

## SYLVIA PLATH'S HARROWING JOURNEY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL TEMPERAMENT ARE REFLECTED IN HER WORKS

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### ABSTRACT

Sylvia Plath was a powerful and respected poet of the twentieth century. Plath had a following in the literary community by the time she took her own life at the age of 30. Her work drew the attention of a large number of readers over the years, which saw in her singular verse an attempt to catalogue despair, violent emotion, and a death obsession.

Despite all of her popularity for her amazing work, the question remains: was she happy? Why did she end her life so soon? What prompted her to take such a bold step? To discuss this, I've chosen Sylvia Plath's life journey and her psychological behaviour had an influence on her works.

**KEYWORDS:** Suicide, Psychological Disorder, False Language

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### INTRODUCTION

Sylvia Plath was born in Boston, Massachusetts on October 27, 1932. Aurelia Schober, Plath's mother, was a master's student at Boston University when she met Plath's father, Otto Plath, who was her professor. In January 1932, they married. Otto taught German as well as biology, with a focus on apiology (the study of bees). Plath's father died of diabetes complications when she was eight years old, in 1940. He had been a strict father, and his authoritarian attitudes, as well as his death, profoundly influenced Plath's relationships and poems, most notably in her elegiac and infamous poem "Daddy."

Plath began keeping a journal at the age of eleven and began publishing her poetry in regional magazines and newspapers. In 1950, shortly after graduating from high school, she received her first national publication in the Christian Science Monitor. Plath enrolled at Smith College in 1950 and graduated with honours in 1955. Plath received a Fulbright Scholarship and moved to Cambridge, England, after graduation. She met the English poet Ted Hughes at a party in early 1956. In 1957, Plath returned to Massachusetts and began studying with Robert Lowell. *Colossus*, her first collection of poems, was published in England in 1960 and in the United States two years later. She returned to England and had her children Frieda and Nicholas in 1960 and 1962 respectively. Ted Hughes left Plath for Assia Gutmann Wevill in 1962. During that winter, Plath wrote the majority of the poems that would become her most famous book, *Ariel*. Plath published *The Bell Jar*, a semi-autobiographical novel, under the pen name Victoria Lucas in 1963. She passed away on February 11th of that year. Plath and Hughes married on June 16, 1956, shortly after.

Plath's poetry is frequently associated with the Confessional movement and compared to the work of poets like Lowell and fellow student Anne Sexton. Her work is frequently cited for the intense juxtaposition of its violent or disturbed imagery and its playful use of alliteration and rhyme. Although only *Colossus* was published while Plath was alive, she was a prolific poet, and in addition to *Ariel*, Hughes published three other volumes of her work after her death, including *The Collected Poems*, which won the Pulitzer Prize in 1982. She was the first poet to be awarded a Pulitzer Prize after her death.

Two of Sylvia Plath's creative works reveal a profound psychological temperament. The poems *Daddy* and *Lazarus* are two artistic creations. There is evidence of a strong psychological bent in the author's combination of factual information about her personal life and the way she wanted her readers to interpret the said information using her own subjective frame of reference.

Specified documentation about her personal life that can be gleaned through research enhanced the earlier assertion about the psychological temperament of the previously stated works. After considering three verifiable facts, such as Plath's troubled mind, her attempt to demonise her father as a Nazi sympathiser, and the use of violent words centred on the ideas of death and murder, one can discern a strong psychological attitude in these two poems.

### **PLATH'S MENTALLY UNSTABLE AND DISTURBED MIND**

There is an easily accessible road that allows for the rapid development of a supporting argument that justifies the earlier claim about the psychological nature of Plath's two poems. The use of biographical research allows the student or analyst tasked with interpreting Plath's creative works to understand the mental component of the creative process right away. Using this method, it is not difficult to discover the tragic end of the gifted poet.

The author of *The Nazi Card: Nazi Comparison at the Beginning of the Cold War* revealed harrowing details about Plath's mental state before she committed suicide in a book titled *The Nazi Card: Nazi Comparison at the Beginning of the Cold War* (Johnson 171). However, examining how he framed her ideas in the poem *Lady Lazarus* provides an indirect way of determining her struggles with mental health issues.

Plath was not angling the positive aspect of the idea that usually comes to mind when the name Lazarus is mentioned in *Lady Lazarus*. She alluded to the dark side of the biblical Lazarus story, when the character died and was entombed. She wanted to die, and she made it clear that no one should try to resurrect her, despite the message of Lazarus' story, in which his body defeated death and decay. In fact, her suicidal thoughts were on full display in her poem, "Lady Lazarus," when she wrote, "what a trash, to annihilate each decade" (Plath, "Lady Lazarus"). Her troubled mind was one aspect of the debate over the psychological bent of her two poems.

### **An Aggressive Attempt to Castrate His Father as a Nazi Supporter**

The secondary assertion in Plath's works that supports the claim of psychological temperament is based on her interpretation of her state of mind when she vilified her father as a Nazi sympathiser. After expressing her father's sympathy for Hitler and Nazism, she punctuated her statements with the phrase "brute heart of a brute like you" (Plath, "Daddy"). A normal person would usually compliment his or her parents. When she dishonoured her father's memory, her abnormal thinking process was exposed for all to see. This realisation is significant because she was not simply complaining about a kink in her relationship with her father; she expressed her thoughts through a murderous rage.

The psychological bent of her poems was revealed not only in her criticisms of her father, but also when she made up claims that her father was a Nazi sympathiser or a member of Hitler's army. The author of *Sylvia Plath: Poetry and Existence* argued in a book titled *Sylvia Plath: Poetry and Existence* that there is no evidence linking the poet's father, Otto Plath, to Hitler's army.

In fact, according to the author, the elder Plath immigrated to the United States as a teenager and published a book in 1934. (Holbrook 292). When she made up stories to amplify her hatred for her father, the poet once again demonstrated an intense psychological temperament. Her poem is probably one of the most venomous examples of a daughter attempting to sever any ties she had with her father.

### **Violent and Derogatory Language**

The final argument supporting the earlier claim is Plath's use of violent and profane language. The perversity of Plath's language is heightened by the realisation that she and her family were subjected to a barrage of foul and violent words. Her first target was her father's memory, and she wrote, "Daddy, I had to kill you" (Plath, "Daddy"). After considering the title of the poem, this verse becomes more unsettling, because it initially disarmed the reader, hoping that the lines would evoke images of the lovely bond that exists between a father and his daughter.

Finally, she aimed her venomous words like terrible weapons at the core of her being. Dying, like everything else, is an art, she wrote. "I do it exceptionally well," she says, as if pleading with death to take her away (Plath, "Lady Lazarus"). One could argue that only a deeply disturbed mind could concoct such language and direct it not at the enemy, but at her father and herself. Her choice of words lacked both beauty and grace.

To avoid any possibility of reconciliation or forgiveness, she severed her relationship with her father in one of the most heartbreaking endings to a literary piece ever written, writing: "Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through" (Plath, "Daddy"). It was the final sign that her mind was about to crumble.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Plath's two poems, *Daddy* and *Lazarus*, were said to have a deep and disturbing psychological bent. Three arguments were used to support this claim. First, her artistic pieces' psychological temperament can be interpreted through the revelation of her troubled mind and, eventually, her decision to commit suicide. Second, it was exacerbated by the fact that she made up stories to discredit her father. Third, the psychological nature of Plath's poems was revealed by her use of violent and foul language not only to discredit her father but also as a weapon against herself. These are unquestionably examples of psychological poetry, as the author allowed her readers to see the state of her troubled mind. She also revealed the extent of her mental anguish prior to committing suicide. It is thus impossible to interpret these two artistic works unless they are examined from a psychological standpoint, while also acknowledging the author's profound psychological disposition when she created both.

### **REFERENCES**

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