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## SYMBOLIC ORDER IN SYLVIA PLATH'S "DADDY" AND "LADY LAZARUS": A LACANIAN READING

### Abstract

Sylvia Plath's works are mainly considered self-reflective mirrors that reverberate her predicaments, especially her troubled relationships with her father and her husband. Plath's responses to gender-biased language, which is the main medium of male-dominated discourses, are full of conflicting desires. On the one hand, as one of the subjects of language, Plath wants to preserve her submissive position; on the other hand, as a poet, she desires to create her own order free of the restrictive and meddling presence of male-centered language. This paper thus aims to investigate the role of the Father in Sylvia Plath's two significant works, "Daddy" (1965) and "Lady Lazarus" (1965), by the employment of Jacques Lacan's views on the order of identity formation and creation of the subject, especially Lacan's Symbolic Order. This paper is an attempt to investigate how the presence and absence of the father figure influences Plath and how she rebuilds a new Order with the free play of signification and devoid of the domineering voice of the Father.

**Keywords:** Sylvia Plath, Jacques Lacan, "Daddy," "Lady Lazarus," Symbolic Order

## Introduction

Sylvia Plath (1932-1963) in many respects was a controversial figure. During her lifetime, she was rather ignored by literary circles, publishers, and critics. Yet, after her tragic and thought-provoking death, Plath was placed at the center of attention not only because of her poems but also because of her troubled relationships with her father and her husband, revealed through her journals and diaries as well as her poems. Many critics have regarded her death as the main reason for this amount of attention; the confessional tone of her poems increasingly instigates such biographical interpretations. Yet, Plath's self-depicting poetry is not reduced just to autobiographical images; it also includes linguistic preoccupations. Her use of multiplicity, ambiguity, and different historical and religious illusions demonstrates her attempts to build a new structure based on the free play of language and devoid of the supervisory voice of preponderant discourses.

In Plath's works, the father figure does not only refer to her father or her husband. The Father in the poetry of Plath is the guardian force that is the dominant voice of patriarchal society. The strength of this force is pervasive to the extent that subjects cannot imagine themselves out of its confining framework. Among Plath's poems, "Daddy" and "Lady Lazarus," with their revealing voice, represent the tensional consequences of the presence and absence of the father figure. The present paper focuses on Jacques Lacan's controversial theory on Symbolic Order and its constitutive parts in "Daddy" and "Lady Lazarus." In these two significant poems, the heavy shadow of male-dominated discourses threatens the feminine identity of the speakers. This study aims to show how the Law of the Father in different aspects influences Plath's poetry.

## The Subject in Lacan's Symbolic Order

Having entered the realm of linguistics, especially Ferdinand de Saussure's theories on signification, Jacques Lacan adds new perspectives and dimensions to psychology and psychological analysis. Lacan brings to light the lingual structure of the subjects' psyche and wonders "how could a psychoanalyst of today not realize that his realm of truth is in fact the word?" (qtd. in Barry 109). The noteworthy point in Lacan's approach is his emphasis on significant impressions of socio-ideological underpinnings in shaping the "self" as far as any belief in unity and solidarity of subjects has been put into question. The interanimation of individuals to one another is manifested in linguistic communication in whi-

ch individuals are “the slaves of language”, or in David Lodge’s terms, “language, the signifying chain, has a life of its own which cannot be securely anchored to a world of things” (61). In such a definition, the subject is not anything but a “linguistic construct.” The territory of this power-seeking commander is language, in terms of Lacan, the realm of the Father with the Symbolic Order. This rule-bound phallic realm is utterly a patriarchal territory without the mother and her crucial role. From a Lacanian perspective, the process of turning the child into a subject takes place with the arrival of the Law of the Father in the Oedipus complex.

Despite pronounced differences between the views of Freud and Lacan, in their claims about the superiority of the Father and his determinative role in the mental construction of a child, they have broad similarities. One of these affinities, as Paul Verhaeghe mentions, is in Freud’s view of the penis and Lacan’s view of the phallus. For both, the phallus is “an object of demand: penis envy” (Verhaeghe 206). In such a male-oriented world, the father is at the center of expectation and the mother is on the margin of deficiency (Verhaeghe 207). In Freud’s eyes, both the girl and boy finally are attracted to the father, the boy because of fear of castration and the girl because of her penis envy. As a result, generally, the mother has been forgotten and the father remains in power forever.

Deborah Luepnitz, for example, believes that Lacan’s use of the term phallus “refer[s] to our wish to completeness” (226). This idealized completeness, in Luepnitz’s view, is “what no one can have but everyone wants.” In this sense, the “phallus” signifies unquestionable unity with absolute power (Luepnitz 226). Lacan expounds the phallus as a signifier, actually a preferential signifier. As the preferential signifier, the phallus determines the sexuality and sexual identity of the subject in a process in which the sexual differences are at the center of attention. The desire only makes sense by the being and presence of the other. Without the decisive role of the other, the phallus cannot prove its superiority, or as Habib puts it, “In Lacan’s view, the subject is empty, fluid, and without an axis or center, and is always recreated in his encounter with the other, with what exceeds his own nature and grasp” (590). In the presence of the phallus as “the signifier of the desire of the other,” a “woman will reject an essential part of femininity, namely, all her attributes in the masquerade. It is for that which she is not that she wishes to be desired as well as loved. But she finds the signifier of her own desire in the body of him to whom she addresses her demand for love” (Lacan 221). As a privileged signifier, the phallus is not only determinative in the identity of a man but even more determinative in shaping the identity of a

woman. Barbara A. Suess further stresses the role of the “patriarchal tradition” in power and justification of the Symbolic Order. Thus, even sane women who are able to identify themselves in the Symbolic Order “may either fail to recognize or choose to reject the supposed logic inherent in this patriarchal Order. Every attempt to resistance by women in the process of identity formation in this so-called interconnectedness ends in failure” (Suess 89).

In fact, the Symbolic Order is an internalized rule based on ideological ends; as Verhaeghe points out, “the whole process is directed by the man/father who is in effect producing the woman/mother” (209). Lacan believes that sovereignty of the Father is continuous and permanent because departure from the Realm of the Father to Real Order, the Realm of the Mother, and the realm of oneness with the mother is impossible. In the real realm of privation, language, as an obstacle to achieving wholeness and integrity, plays a crucial part; as Joodaki and Elyasi put it, “the subject’s real being fades, the pure desire of the time of the Real and Imaginary gives place to the desire of the Other, that is the Other of discourse” (168). Language in fact connects the Symbolic Order to social and cultural predetermined rules; so, language does not allow the subject to get through the Real Order, the place without the domineering voice of the Father. The inclination to go to the Real Order is actually a forceful desire to going back to the pre-Oedipal Mirror Stage, where one has both wholeness and connection with the body of the Mother. The Real Order cannot be achieved because language is not able to define, categorize, and control it.

In Lacan’s perspective, in language and through language the subject is formed as a subject. In this process, language is no longer an intrinsic entity. We as subjects of language have to constantly represent ourselves in language. In this one-way transaction, the Mother is not more than the primary lost object that remains an unattainable wish forever. Peter Barry identifies the poets’ struggles to create a metaphorical and allusive world in their poems as an attempt to return to the Imaginary Order: “the anti-realist text represents the realm of the Imaginary, a world in which language gestures beyond itself, beyond logic and grammar, rather in the way that poetic language often does. Indeed, the contrast between the Imaginary and the Symbolic might be seen as analogous to that between poetry and prose” (80).

If we regard prose “as analogous to” the Symbolic Order and poetry to the Imaginary Order, women in prose works have to write under the pressure of the

Law of the Father and women poets, free of this Order and through free play of signification, can write more liberally. Yet, even in the Imaginary world of language, the meddling voice of the Father once in a while takes women away from linkage to the creative arena of Imaginary Order.

### **Sylvia Plath: The Victim of the Symbolic Order**

One of the most discussed issues related to Sylvia Plath is her life, especially her mental struggles and her tragic death. Placing her among confessional poets was one of the reasons of this huge amount of attention because in the eyes of many critics her poems are mirrors of her life, beliefs, fears, expectations, and protests. Mark A. Runco also refers to the link between Plath's work as a poet and her suicide: "Plath invested very heavily in her writing, which made this the area in which she had the most to lose" (642); he then adds: "Writing is a risky profession, and a risky area in which to invest, and this may be particularly true of poetry, since the response may be the most unpredictable" (643). This point gets additional significance when we notice that she wrote her best works during the last months of her life. Bruce Bawer believes that "For her, writing became a way of asserting herself, of combating her deficient sense of identity" (12). This "deficient" feminine identity apparently has a relationship with language and the exploitation of language in the view of a poet who was sharply aware of the power of language in a patriarchal society. Andrea Gerbig and Anja Müller-Wood discuss self-imposed ambiguity in the poetry and prose of Plath through interweaved intertextuality. They believe that employing such functional ambiguity, despite its aesthetic and thematic results, is not without hazards: "Her intertextual nets, by creating a multitude of possible references, diversify the expectations and interpretations of her readers in a way that may be contrary to her own intentions. Plath, in attempting to streamline her style, invokes the linguistic uncertainty inherent in intertextuality and is eventually caught in her own associative web" (77). Indeed, Plath is "caught" not in "her own associative web" but in the entangling net of the symbolic realm of the Father.

It seems that in the last months of her life Plath was in direct and close connection with her creativity and her identity as a poet to the extent that she lost her connection with social necessities. The first important consequence of such alienation was the profound awareness of the impossibility to change the inveterate and all-pervasive Order; as Suess puts it, "the patriarchal structure of language, and therefore, of society, leaves women with a less than complete, liminal, and

consequently frustrated relation to both language and society. Thus, the Symbolic Order empowers men to control the personal, professional, and social lives of women" (94). Indeed, without the interfering voice of this "patriarchal structure of language" out of the absence of her husband, poet Ted Hughes, in the last months of her life, Plath was in close connection with her feminine identity and as a result with her creativity; however, this connection made her forget the deep and capillary structure of the Symbolic Order for a while.

The influence of the Father in Plath's life is obvious not only in her poems but also in her diaries and journals, a truth that she never tried to deny or hide. Their relationship was full of paradoxes and contradictions: "He was an autocrat. I adored and despised him, and I probably wished many times that he were dead. When he obliged me and died, I imagined that I killed him" (qtd. in Steiner 313). This short statement eloquently reflects Plath's troubled relationship with her father and her wish to destroy the authorial presence of the Father. Plath's dual feelings to this patricide are reflected in every word of this statement: while she wishes to kill the Father and release herself since she "despised him," she feels guilty about his death since she "adored" him.

Margaret Dickie mentions Plath's life-long obsession with her father, which is discernibly reflected in "Daddy." Dickie recognizes Plath's quest "for a language with which to address him [her father]" (13). In Dickie's view, when Plath realizes that she cannot get this language, "she grows spiteful, attacks the father" (13). John Rietz claims that the contradictory emotion towards the father comes from the context of the society in which Plath lived and wrote: "Her true subject is not Otto Plath; it is another father altogether: the male literary tradition, the thousands of years' worth of words 'littered/In their old anarchy to the horizon-line' that confronts every young writer with ambitions to master and build upon that tradition" (423). So, the Realm of the Father has become wider and wider, and the poet cannot find any secure border for her deeply feminine expression. Christopher MacGowan looks at the link between the incarnation of the father in Plath's poetry and her husband:

He [father] emerges as a central figure in Plath's poetry, especially her final poems, where he is sometimes allied with her husband, poet Ted Hughes, from whom she had separated. Both embody a haunting, oppressive presence that she cannot set aside, one that is resented for being there and also condemned for abandoning her. (148)

Thus, in Lacanian account, Sylvia Plath is not only a rebellious woman who wants to get rid of the hegemonic presence of the Father but also a poet who wants to get rid of authoritative language and make her own language. In *Modern Critical Views: Sylvia Plath* (2007), the multiple personalities of Plath are mentioned, and it is concluded that her destructive “self” led her to death: “But it was probably the case that Sylvia’s powerful buried self was deadly in its determination to emerge at any cost” (Stevenson qtd. in Bawer 12). Bawer suggests that there are contradictory aspects in the psyche of the poet that make this equation even more sophisticated. He refers to Plath’s direct assertion about the role of her husband as a substitute for her father who “fills somehow that huge, sad hole I felt in having no father” (Plath qtd. in Bawer 14). Bawer quotes Plath’s later references to her husband, “a violent Adam,” “the only man in the world who is my match,” “the strongest man in the world . . . with a voice like the thunder of God,” “a breaker of things and of people,” (14) which are irrefutably similar to the image that she draws of her father. At the center of the poet’s attention is absolute power as the main characteristic of an ideal man, father/husband or in Lacanian framework Father/Father. The replacement of the dead, old, and traditional Father with the alive, new, and modern Father more than anything mirrors the strong desire to bridge a deep gap. This new Father is a poet; it means building a new structure for language, stepping into the field of creativity, leaving behind the authoritarian and patriarchal language of the predecessors, and constructing the new system of rules and laws. However, this new Father after a while becomes another domineering voice. When Hughes left her, Plath lost her Father for the second time: “his departure from her life served to release, after decades of suppression, an eight-year-old’s exorbitant fear and fury at her father’s death” (Bawer 18).

## Discussion

In Plath’s “Daddy,” the presence and at the same time the absence of the Father is depicted very painfully. The father in this poem is an authoritarian and even brutal figure who is referred to as *Marble-heavy, a bag full of God, Luftwaffe, Panzer-man, swastika, vampire, Brute* and *black heart* (emphasis mine). Forough Hassanpour and Ruzy Suliza Hashim regard “Daddy” as an elegy which reflects “the speaker’s confused identity and her resentment with her dead father” (125). They find a link between this autobiographical elegy and male-centered hegemony in a society which keeps women in vulnerable margin of community (125). From the very first lines, the speaker shows the domineering role of the Father:



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, *The Collected Poems* 222)

The speaker is conspicuously under the control of the Father in the Realm of the Father. Father with his "black" ruthless soul has devoured the "white" side of the speaker's soul "for thirty years." This blackness does not let her "breathe."

With the line "Daddy, I have had to kill you" (Plath, *The Collected Poems* 222), the speaker shows her unwillingness to be under the command of the Father's authoritarian presence. It seems that she wants to return to the Mirror Stage where she has a sense of unity and full independence. With this line, she asserts her real desire to take action after thirty years of passivity. Killing the Father in his territory, in the realm of language and by the use of language, is an aggressive deed by a girl who wishes to eliminate phallic supremacy; but as a submissive subject she knows very well that the sovereignty of the Father cannot be terminated by his physical death because the Law of the Father has been internalized in subjects. However, it seems that Plath wants to destroy this lingual realm and erect an Order of her own. Direct references of the poet to language are considerable: "In the German tongue / . . . I thought every German was you. / And the language obscene" (Plath, *The Collected Poems* 222).

Taking advantage of language, the Father establishes and stabilizes his strong position. Language thus becomes the compelling ideological device by which the Father preserves his Law. Combining the term "German," which in this poem represents male unbridled violence, with the term "tongue," which represents strict and unchangeable rules, reflects the interrelation of language and authoritarian presence in a male-dominated society. In this way, language simultaneously makes the communication possible and impossible. Whenever the Father needs to prove and justify his Laws, language is employed as a means of communication, and when he wants to make a distance to maintain his authority, language is exploited as a means of intimidation and disconnection: "I never could talk to you. / The tongue stuck in my jaw (Plath, *The Collected Poems* 222).



It is significant that these two lines come after the lines that show the omnipresent role of the Father: “So I never could tell where you / Put your foot, your root (Plath, *The Collected Poems* 222). This coincidence is not accidental. It seems that because of the omnipresence of Father, the daughter fears to express her own real feelings. This ubiquity and the fear derived from it are part of the magisterial manner of the Father, which makes him increasingly vigorous. The fear makes a distance between the superior Father and the inferior subject with the direct result of lingual subjugation of the subject in confrontation with the Father.

The speaker’s reference to the harsh and horrific part of history marked by men is substantial in several aspects. First, it refers to the historical domineering manner of men in crucial and decisive contexts of political and social incidents. In this respect, women generally were excluded from determining events of their days and were just passive, submissive, and silent observers or even worse, victims. Second, this reference is employed as a forceful metaphor for the extremity of the Father’s cruelty to the vulnerable and defenseless subject. This reference is also used to mention some paradoxical feelings. When pointing out the psychological state of German families as mental patients during the war, Jacqueline Rose mentions contradictory emotions of being victim/aggressor in these families: “Over and over again these patients found themselves in fantasy occupying either side of the victim/aggressor divide” (25). The same ambivalent sentiments can be seen in Plath’s ambivalent emotions to her Father. At first glance, in both the Holocaust and emotional conflicts of a woman in the Realm of the Father—both are realms of authoritarian forces—there is a clear and distinctive boundary between opposite forces but when closely examined there is not any recognizable border between them. Perhaps multiple meanings are the main reason of the Holocaust images in Plath’s other poems, which later made many critics claim that these images reduce horrifying and pervasive impacts of the Holocaust to some internal conflicts.

In later lines, the speaker, besides the reverberation of the indestructible Law of the Father in cruel images, victimizes herself with the metaphorical use of historical catastrophes:

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, *The Collected Poems* 222)

In these images, despite her direct assertion, the speaker sees herself not as a Jew but as all the Jews who suffered in Nazi camps. Mechanical terms, such as “engine,” and military terms, such as “barb wire,” “boots,” and “panzer-man,” reflect the apathetic spirit of the Father as an automaton without any human passion. The poet then mentions the erroneous historical passivity and silence of women: “Every woman adores a Fascist, / The boot in the face, the brute / Brute heart of a brute like you” (Plath, *The Collected Poems* 222).

This “woman” may also refer to Plath’s traditional and yet idealistic mother. In this view, Plath’s mother is one of countless women who let the patriarchal authorities consolidate their power with their submissive treatment. These traditional women have had an important part in the definition of the ideal woman for the next generations. Jooyoung Park believes that “Plath’s rage not only reflects her fear of separation [of Mother], but also her ambivalence towards the ‘primordial’ mother. Reading her poems, we cannot fail to notice Plath’s irresolvable ambivalence towards the maternal figure” (469). In many of her poems, Plath thus refers to women by using the terms such as “Medusa, the vampire’s daughter (‘Daddy’), the monster queen of bees (‘Sting’), the walking mummy with a featureless face (‘Lady Lazarus’), the Nazi artifact, the concentration camp victim, and a flaming sinner, acetylene Virgin (‘Fever 103 [degrees]’)” (Park 470), so that “it is not by accident that an annihilating, devouring, and death-bearing mother figure emerges in many of Plath’s poems” (Park 470).

Plath herself finds the origin of her deep depression in her unhealthy relationship with her mother: “How can I get rid of this depression: by refusing to believe she [Mother] has any power over me, like the old witches for whom one sets out plates of milk and honey” (Plath, *The Journals of Sylvia Plath* 279). From a Lacanian perspective, these ambivalent emotions go back to the subject’s life-long desire for oneness with the Mother in the lawless world of the Real Order. When the subject realizes that his/her wholeness with the Mother is just an illusion, he/she puts the blame on the Mother while paradoxically adoring her. Julia Kristeva believes that “matricide” is necessary for the successful transition of a child from dependence on the mother to individual autonomy. In fact, for safe residence in the Realm of the Father, the child must erase any trace of Mother. In the case of Plath, according to her journals and poems, it appears that she could not get rid of her mother and commit this matricide.

In “Daddy,” Plath also mentions her suicide and names her father as its main reason:

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. (Plath, *The Collected Poems* 222)

“Pretty red hearts” provide us with a traditional and passive picture of women, or more precisely, ideal women, a picture which mirrors women’s feminine beauty and vulnerability. In these lines, the speaker declares her own suicide as an attempt to get back to the lost Father. The necessity of presence of Father, despite his authoritative manner, is completely clear as if without the domineering voice of the Father, the daughter cannot exist. The need for wholeness in relation to the Father comes in the next stanza:

But they pulled me out of the sack,  
 And they stuck me together with glue.  
 And then I knew what to do.  
 I made a model of you,  
 A man in black with a Meinkampf look. (Plath, *The Collected Poems* 222)

For the speaker, the presence of the Father never ends even with his physical death. She “made a model” of him and during her lifetime reproduced the Father in other male figures, even though she believed in the blackness of the Father.

In many aspects, “Daddy” is closely connected to another poem of Plath, “Lady Lazarus.” Both poems focus on the same personal conflicts with somewhat similar images and metaphors. As in “Daddy,” in “Lady Lazarus,” the speaker sees herself as a victim of the Holocaust; she is thirty, and she is obsessed with death and paternalistic power. Susan Van Dyne thus believes that Plath’s “urge to reorder her past retrospectively and to utter a compelling prophesy about her future prompt this poem’s terrifying self-dramatization” (395). Van Dyne claims that in this poem, Plath is “testing her authority, her myth-making capability, exercising a bold new voice that affronts and astonishes” (396).

The first important point about this poem is its metaphorical title. Lady Lazarus was derived from Lazarus, a figure in the Bible that died and was resurrected by Christ. From a Lacanian perspective, Lazarus is a man that can be considered a Father figure who has been reproduced again and again, a kind of phoenix that never dies and every time is resurrected more strongly: "A sort of walking miracle, my skin / Bright as a Nazi lampshade" (Plath, *The Collected Poems* 244). By reincarnating this male religious persona in a woman's body, Plath rebels against the hegemonic voice of religion. In this poem, the Father can no longer regenerate himself; instead, a woman persona, maybe the Mother figure with her continuous regeneration, consolidates her power: "I have done it again. / One year in every ten / I manage it" (Plath, *The Collected Poems* 244).

She identifies herself with the victims of the Holocaust, but whereas the speaker in "Daddy," despite her direct and indirect references to her desire to gain power, is passive and appears as a scapegoat, in this poem, the speaker after affliction rises "out of the ash" forever. The affliction even makes her stronger, as Linda Wagner-Martin points out: "Plath's 'Lady Lazarus' is under the command of her own superior will. Superior in all respects to the general population, and to her former beloved, the persona can even out-do her competition in killing herself" (199). Further in the poem, the speaker loses her face as the most important part of her body, the main symbol of female beauty in male-centered discourses: "My face a featureless, fine / Jew linen" (Plath, *The Collected Poems* 244). By losing her face, the woman loses her own predefined identity, actually her false identity, and in this way can be regarded as Everywoman. In this poem, in comparison to "Daddy," death is not depicted in negative and dark tones. Here death is portrayed as an art in a theatre scene and also as a starting point for regeneration. "Lady Lazarus" depicts the same paradoxical feelings as "Daddy"; but whereas in "Daddy" the contradictory emotions of love and hatred are addressed to the Father, in "Lady Lazarus," these emotions are addressed to men in general.

Religion and medicine, as two incisive discourses which generally exploit language to achieve their ends, are mocked in this poem. Religion as a dominant discourse attempts to justify itself by the use of a definite and definable boundary between good and evil, "God" and "Lucifer." The proportional employment of number imagery helps the poet to clarify the rigid, mathematical, and patriarchal nature of religion. Number three is the dominant number mainly representing the Trinity. Not only is this number repeated frequently in the context of the poem but it also appears in the poem's structure to give it more emp-

hasis: the poem consists of twenty-eight triplets. Maureen Curley suggests that this structure “replicates the number of days in a lunar cycle and the number of days in a normal menstrual, reproductive cycle” (213), which again emphasizes female regeneration.

As another important patriarchal discourse, medicine strives to justify itself by scientific truths. The speaker directly addresses the “Doktor” “Herr Enemy” because in the strong hands of him as the new Father, she is just an “opus” and “valuable . . . pure gold baby” (Plath, *The Collected Poems* 246). In fact, in the eyes of the doctor, the speaker is just a subject through whom he is able to prove his ingenuity and legitimacy. When the speaker says, “Out of the ash / I rise with my red hair / And I eat men like air” (Plath, *The Collected Poems* 247), she mocks and revolts against patriarchal discourses that just want to control, categorize, and define subjects under their own rules and frameworks. Leonard Sannazaro precisely asserts that “Unlike the Jewish Lazarus of the New Testament, who must await Christ to summon him back to life from his deathly paradise, Lady Lazarus does not simply die but reduces herself to ashes and revives herself in flames by the strength of her own will” (1983).

The poem starts with “I have done it again” and ends with “And I eat men like air”; the poem starts and ends in an active mode. In comparison to “Daddy,” in which the speaker is not the doer of actions and is just the passive receptive of the consequences of the Father’s absence, in this poem the speaker takes action; she is the unyielding doer of her world. What passes between the first line of “Lady Lazarus” and its last line shows that the poet seeks to construct her own world, in a way, her own Order with its own Laws and Language. In “Daddy,” because of her social ties and needs, Plath oscillates between acceptance or rejection of the Symbolic Order and the Law of the Father. She both needs this Order and rejects it. Indeed, in “Daddy,” Plath oscillates between her true voice as a poet and her distorted voice as a woman in a male-dominated society. Yet, in “Lady Lazarus,” apparently she does not have such a vacillation and doubt and knows very well what she wants: her own Order. She decides to get rid of the predetermined definition of an acceptable and expected woman who is in the service of patriarchal discourses.

After all, Sylvia Plath was not able to make peace between her contradictory emotions derived from her contradictory roles – a woman subject who was faced with predetermined expectations of society and a poet who was faced with

rebellious views that did not fit into preset and conventional models. Her death is her final response to the crucial question whether it is possible to stand up to a patriarchal tradition that has spread its roots capillary in all aspects of society. Her death was an all-out warning for women's communities to reevaluate their position in such a society.

## Conclusion

Lacan's proposed Symbolic Order with its one-way domineering Laws elucidates the paradoxical position of women in gender-biased language. In Plath's poems "Daddy" and "Lady Lazarus," the paradoxical presence of women in the realm of the Father, or the realm of language, can be traced. "Daddy" can be regarded as an autobiographical poem depicting its author's troubled emotions towards her father and, in a way, towards her husband. In this poem, Plath employs images of Nazis and the Holocaust to represent the cruelty of the Father and the emotional afflictions of his subject. The speaker tries to eliminate the father figure and step into the realm of mother, the realm of imagination.

In "Lady Lazarus," the speaker takes action and attempts to annihilate the deep-seated Symbolic Order. While "Daddy" depicts the speaker as a passive victim of the Symbolic Order, "Lady Lazarus" presents an unruly speaker who undertakes to annihilate the Symbolic Order. The speaker of "Lady Lazarus" actually strives to construct her own Order devoid of two pervasive patriarchal discourses, religion and medicine. In both poems, the speakers cannot reconcile with the power-seeking Symbolic Order. In both "Daddy" and "Lady Lazarus," the author tries to break the prescribed picture of the ideal submissive woman and provides the reader with new models.

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# SIMBOLIČKI POREDAK U PJESMAMA „TATICE“ I „ŽENSKI LAZAR“ SYLVIJE PLATH: LAKANOVSKO ČITANJE

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Djela Sylville Plath uglavnom se smatraju samorefleksivnim zrcalima koja odražavaju njezine teškoće, posebice problematičan odnos s ocem i suprugom. Njezine reakcije na rodnu pristranost jezika, glavnog medija diskursa kojima dominiraju muškarci, pune su proturječnih pobuda. U jednu ruku, kao jedna od subjekata jezika, Plath želi sačuvati svoj podređen položaj; u drugu ruku, kao pjesnikinja želi stvoriti vlastiti poredak oslobođen ograničujuće i opterećujuće prisutnosti androcentričnog jezika. Rad istražuje ulogu Oca u dvama značajnim djelima Sylville Plath – pjesmama „Tatice“ (1965.) i „Ženski Lazar“ (1965.) – i to primjenom postavki Jacquesa Lacana o poretku oblikovanja identiteta i stvaranja subjekta, osobito Lacanova simboličkog poretka. Rad nastoji utvrditi kako prisutnost i odsutnost očinske figure utječu na Plath i kako ona oblikuje nov simbolički poredak sa slobodnom igrom značenja te bez dominantnog Očeva glasa.

**Ključne riječi:** Sylvia Plath, Jacques Lacan, „Tatice“, „Ženski Lazar“, simbolički poredak