

**RESEARCH PAPER****A Systematic Investigation of Sylvia Plath's Poem Daddy Under the Lens of Feministic Stylistic Approach****¹Hira Jamil*, ²Sadia Liaqat and ³Dr. Mehreen Zafar**

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The study aims to examine the language and style of the poem Daddy by Plath within a feministic perspective. Hence, the primary objective of the study is to uncover the patriarchal power structures and gender norms in the context of the poem along with the secondary objective to identify the linguistic devices that Plath has used to represent the other gender in her particular piece of writing. Moreover, Sara Mills (1997) feministic stylistic approach has been applied as the framework of this study. While, the sample of this study has been comprised of a poem Daddy written by a famous Poetess Sylvia Plath and in the selection of this particular sample, the researcher has employed purposive sampling technique. The results revealed the continuous struggle of the speaker in a patriarchal society where all rights and authorities are reserved to men and the both genders try to win over each other in terms of taking the control of their lives. The results also revealed the constant use of linguistic devices to represent the male gender like imagery, metaphors, allusion, enjambment, alliteration and assonance.

Keywords: Feminism, Stylistics, Poetry and Linguistic Analysis**Introduction**

Stylistics is generally perceived as the study of a writers' literary and non-literary work. In other words, it is an attempt to examine a literary discourse from linguistic perspective (Windowson, 2014). Not found in list Leech and Short (1980) there were two big names who did great contributions in the field of stylistics. They both defined this term in these words;

"It refers to the linguistic examination of style. It is done in order to find it out what sort of lexical choices have been employed in a particular piece of writing. Hence, it takes the responsibility to interpret the relationship between language and the artistic functions it performs '(Leech & Short, 2007).

On the other hand, feminism is a movement started in Europe in early 1960s. It shows its concern for the weaker position of women in society and with the humiliation and discrimination being faced by women only because of their "sex". It seeks to get equal social, educational, political and financial opportunities for women as their male members get and enjoy (Ibrahim, 2020).

The world history of feminism beared three waves. The first was extended from the mid nineteenth century to early 1960s having the motto for equal educational and legal rights for women. It also showed great concern for sexual harassment of women and their reproductive rights as well (Hammer & Kallner, 2009).

The second wave was observed from the beginning of 1960s to 1970s. It raised it's voice to abolish all the social, racial and sexual differences that the women were facing in order to promote the personal and political solidarity (Plain, 2007).

The third wave covered the period from 1980s to the present and seems to focus its attention on multiple contemporary issues like immigration, environmental problems, class conflict, multiculturalism and social activism for getting equal human rights for women across the world (Hammer & Kellner, 2009).

Meanwhile, stylistic feminism can be defined “as a study to have a deep insight into the way, genders are handled in texts. Basically, it is a theoretical approach proposed by a great feminist writer Sara Mills in 1995. It shows its great concern for providing a foundation for the critical examination of the language of a text from a feminist perspective in order to explore the fact how women are being represented in that particular text. It also steps forward to make the readers understand why writers of a particular work adopt certain linguistic strategies to express themselves rather than others and how certain effects are obtained from the employment of those particular language strategies.

The present study is based on the feminist stylistic analysis of the poem *Daddy* written by Plath. Through this study, the researcher had made an attempt to explore the way, both genders are represented by a female poetess by applying the particular selection of words.

Literature Review

Panjaitan and Hamka (2023) conducted a qualitative research on the poem *Daddy* within a perspective to explore the use of imagery done by Plath in her particular work. Kress and Leuween (2006) stylistic model was applied as the framework. However, the results revealed the different types of imagery among which the visual imagery remained the dominant one throughout the poem and successfully reflected the painful life of Plath.

Salith (2023) explored the aspect of power and gender in Plath’s poem *Daddy*. The study was qualitative descriptive and the researcher applied Simon de Beauvoir (1947) feminist perspective as the theoretical framework of this study. The findings revealed that through this poem, Plath has made an attempt to get the women of her era ready to take the control of their lives by raising their voices against all the inequalities being done to them and also to resist the so called societal pressure that was being imposed on the women of mid 20th century.

Yasmine et Al (2021) conducted a qualitative research in which they explored the notions of patriarchy in Plath’s Poem *Daddy*. The objective of the study was to unfold oppression that Plath went through while living with her father and later with her insensitive husband. Simon de Beauvoir (1947) feminist approach had been employed as the theoretical framework. The findings revealed that like other women of her era, Plath also always received an ill treatment from the male members of her family whether he was her father or husband.

Herman et al (2020) examined the elements of love and hate in the poem under this investigation. The study was based on qualitative descriptive and the main objective was to explore the way, the poetess portrayed her pains and sufferings. The results show the constant use of powerful imagery done by the poetess to describe her painful relationship with her father who never shows any sort of affection for her daughter who always tried to find lost love of him but failed. Then she got married to a man who proved more cruel than her father and ultimately led her innocent wife to end her life by her own hands.

Material and Methods

The research is based on qualitative descriptive method. Feminist stylistic approach proposed by a well-known feminist Sara Mills (1997) has been applied as the

framework of this study. While, a particular sample of a poem entitled “*Daddy*” has been selected by employing the purposive sampling technique. Meanwhile, the data has been analyzed through the textual analysis method.

Results and Discussion

Generally, the pronoun “he” is used to refer both genders but in the context of this poem, Plath has made the use of this pronoun only to refer the “male sex” who is most probably her own deceased father. She did so to highlight the patriarchal gender structures and norms to show how males want their things done their way and the women who challenges their authority and dare to not cater their needs get punished. Moreover, the poetess frequently used multiple literary devices that have been discussed below.

You do not do you do not do

Anymore black shoe

In which I lived like a foot

Thirty years, poor and white

Baring daring to breath or Achoo

Firstly, she employes “apostrophe” by addressing her late father as he is still present in her life. She seems to challenge the male authority by saying that her father cannot control her life any more because she has already been exploited by that man for more than thirty years of her life and now is tired of this sort of oppression. She employes “repetition technique” also in the first line to create an rhetorical effect in her message. Secondly, she compares her father with a “black shoes” and herself with a “foot” to refer the sufferings that she had to bear while living with him. She claims to spent a miserable life with her father where there was not any excitement and color rather a continuous sense of terror which didn’t allow her even to take breath loudly. Thirdly, the same stanza reveals the occurrence of assonance and consonance techniques in the form of the repetition of “o”, “a” and “d” sound.

In the next lines, she expresses her desire to kill her father by her own hands and regrets to lose the opportunity because of his father’s death has taken place many years back. She gives a horrible description of his father by calling him a “colossal statue” and as a heavy marble to give voice to the terrible memories of him in her mind that seems to press her down even after many years of his death. Here, the researcher found the implementation of hyperbole by the speaker of the poem in order to create a point of emphasis in her argument.

Then refreshing her childhood memories, Plath gives the description of the beautiful Atlantic ocean and the beautiful area of Naust. In the very next line, she uses the term “freakish” to prolong this beautiful scenery and this refers to the idea that although her father has been a beautiful German but she always felt something very strange about him. Inspired by being oppressed by her father, she remembered the time when he got ill and she prayed for his recovery.

In the German tongue, in the

polish town.....

In the next stanza, she questioned the origin of his father and claimed that the only thing she knows about her father is that he came from a polish town that endured war after another. The second thing that she knows about this town is it's language that is German.

The next stanza is the continuation of the previous one where she mentions that she gathered all the information mention above from one of her polish friends because she could not have the courage to ask her father such things. So-called patriarchal power structure again revealed here where a daughter is not supposed to know anything about her biological father.

She again seems to talk about the traumatic relationship that she share with her father by saying that she never felt any sort of feelings for her father rather always perceived him as other Germons harh and obscene ones and wherever, she tried to talk to him, she felt her tongue stuck in her throat.

The seventh stanza revealed the use of "allusion" where Plath compares her relationship with her father to the Jews and Nazis during the Holocaust. Nazis stands for allusion here, it was a polital party led by Adolf Hitler in 1930s that opposed comunism and free intellectual inquiry to form a master race. They considered the Jews an inferior race and wanted to take the complete control of their lives. Something happens to Plath because the oppression she gone through while living with her father was unbearable and painful. She claims to be taken the same humiliation as jew took from Germans. The next stanza again contains the same content where she takes herself as Jews and gypsies who both oppressed by their German rulers.

I have always been scared of you

..... Panzer man panzer man O you'

In the nineth stanza, she finally mustered the courage to speaker her father after so many years after his death. She tells him that how much she has been afraid of him and how he always appeared to her as some sort of cruel army figure with beautiful mustache and arayn blue eyes that made him as superior as Nazis but still something fierce and terrifying that prevented her to get close to him. Again the last line of this stanza "panzer man..." revealed the use of repetition technique along with a historical reference of a German truck driver.

The next stanza again revealed the use of a powerful metaphor "giant black swastika", she says that he had such a huge figure that could cover the entire sky. Then she assumes a sarcastic tone and says every woman adores a fascist. Here, she not only gives a clue of her oppressed life but seems to warn every woman of her era who is consciouly and unconsciously bing suppressed because of the patriarchy.

You stand at the blackboard

Daddy.....

The above lines occured in stanza no eleven, Plath gives a description of a classroom where her father standing near the blackboard. She sees her cleft in his chin and wishes this cleft to be in his foot, this simply implies that she considers her father a devil because devil is generally believed as an animal with a cleft feet. Then she confesses that despite of her father being so cruel, she has always been longing for her affection and love but he made her childhood miserable. It is important to be noted that her father dies when she was only ten and now she is twenty years old but failed to get rid of those terrible memories but still she

wants him to be back in her life and for this purpose, she even tries to commit suicide but rescued.

They pulled me out of the

Sack.....

Here, Plath seems to complain about to be rescued and realized that she must search for a man who looks like her father. Here, Freud's notion of Electra complex seems to be occurred where a girl seems to fall in love with her father and same happens with Plath. Inpite of taken so much pain from her father, she tries to get him back in her life might in the form of her husband. She calls him a vampire, again a powerful metaphor.

In the following stanzas, she revealed her intention to get her father back because in this way, she will be able to take the revenge of those sufferings that she had to bear from her father and by killing that person she thinks that she will kill her late father too. In this way, all her sufferings will be ended and there will be no need to create an imaginary world to talk to her late father.

The analysis mention above not only revealed a toxic relationship of a daughter and with her cruel father rather highlights an imbalance power between men and women in a patriarchal society where authority is reserved to only one gender. In such societies, women are always subjected to repressive rules, violence and humiliation by their males.

Conclusion

The study successfully revealed the patriarchal power structures and gender norms in the context of the toxic relationship that the speaker of this particular poem shared with her father. The title of the poem is the first indication of patriarchy where a male sex is the venerated one and the female is marginalized. She spent a painful childhood that affected her psychological health badly. Her father died when she was only ten and now she is twenty but still unable to get rid of those terrible memories of those days. She made a vast use of literary devices to reflect those painful experiences and to give the physical description of her cruel father. She made the use of powerful metaphors to describe the comparative role of her father, if sometimes, she called him "a black shoes" which trapped her for more than thirty years after even his death, then in the next moment, she seemed to call him a devil, a swastika, a marble statue and Naizis, a symbol of terror and her husband with a vampire who is the recreation of her father and by killing him she would be able to take revenge of all the sufferings taken from her father. Here, her father stands for the entire patriarchal system of that era where women were being treated brutally. She also seemed to employ allusion, Hyperbole, repetition, consonance and assonance to create an effect in her messages to all women who let themselves exploite by the patriarchal norms.

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