were presented in the first-person voice with little apparent distance between the speaker and the poet; they were highly emotional in tone, autobiographical in content, and narrative in structure’” (Gale). In “Daddy”, there is a little gap created poetically between the poet and the created persona, or the “I” of the poem.

“Daddy”

The poem “Daddy” includes many autobiographical details. One major detail is that Plath’s German-born father died when she was young. She confesses, “I was ten when they buried you”. Actually, Otto Plath died from a cardiac embolism on 5 November 1940 after being hospitalised for nearly a month in order to receive the proper medical attention. The father’s tragic death haunted her throughout her life. Undeniably, losing the paternal figure at an early age made a seemingly irreplaceable void in her life. Her dad left her at a very sensitive age; an age that requires forming a strong, close emotional bond between the child and the father. Because at ten he left her, “at twenty [she] tried to die /and get back, back, back to [him]”. The constructed persona “thought that even the bones would do”, which expresses her readiness and eagerness to die because only death would reunite her with her father. The recurrence of the plosives /t/, /d/, /b/, and /k/ in these lines creates an abrupt, sharp effect that projects the daughter’s breathlessness and agony at the time of speaking. Yet, the main questions that arise at this point are: what does the death of the father really evoke in the speaker’s memory? What does the persona truly mourn? Does she express grief for the life of insecurity and deprivation she led after the physical loss of her father? Or does she rather express sorrow for the lost miserable and irrecoverable past that she experienced with him? Whatever the reasons are, Plath was influenced by her father’s sudden death to such an extent that it affected not only her private life but also her writings. “Daddy” stands as the best example among her poetic writings, a poem that incarnates the presence of her dead father. Put differently, “Daddy” is a confessional poem where the presence of the father figure is strong and overwhelming.

The poem under study examines the complex relationship between the daughter and her dead father. In the first stanza, Plath assumes to be the victim of her father’s life and death as she was left for “thirty years” “poor” and “barely daring to breathe or achoo”. “Instead of saying ‘sneeze’ Plath uses the onomatopoeic ‘Achoo’. Using the sound of the sneeze rather than the word sneeze, Plath is able to rhyme with the ‘oo’ sound that runs throughout the poem. It is a sound of fear and dread and of surprise and release” (Gale). It expresses the speaker’s mingled

feelings of sorrow and melancholy for paternal loss but also of freedom from paternal authority and power. Using a gloomy depressive tone, she blames him for not doing “any more, black shoe / in which she has lived like a foot”. The comparison of the speaker to a foot living in a black shoe has a disparaging significance. The common symbolism of the shoe as a shelter and of the father as a protector is mocked by the black colour of the shoe. For thirty years, the daughter has been deprived of the sense of security and protection that any male parent may afford his child. “The world she has lived in, like a black shoe, is severe, formal, confining, and constricting. She experiences herself to be more like a foot, a limb or appendage, than a person, integral unto herself” (Gale). Even after his death, the world is still limiting and suppressing. She is still enslaved and objectified by the dark shade of the shoe. “Plath is expressing a claustrophobic condition that has haunted the narrator lifelong” (Gale). “Daddy” is a confessional poem through which the poet narrates and divulges one of the intricate mysterious father-child relationships.

In the second stanza, the poet’s tone changes from a child’s tone to that of a hostile and aggressive woman. The poet “rejects her role as victim and asserts that violent revenge” (Bloom, 2001, p. 42). This is obvious through what she confesses, “[D]addy, I have had to kill you”. This line may have an equivocal meaning. On the one hand, it may connote the idea that the daughter does not want to kill her father, but to exterminate the memories associated with him that are haunting and tormenting her. It seems that the daughter has been overwhelmed with feelings of pain and suffering since his death and that she fails to get rid of his influence and release herself from his reminiscences. Accordingly, Harold Bloom emphasises that the first line of the second stanza is “partially a wish and partially means that she has had to kill his remaining presence in her life” (2001, p. 42). On the other hand, this line may also denote the idea that Plath has really meant killing her father. By confessing, “[D]addy, I have had to kill you / you died before I had time”, it sounds as if she is bothered by his death before she has a chance to murder him metaphorically. Plath’s real intention to deprive her father of existence may be proved by what she once revealed as far as her relationship with him is concerned. Indeed, she reveals, “I adored and despised him, and I probably wished many times that he were dead, I imagined that I had killed him” (Steiner, 1973, p. 21). Nevertheless, this poem makes the reader feel confused and unable to have a clear understanding of Plath’s real intentions and attitudes toward her parent. Indeed, while in the second stanza she seems to be out of control and to have the feelings of hatred and disgust toward him, in the third stanza she asserts that “[she] used to pray to recover [him]”; which means that she really wishes he were still alive. “Daddy” is an autobiographical poem that projects a daughter’s feelings of ambivalence toward her father.

In her book *A Closer Look at Ariel*, Nancy Hunter Steiner advocates that Plath describes her father as an “autocrat” (1973, p. 21); which means a dictator. As a matter of fact, in “Daddy” she portrays him as an evil German dictator:

I have always been scared of *you*,
with your Luftwaffe, your gobbledygook.
And your neat moustache
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. (41-50)

The father is depicted as a “Panzer¹ man”, “a brute”, and “a swastika”.² The poet confesses that she is terrified by the image of her dad as a cruel hard-hearted “fascist” with his “Luftwaffe”³ “neat moustache”, “Aryan [and] bright blue [eye]”, and “brute heart”. The reference to the authoritarian role of the father and to the claustrophobic condition to which the daughter’s life is doomed, which is first unveiled through the image of the black shoe, is once again proposed in the poem through the metaphor of the “black swastika”. Indeed, the latter, which stands as a symbol of Nazism, compares the father to a constricting sphere, or rather a maze through which the daughter fails to walk in order to find the exit. Even the “sky”, the epitome of freedom and emancipation, fails to “squeak through” that maze and illuminate its darkness. The metaphor of the father as a swastika does not only project the state of confinement and bewilderment of the daughter but also identify the type of father-daughter relationship, which seems to be intricately complicated. What seems to be striking is the daughter’s acknowledgement that she “adores a Fascist” like her father in spite of the pain, scare, deprivation, and degradation caused by him. “The speaker [who] embraces this identification of self as victim, becomes, in stanza ten, an apparently unashamed masochist [through] the bravado claim that ‘every woman adores a Fascist’” (Gill, 2008, p. 62). Still, it could be suggested that the persona’s masochism is paralleled with the father’s sadism, which is implied through the emphasis on the image of the father as a “brute” thrice in the above-mentioned lines. The daughter’s apparent submissiveness to sadistic paternal power spotlights her gratification with that sadomasochistic relationship.

The father is seen not only as a Nazi and a sadist but also as a devil. The monstrosity of the paternal figure, which is already evoked through the image of the brute, is further projected in the subsequent lines:

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. (51-56)

The freakishness of the father is displayed in the verses, “a cleft in your chin instead of your foot / but no less a devil for that”, which suggests that the speaker correlates a cleft with the devil’s hoofs. Still, paternal grotesqueness is also spotlighted through the frightful image of the devouring black man who fragments her fragile tiny heart into two pieces. The lexical register of darkness used throughout the poem and conveyed through the recurrence of the term “black”, in addition to the diction of evilness, accents the image of the monstrous father who fails to love his daughter. The frequent exploitation of monosyllabic words throughout the poem, which are indicated in “eye”, “foot”, “face”, “heart”, “chin”, “bright”, “brute”, “boot”, “bit”, “man”, “no”, “not”, and “red”, intensifies the daughter’s intermittent suffocation and hence emphasises her fear of the male parent. The different imageries attributed to the father

¹ Panzer refers to “a German tank of World War II” (The New Penguin English Dictionary, Robert Allen).

² Swastika means “a symbol with arms extended clockwise as the emblem of the German Nazi Party and Third Reich” (The New Penguin English Dictionary, Robert Allen).

³ Luftwaffe is “the German Air Force, esp. during World War II” (The New Penguin English Dictionary, Robert Allen).

do not only imply Plath's feelings of fright but also of hatred and anger toward her dad who did not love his daughter enough to want to survive for her. She is mad at him for dying and abandoning her at a young age. It has been argued that "the rage expressed in the poem and its excessive accusations, that [D]addy is a Nazi devil, a brutish torturer and a vampire, are evidence that the speaker's fury is on-going and self-destructive" (Gill, 2006, p. 39). Yet, Plath's self-revelation in "Daddy" becomes an outlet for a possible release from the shackles of the many traumatic memories she holds of her father.

Other autobiographical elements are strongly present in "Daddy". The word "toe" in the second stanza is not used randomly in the poem; it has a rather important significance in Plath's life experience. Indeed, Otto Plath's leg was amputated on 12 October 1940 after an operation for a gangrenous toe. In *Sylvia Plath*, Peter K. Steinberg turns to the autobiographical record of Plath and offers important facts. He states:

In August 1940, Otto stubbed a toe on his left foot and shortly thereafter developed gangrene. Incapacitated by pneumonia, he spent two weeks at the hospital in Winthrop. Accompanied by a nurse, Otto entertained his daughter only briefly through the days of September. Sylvia, writing poems and drawing pictures, gave them to her father, which pleased him to no end. By October, gangrene had set in so badly his doctors decided he needed to have his entire left leg amputated. (Steinberg, 2004, p.13)

After the surgery, he had been hospitalised until he died from a cardiac embolism on 5 November 1940. It is interesting to note that "'Daddy' [is] composed on 12 October 1962, the anniversary of her father's leg amputation in 1940" (Gill, 2006, p. 40). It seems as if Plath is celebrating the anniversary of her father's leg amputation by writing this poem and referring to that sad incident that disturbs her life. The reference to that painful event is made explicit through the use of the word "toe". Still, critics have different perspectives on Plath's real intentions of writing "Daddy" on that particular day. Jo Gill, for instance, asserts that "Plath [is] attempting to amputate daddy from her own psyche", and that we should "read 'Daddy' in Freudian terms as a symbol of castration of her father, an attempt to rob him of his sexual power over her" (Gill, 2006, p. 40). In this context, "Daddy" becomes a celebration of feminine self-liberation from masculine power, more precisely, from his paternal omnipotence over her. It has been declared that "in the 1970s 'Daddy' was celebrated perhaps more as a confessional anthem of female oppression, subversion, and resistance in a world dominated by male power and the power of male definition than it was celebrated as a poem" (Gale, 2016). The influence and potential of this poem lies in its reliability on genuine events and images in Plath's life to produce an autobiographical account about her failures as a submissive woman and triumphs as a rebellious woman against the masculine order.

Plath spent much of her earliest childhood years near the ocean. In "Daddy", third stanza, the references to the "freakish Atlantic" and "the waters off beautiful Nauset" reflect her enduring familiarity with these natural landscapes in her life. "Nauset" is the "old name for a town on Cape Cod where her father originally arrived in America from Germany" (Bloom, 2001, p. 42). Nauset beach, Cape Cod, Massachusetts, is near Plath's childhood home. Plath had always contemplated the beauty of the beach at Nauset especially "the colours, the hubbub, and the throbbing, deep-summer tenor of the place" (Steiner, 1973, p. 25). This sandy area, "[her] favourite tawny beach, she once called it" (Duffy, 1971, p. 388), forms one of her cherished pleasant childhood recalls. In "Daddy", Plath prays that her father recovers in the radiant Nauset waters, the place which reminds her of their memories during the past years. Obviously, Plath adores the natural elements mentioned above effectively enough to influence her and

make her pray for the recovery of her dear dad. In contrast to the second stanza where Plath seems to be revengeful and hostile toward her parent, elements of nature in the third stanza tend to create a harmony and make a kind of reconciliation between the daughter and her father.

Plath's relationship with her husband Ted Hughes is another element in the poem that alludes to her own life experience. The bond between Plath and men is once again tackled in "Daddy" through spotlighting the ups and downs of her marital life. On February 26, 1956, Plath first met the English poet Ted Hughes and she fell in love with him. Their passionate love relationship led to marriage in June 1956 in London, England. Plath expresses that Hughes is "the only man in the world who is her match" (Bloom, 2001, p. 12) and she portrays him, as Bruce Bawer confirms, like "the strongest man in the world . . . with a voice like the thunder of God" (in Bloom, 2007, p. 14). Even though she failed through her first suicide attempt to rejoin her father, Plath "did not surrender the wish to get back to him" (Gill, 2006, p. 39). By marrying Ted Hughes, she intends to make "a [D]addy substitute" (Gill, 2006, p. 39). This is made conspicuous in the poem: "and then I knew what to do / I made a model of you". Undoubtedly, Plath's attempt to make a model of her father is due to her inner sense of deprivation from the indispensable paternal care and affection. Put it differently, "out of her need for a paternal figure..., she is now connected to a new man who is just like him" (Bloom, 2001, p. 43). Hughes in "Daddy" is portrayed as "a man in black with a Meinkampf⁴ look". Here Plath tends to say that her husband has the same look of her father, that sharp gaze of a Nazi leader, and she associates him with the black colour that is attributed to the father in the first stanza. In the beginning, the couple's marriage "was idyllic and generally a happy one. Her home and husband became Plath's top priorities and she felt that she had found her true soul mate in Ted" (Agarwal, 2003, p. 17). Yet, the peaceful romantic marriage did not last.

Plath's marital relationship to Hughes exacerbated in summer 1962. Indeed, just after the birth of their son, their marriage was increasingly threatened by Hughes's infidelity. Plath discovered the mutual attraction between her husband and his friend Assia Wevill. The instability of their private life made the couple decide to separate. It has been claimed that "Daddy" "is written just after Plath split up with her husband because of another woman" (Bloom, 2001, p. 43). Some critics clarify that "at the time Plath wrote 'Daddy', either during the last months of 1962 or the first of 1963, they were in the process of divorcing. The poem was first published in *Ariel*, posthumously, in 1965" (Gale, 2016). During those particular moments of separation from her partner, Plath was mentally and psychologically tormented. She felt disappointed and depressed not only because of the bitterness of her husband's betrayal but also the bitterness of the sense of loneliness she experienced once again in her life. Through these two lines, "the black telephone's off at the root" and "the voices just can't worm through", the poet tends to explain that "again she is confronted with a lack of communication" (Bloom, 2001, p. 43). Indeed, the first time Plath is confronted with the lack of communication is when her father dies and leaves her without "the love of a steady blood-related man" (Gill, 2006, p. 42), and the second time is when her husband abandons her for the love of another woman. "Written in the wake of her separation from Ted Hughes in October 1962 reactivated Plath's sense of abandonment and unleashed the full tide of negative feelings towards the male image" (Agarwal, 2003, p. 86).

In the light of this poem, Ted Hughes no longer epitomises the perfect image of a man in the eyes of Plath. He is rather seen in the metaphor of a "vampire" who "drank her blood for a

⁴ *Mein kampf*, German for "my struggle" or "my fight", refers to "the autobiography (1925-27) of Adolf Hitler, setting forth his political philosophy and his plan for German conquest" (Dictionary.com).

year/seven years . . .” Obviously, through this poetic device of imagery, Plath confesses that in the same way a vampire sucks the blood of its victims, her marriage to Ted Hughes, which lasts for seven years, “has drained her by drinking her blood, or figuratively sucking the life out of her” (Bartleby Research, 2016). Along these lines, it has been reported in “A Disease of the Blood? The Chronic Loneliness of Sylvia Plath” that in the volume that includes a dozen letters sent by Plath to her psychiatrist before her death (published between 2017 and 2018), this woman writer “accused Hughes of beating her and causing a miscarriage, as well as wishing her dead” (Alberti, 2019, p. 40). In this vein, the metaphor of the vampire relates to the dramatic act of miscarriage in Plath’s life. The husband’s beating results in expelling the foetus from her womb, and hence, draining her body from blood and life. The loss of blood and the foetus projects the loss of her body-self. The vivid imagery of the vampire reveals the extent to which this woman has been the victim of her husband’s possession, mutilation, and oppressive dominance. Undoubtedly, this correlates with how her husband is a model of her father; both of them “have stripped [her] of her sense of self” (Bartleby Research, 2016). Indeed, Plath “married . . . a surrogate figure and significantly, a daddy substitute who would punish her, repeating a masochistic relationship to a dominant male figure” (Gill, 2006, p. 39). By saying “if I’ve killed one man, I’ve killed two”, Plath intends to say that as she killed her father, she killed her husband too. As she murders her father, she releases herself from all those sado-masochistic ties and shackles. The poet of “Daddy” exploits the confessional mode to celebrate female submission, oppression, subversion, and resistance in a world dominated by male power and control.

Another important autobiographical detail mentioned in “Daddy” is Plath’s first suicide attempt when she was twenty years old. Plath confesses that “at twenty I tried to die / and get back, back, back to you”. On 24 August 1953, she tried to kill herself by taking an overdose of sleeping pills; she recovered, however, being treated with “intense psychotherapy and electroshock therapy” (Agarwal, 2003, p. 17). After her failure to commit suicide, Plath expresses that “[she] couldn’t even succeed at killing [her] self” (Steiner, 1973, p. 21), which intensifies the idea that “her desire to die won out over her struggle to live” (Chapman, 1994). Plath’s suicide attempt may have the following reasons. First, Plath, whose father’s death evidently impacted her life emotionally and psychologically, finds that only death can save her from her deep desperation and endless suffering. Besides, Plath’s first suicide attempt may be related to the daughter’s need to return to her father because she misses him badly. “The slowness and quiet” of this line, “I thought even the bones would do”, “reinforces her sad anguish in trying to be near him, even if it meant her own death” (Bloom, 2001, p. 43). Moreover, “one explanation Plath seems to be formulating for the first suicide attempt is [her] internalised guilt for wishing her father dead and having that wish fulfilled” (Gill, 2006, p. 40). Plath’s “Daddy” is an attempt to exteriorise this inner, tormenting feeling of guilt. Through disclosing her story of suicidal intention, this confessional writer seeks to free herself from an old burden.

This poem, which draws on Plath’s life experience, does not just point to events that occurred in her past life, but also it foreshadows her coming death. The two expressions “I’m finally through” in stanza four and “I’m through” in the last line of the poem, foretell what life holds in store for Plath, which is death. It seems as if Plath is finally able to resolve her conflict with herself and her father and to find her own path, which is self-extinction. Because she is exhausted, she decides to end those conflict-laden relationships that subjugate and objectify her, to quit life, and to cross to the other side. “‘Finally through’, however, is ambiguous. It means ‘I have finished with this false-self conformity to your model which they have forced on me’. But it also means ‘I have at last got through to you, into the realm of death and I find

that your death was terminal” (Holbrook, 176, p. 2013). As she jaunts through the path of death, she kills those tormenting traumatic experiences living within her, and hence, ensures the death of the father. Effectively, this American poet committed suicide four months after the composition of her poem “Daddy”. Grieved by her father’s death, disillusioned by her husband’s unfaithfulness, and unable to stand alone in life and take care of two children, Plath had been “too exhausted by these emotions to go on living” (Chapman, 1994). “Daddy” echoes the poet’s contentious relationships, emotional imbalance, and presages her tragic end.

Critics agree that Plath’s poetry is autobiographical and that she is “a strong autobiographical writer” (Bassnett, 2005, p. 2). It is worth noting that her poems became more autobiographical during the last few months of her life. In other words, “during the fall of 1962, Plath’s life experience and art experience coalesced, and the results were poems uniquely her own” (Martin, 1988, p. 9). It has been widely agreed that the poems in the collection *Ariel*, in particular, have been feverishly confessional. These poems, which “were written mere months before Plath’s death in February 1963 . . . are some of the best examples of confessional poetry, or poetry that is extremely personal and autobiographical in nature” (Gale, 2016). Accordingly, several events mentioned in her poem “Daddy” allude to Plath’s personal life. The autobiographical details that the poem straightforwardly unmask and represent include the illness and the death of Plath’s father when she was young, her prayers for her father’s recovery at the Nauset beach, her relationship with her husband Ted Hughes, and the first suicide attempt at the age of twenty. However, it is erroneous to believe that Plath is completely faithful in giving the reader the exact truth about some details in her life. In other words, Plath’s faithfulness could be challenged. For instance, in “Daddy” she confesses: “I was ten when they buried you”; whereas, in *Sylvia Plath’s Bell Jar*, Bloom asserts that the poet’s father died “a week and a half after Plath’s eight birthday” (2001, p. 9). Likewise, in *Sylvia Plath*, Peter K. Steinberg declares that “Otto Plath died in the New England Deaconess Hospital on November 5, just nine days after Sylvia’s eight birthday” (2004, p.13). It sounds as if Plath writes “ten” deliberately in coordination with “twenty” in order to endow the poem with sound effect and musicality. Besides, while the constructed persona expresses that her first suicide attempt is a means to get close to her father and to relieve the sense of abandonment she felt after his death, one cannot deny that the real and direct motive that lies behind Plath’s suicide attempt at the age of twenty is actually the tremendous sense of depression she felt when she is not accepted in Frank O’Connor’s summer school writing course at Harvard. Put it differently, “on 24 August 1953, Sylvia Plath attempts suicide after learning that her application to Harvard’s fiction writing course is rejected” (Kirk, 2004, p. xviii). It is true that Plath uses an autobiographical, direct and personal style, yet keeps a small, apparent distance between the poet and the persona.

Still, what is the advantage of adopting the confessional style in her poems? Plath breaks out of the snare of silence and lets the unconscious flow. The result is a life-like narrative loaded with autobiographical content and with strong and deep emotions. Plath seeks to confess “those ‘very difficult feelings’ best designated, in the language of psychology, as traumas” (Horváth, 2005, p. 14). It has been stated that “‘Daddy’ is a brilliant piece of work and is very artfully compiled. In this she used autobiography with huge, horrific events to convey how she felt herself” (Agarwal, p. 87). The expression of her paradoxical, perplexing feelings in art helps her recover.

The sturdy relationship between autobiographical writing, confession, and psychotherapy in “Daddy” has been scrutinised by many critics. In *Psychoanalysis, Historiography, and Feminist Theory: The Search for Critical Method*, Plath’s “Daddy” is interpreted as “notes

upon an autobiographical account of paranoia” (Kearns, 1997, p. 78). Depression, alienation, self-diminishment, suicidal ideation and intention, and death fantasies, which are aspects of the speaker’s emotional illness, are unabashedly voiced in the poem to project Plath’s real story of psychological disturbance. Yet, this autobiographical account is given for therapeutic ends. Indeed, “the text is like a poetic equivalent of psychoanalysis as ‘the talking cure’. Whether we construe Plath’s poem as autobiographical, ‘Daddy’ operates in the form of a kind of confession” (Bennett and Royle, 2016, p. 313). Confessional writing has a therapeutic power. It is a means of healing those wounds within her. It is a way to go beyond those traumatic experiences that still haunt her in life. Plath’s moods, feelings, thoughts, and behaviours are translated into words that work to set her in a positive direction and regenerate her self. In *Signifying Pain: Constructing and Healing the Self through Writing*, Judith Harris asserts that “the journals of Sylvia Plath offer insights into her psychiatric treatment and the relationship between the creative and therapeutic process” (Harris, 2003, p. 85) adding that “on multiple levels, Plath’s poem stimulates a patient’s talk in psychotherapy” (Harris, 2003, p. 85). “Daddy” makes a journey into the female psyche and disengages its unconscious impulses and internal conflicts, visualizing by that a scene of psychotherapy between the patient and the therapist.

Conclusion

To conclude, even though Plath died at a young age, she gained fame and made her name by the poems that were published after her death. The huge success and recognition that these poems achieved are actually due to Plath’s skill and power in bringing her private life and intense convoluted personal feelings into her art of writing. Undoubtedly, many autobiographical elements are strongly present in “Daddy” in which the poet takes on the persona and uses the discourse of a child. The daughter’s discourse is highly emotional in tone, autobiographical in content, and narrative in structure. There is a noticeable close relationship between the “I” of the poem, or the constructed persona, and the poet. To truly understand and recognise the value and importance of this poem as autobiographical, one should discover Sylvia Plath’s life story and delve into her inner world.

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