

PATRIARCHY IN SYLVIA PLATH'S "DADDY"

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Abstract

The research aimed to discuss patriarchy in Sylvia Plath's "Daddy". There were two objectives of the study. The first was to portray the patriarchy in Sylvia Plath's "Daddy". The second was to analyze the symbols of patriarchy in Sylvia Plath's "Daddy". This research applied four theories. They were ideology, patriarchy, oppressor, and symbol. The ideological and structural approaches were used in this research. The result of the research showed the portrayal of patriarchy in father's and husband's figure. From the father's figure we can understand that a parent who is the dominant ruler of his daughter's life will leave such a painful loss after his death comes so that his daughter loses his guidance in life. While, from the husband's figure we can learn that patriarchy also happens in a marriage. Furthermore, the symbols dealing with patriarchy is revealed in the description of confinement life, fear, regretful loss, and unhappy marriage.

Keywords: ideology, patriarchy, oppressor, symbol

1. INTRODUCTION

Patriarchy is an unfair condition of social system between male and female that supports one of gender, especially male, being superior to oppress their opponent and uses their stronger power. Bell states that patriarchy is a social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially female, and endowed with the right to dominated and rule over the weak and to maintain the dominance through various forms of psychological violence (2010: 1). Therefore, women are always weaker and impossible becoming stronger than man because of this system. Sylvia Plath is one of the feminist who struggles for her right and she wants her true life without the rule of man. She was born in 1932 in Boston, the daughter of German immigrant college professor, Otto Plath. She was also an American author, novelist, poet and also a short story writer. In this research, the researcher tries to go after the patriarchy portrayed in Sylvia Plath poem "Daddy," and tries to analyze patriarchy symbol which also founded in Sylva Plath's "Daddy." In analyzing the data, the researcher gives limitation to make the readers easier to understand on the discussion. In this case, the researcher only focuses on one important topic that is Patriarchy. The research discusses how is patriarchy portrayed and also analyzes the symbol of patriarchy in Sylvia Plath's "Daddy".

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The research is qualitative because it will be easy to analyze how the patriarch portrayed in this poem. Burns and Grove (2003: 19) describe qualitative as a systematic subjective approach used to describe life experiences and situations to give them meaning.

The data of the research is from Poem hunter, {"Daddy" by Sylvia Plath, (<https://m.poemhunter.com/poem/daddy/>), accessed on December on 18th, 2017 at 08:31}. To collect the data, purposive sampling is utilized because not all of data will be analyzed. The technique of data collecting is library research that needs some material related to the theories from books. The technique of data collecting is library research. There are three steps used in this analysis. First, interpreting the poem and portraying the patriarchy in this poem. The theories of ideology, patriarchy, and symbol are used. Second, analyzing the poem, the researcher uses two approaches in solving the problem. Ideological approach and structural approach are applied to analyze the problem of the study in this research. Ideological approach is used to catch the main meaning of patriarchy. Terry remarks that ideology as a set of doctrines rather, it signifies the way men live out their roles in class-society, the values, ideas, and images which tie them by their social functions and so prevent them from a true knowledge of society as a whole (Eagleton 1976, 16 -17). It is clear that patriarchy is an ideology. "Ideological criticism is a form of criticism that usually targets ideographs within a particular work or speech in order to better understand the ultimate substance of the work. Ideographs are "artifacts" within a works, often either particular words or images, which have a greater, symbolic meaning that is understood and observed on a cultural level". {"What Is Ideological Criticism?", P. 1, (<https://m.wisegeek.com/what-is-ideological-criticism.htm>), accessed on September 7th, 2018 at 21:45}. It means that ideological criticism can help the researcher to identify the meaning from certain social concepts, beliefs, and perceptions. Structuralism is only focused on the work without seeing the biographical influences. Lye in discourse of structuralism states that "Structuralism is the explanation of texts or events in their own terms (as those terms are conceived) not in relation to external causes. When one turns to the internal dynamic of a text as an object, a field of meanings, and to the coherence of it as a text, rather than as biography or sociology, one reads structurally. Structuralist reading abandons psychological, sociological, and such explanation". {"Structuralism and Literary Criticism", P. 3, (<http://jeeves.brocku.ca/English/courses/4F70/genette.php>), accessed on August 31st, 2018 at 10:45}. It shows that structuralism is utilized to read a literary work without seeing the external aspect of the poet or writer. Structural approach is chosen and applied in this research this kind of approach is very effective to get some poetic meaning of words. Structural approach is also called formalist criticism and the definition can be seen "In formalist criticism, a poem or story is not primarily a social, historical, or biographical document. A literary work can be understood only by reference to its intrinsic literary features and elements found in the text itself. To analyze the poem, the formalist criticism focuses on the words of the text rather than facts about the author's life or the history written". {"9 Critical Approaches to Literature", P. 2, (<http://www2.sdfi.edu.cn/netclass,jiaolan/englit/criticism.htm>), accessed on August 31st, 2018 at 09.30} The statement above means that formalist criticism is concerned primarily with the work itself. The last step is drawing a conclusion. The researcher will assemble the results of analysis and construct the conclusion.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

a. The Portrait of Patriarchy in Sylvia Plath's "Daddy"

To discuss about the portrait of the condition of woman in the poem "Daddy" related to the dominance of male figure in her life time and the dominance of male figure is chosen since it contributes the most to the whole depiction of woman in the poem toward the male figure. Hence, the poem "Daddy" written by Sylvia Plath is shown before going to further discussion.

The Depiction of Father's Figure

The relationship of father and daughter is portrayed clearly in the poem. The speaker shares her condition after her father died. To lose father because of death is never an easy situation for a daughter who loves him so much. The speaker puts her father as her idol, hero, and also patron to look for an ideal husband in her future. Nevertheless, the speaker shows her relief because she does not live in her father's shadow anymore. Even though in the first stanza, the speaker starts to express her disappointment, bitterness, and suffering from the death of her father, she does not seem to mourn his death.

*You do not do, you do not do
Any more, black shoe*

At the first two lines, it can be seen that the speaker feels surprised as her father is no longer there with her. It also expresses that there is no sadness or loss. It is rather to reveal that the relationship between father and daughter is not really well. Even though the speaker still adores her father, the expression of "you do not do" has a meaning that she feels free since her father will not return to her life anymore. The repetition of the words "you do not do" used in the first line also emphasizes that she is shocked by her father's death yet she tries not to feel lost. Moreover, the words black shoe is actually the way how her father protects her when he is still alive. Therefore, she intends to continue what she wants as her own self even she knows that it is impossible to do it herself.

Consider the following lines:
*In which I have lived like a foot
For thirty years, poor and white,
Barely daring to breathe or Achoo.*

The next lines are shown by the speaker about her condition before her father died. The emotional feelings and struggles cause personal pain when she was ten. It later brings her down to her entire life. The speaker lives by her father's shadow for at least thirty years. Thirty years old is the age in which she senses her father life with her. She triggers a connection between her childhood conceptualization of father figure and impact through her mental growth as an adult. However, it then shows that she does not dare to do anything in her life because of her father. The speaker's father always haunts her with all the ideas he has when he was alive. All of the things her father has done to her make her weaker. She is afraid of her father, therefore, she bears herself not to disobey him. She always asks her father's agreement to do anything. Talking to her father is also something that the speaker does not have any courage to do. In contrast, she pictures her father as an intelligent and discipline man. Man who has high intelligent usually acts like a superior to woman.

*Daddy, I have had to kill you.
You died before I had time—*

The word "kill" does not mean that the speaker really kills her father, but it is just an expression of anger as effect of her father's death. She has sense of hatred because she is trapped in her father life's desire. It is said to be an enforcement which is made by her father during his life time to push the speaker to obey and follow his orders. It continues to become the main cause of the speaker's anger. She knows that becoming what her father wants is not something that makes her life better in the future. She feels disappointed at herself to not telling her father what really happens. She does not have courage to confront her father so that she never states disagreement towards her father. The following lines in the third stanza show her actual relationship with her father.

*I used to pray to recover you.
Ach, du.*

The speaker reveals how closed she is with her father. She states the word “recover” which means that she wants him not to be sick. It is the condition of her childhood when she realizes that her father will die. She cannot leave the memories of her father behind. The loss that the speaker has is just merely because her parent is died. She loves her father. However, she pictures her father as a human being who has strength and weakness until she is abandoned by him.

The depiction of her father in the speaker’s life is complicated. The lines of the preceding stanzas express her deep emotion to her father during his life time until death. The speaker has her own way to find a good perspective toward male people. She comes to a belief that her father is a perfect and good man that will help her to find her self-identity and the meaning of life. When it comes to his death, she cannot live without him. It becomes an unhealthy effect for her relationship with her father. In other words, she blames her father for leaving her in a bad memory.

I never could talk to you.

The tongue stuck in my jaw.

The word “you” in the first line above refers explicitly to her father. It means that the speaker realizes that she will never face her father again. In spite of this the speaker’s father wants her not to be worried about him. In the contrary, it is not as easy as it seems. She faces much trouble in order to recover from her loss. It is also stated clearly that the speaker never gets a chance to tell to her father how hard her life shadowed by him. She hardly finds her ideal life since she focuses herself to her dead father. In addition, the expression of *the tongue stuck in my jaw* underlines a problematical thing happened to her so that the speaker thinks she is better to be silent rather than to tell people about her father. It also can be understood that even the speaker father is dead but the way how he treats her will always be a reason for her to let her father takes a control of her life.

The speaker knows exactly what her father did. Even though she is sure that her father plays so important role in her life, she always believes that her father is an ideal man to rule everything for her. In addition, her father never lets the speaker to disobey or dishonour him. The paternal leader of a man in family has taken its place strongly through the speaker. The fact that a father oppresses her proves to be true. He gives limitation to the speaker in developing herself during her childhood. Therefore, the speaker feels fearful of her father even until he is dead. The quotation of the twelve stanzas will explore more of the bitterness the speaker has toward her father’s memory.

Bit my pretty red heart in two.

I was ten when they buried you.

She expresses that she loves her father so much. Someone who loves a man so much will pay respect to him whenever she can. When the one is dead, the woman will have a very broken heart. It is similar to what happens to the speaker. Therefore, knowing that her father dies, she really feels painful. She further uses the words “bit my pretty red heart in two” to emphasize that she indeed losses her beloved. She used to adore her father. The speaker’s father causes an opened-wound that cannot be remedy. Followed by the next line, a fatherless childhood makes the speaker face many difficulties to adapt her new life. A ten years old girl is never easy to accept the hard reality, especially if she has to have lost a parent. Her father brings chaos in the speaker’s mind and heart. Consequently, the speaker’s father creates a gap that he will not aware that it may cause the relationship between the speaker and him comes to an end. However, it is not really an end as the following lines from this stanza will reveal another part of the speaker’s life toward her father’s figure.

At twenty I tried to die

*And get back, back, back to you.
I thought even the bones would do.*

The long journey of the speaker's life adjusts a new different world for her. The ten years moment after her father's death gets her difficult to pursue her dream even though she is free to be herself. Her father still buries his way of thinking, reacting, and living to the speaker. It seems so obvious that the father never lets her to let him go. Now, she does not have any leader to obey. In other words, the speaker's father is the most dominant figure in her life. Therefore, his death brings confusing state for the speaker's mind.

The line fifty eight pictures the speaker condition after ten years of her father death. The speaker uses the words "tried to die" to mean that she intends to commit suicide. Someone who tries to commit suicide feels unworthy to live or even she does not have any willingness to think about her future. The one of the causes of committing suicide is losing someone. Hence, the speaker cannot accept the death of her father. It is because of the memory of her father forces her to memorize him every time.

The speaker says that at twenty she tried to die to emphasize that her father's death has troubled her. Probably, the speaker's father's spirit still can be felt even when he is not around anymore. Her father's death is also the biggest punch in speaker's life. It means that the burial does not bury the spirit of her father. It then continues with the expression "and get back, back, back to you". She wants to back together with her father. The painful life as described in the speaker's life may assume that the tragic loss of father makes her think and act like a child. In other words, the father's figure in her life has controlled her own past to contribute the most to her mature life or future. It can be represented by the description of her father toward what she becomes after the tragedy. Considering the last line of the last stanza:

Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through.

Tiring struggles of the speaker to recover from her loss leads her to hardly forget her father. However, her father fails to prove his love and express his deep emotion toward her effects the feeling of disappointment in passing her life after his death. It either directly or indirectly influences her to see anything in wrong perspective. The speaker sees her father as a brutal man who betrays every woman who loves him so much. Her father traps her in sense of guilt and anger to what he has done to her in the past. Now, she cannot blame herself to what happens but she still tries so hard to find way to continue her life.

b. The Symbols of Patriarchy in Sylvia Plath's "Daddy"

Dealing with the patriarchy, there are some symbols that the speaker uses in this poem namely confinement life, fear, regretful loss, and unhappy marriage. So, the further discussion will explain about more the symbols found. Below is the poem entitled "Daddy" by Sylvia Plath.

Confinement Life

The speaker shows the relationship with her late father when he was still alive. We all know that father is a strong ruler in a family. Father always loves his children. To prove his love, he needs to guide and teach the children to make their future brighter. In this poem, however, the speaker illustrates the way her father treat her differently.

Any more, black shoe

She has lived in her father's "shoe". Shoe is footwear which is used to protect and comfort. The shoe is usually attached to body part that is foot. Shoe, therefore, is functioned to cover the feet. Though, the real meaning of the shoe as stated by the speaker refers to the depiction of her father's intention to her. In this case, the shoe has black colour. The black itself symbolizes power and authority.

In which I have lived like a foot

The speaker also compares herself to a foot. Foot is the bottom part of body which is not equal to head as the top part of body. If the speaker is foot so her father is the head that means that she is never the same to her father. It can be concluded that her father is also her leader. Her father becomes the leader in her childhood to rule her life. As the speaker is foot, it can be seen that the speaker's life is under the influence of her father. Living like a foot she then calls herself as prisoner to picture her life. Consequently, the foot in a shoe is the exact description of what the speaker tells us about the way her father treats her. She is trapped in her father's ambition since she was a child. Her father forces her to obey and do exact things as his father command to her. The speaker actually regrets what her father did after he died, but she also realizes that she will never get her chance to let go of their issues.

Considering the line below:

It stuck in a barb wire snare.

The speaker also relates her life to *barb wire snare* in which she is stuck in. A *barb wire snare* is the edge of a trap used to hunt wild animals. It is made to catch the animals and hard to be free instead the hunter takes it off. In this discussion, the speaker shares her hard situation where her father has tightly trapped her. Therefore, she cannot freely live her own life.

Fear

Fear is distressing emotion aroused by impending danger, pain, or threat from someone or something. Fear also builds up when someone is worried about something that is not happening yet she is afraid to fail or lose it. The speaker experiences unpleasant feeling in the past when she was child. Let us see the line:

Barely daring to breathe or Achoo.

The word "achoo" here sounds very childish. The speaker expresses her fear through her childish action of sneezing by saying "achoo". When a child sneezes, she produces the soft voice. The soft voice indicates that there is uncomfortable condition the speaker has. Hence, the speaker uses "achoo" to represent her soft voice the way she speaks to her father. The sound of childish here also refers to the speaker's attitude toward her father. She is so afraid to make a single mistake to him. She chooses not to have any courage to act like a mature woman in front of her father because mature woman will bravely defend herself from someone who tries to harm her.

The speaker's fear becomes more real in the next line of her poem below:

I thought every German was you.

The setting where the speaker believes her father came from was Germany. The speaker addresses her father as "German" in the poem. She has her own reason to call her father "German" that is due to the depiction of Hitler who was the leader of Nazi that was remembered as a powerful politician in Germany. She compares her father with Hitler. Hitler was a German who responsible for devastation of the Second World War and the horrors of the Holocaust. Thus, the speaker sees he father as Hitler to her. She then pictures herself in the next line from the seventh stanza.

Chuffing me off like a Jew.

The image of Jew is the contrast of German which earlier the speaker talks about. Jew refers to the person of Jewish heritage or who has converted to the Jewish religion. Furthermore, Jews are the people who are perished by the Holocaust incident orchestrated by Hitler. Here, the speaker symbolizes herself as a Jew and her father as Hitler. It is stated obviously that she feels the same fear as experienced by the Jews toward Hitler. The speaker wants us to know that her father has tortured her mentally so that she suffers from the

unlucky condition during her father's life time. Moreover, the speaker and her father also has bad communication in which she expresses in the next line:

I began to talk like a Jew.

I think I may well be a Jew.

The speaker says the word "Jew" more than three times in the poem. The inner conflict between the speaker and father gets worse as she does not want to talk to her father anymore yet she feels her fear has taken over her emotion.

In addition, the main reason the speaker describes her father through Hitler and herself as a Jew is to give a portrayal of the fearful feeling she has toward her father. All of her fear comes from the bad character of her father and the domination from him. She chooses not to talk much with her father rather than being in a heated conversation with him. It can be seen that her father's figure is always be a terror for her.

4. CONCLUSION

Patriarchy is an unfair condition of social system between male and female that supports one of gender, especially male, being superior to oppress their opponent and uses their stronger power. Patriarchy impacts almost all of the social systems in society towards the arts of literary work such as prose, poetry, and drama. Hence, the patriarchy is chosen as the main problem in this study. The poem "Daddy" written by Sylvia Plath is taken as the main data as it is the representation of the literary work dealing with patriarchy. There are two objectives of the study. The first is to portray the patriarchy in Sylvia Plath's "Daddy". The second is to analyze the symbols of patriarchy in Sylvia Plath's "Daddy". This research applies four theories. They are ideology, patriarchy, oppressor, and symbol. The first theory of ideology refers to social thoughts, movements, beliefs, notions that can make people be influenced, believed, and obey some norms or rules. The second theory of patriarchy deals with men as the ruler of social systems. Meanwhile, oppressor is the theory of the way someone who threatens people in a certain and cruel way and prevents or limits them for having opportunities and freedom. The last theory is about symbol. Symbol is an art of using an object or a word to represent the hidden sense. The ideological and structural approaches are used in this research. Ideological is related to the identification of the meaning from certain social concept, beliefs, and perceptions. Meanwhile, Structural approach is the utilized to read a literary work without seeing the external aspect of the poet or writer. The writer has found the portrayal of patriarchy in the poem through the depiction of the father's figure and husband's figure. From the father's figure we can understand that a parent who is the dominant ruler of his daughter's life will leave such a painful loss after his death comes and his daughter loses his guidance in life. It can be seen from the expression of "Bit my pretty red heart in two. I was ten when they buried you." While, from the husband's figure we can learn that patriarchy also happens in a marriage as it is in the lines "The vampire who said he was you". Furthermore, the symbols dealing with patriarchy is revealed in the description of confinement life, fear, regretful loss, and unhappy marriage. In summary, the figure of father who failed to prove his love to his daughter and left to the death causes the feeling of disappointment, anger, and pain in his daughter's life in passing her life. It also influences the daughter in choosing her way of living, thinking, and finding towards her new life. The unhappy marriage is the result of the feeling the daughter feels to her husband due to the reflection of father's figure.

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