

Experiencing Sylvia Plath: Four Poems: Between Anger and Resignation: A Close Reading¹

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Abstract: *Sylvia Plath’s poetry continues to divide both casual readers and literary critics. Although its appreciation in both camps has grown over the years, reading evaluations still render conflictual views as regards the appropriateness of metaphors, imagined victimhood, perceived self-display, and lack of irony expressed in self-righteousness. This article will address these and other “literary crimes” for which Plath was lambasted in the criticism of the late 2000s in a depreciatory wake of fault-finding dating to the very appearance of the poems. Conversely, other early reviewers were exhilarated, one of them being a fellow-sufferer from depression – Al Alvarez. The plethora of critiques on Plath has contributed to a wealth of Plathology, and the American woman writer, while considerably gaining in modern appreciation, remains wildly provocative. This article will offer a close reading of four poems – Plath’s signature seal “Lady Lazarus” and “Daddy” contrasted to two of the poet’s last poems, the equally fascinating “Edge” and “Words”. Regardless of the detractors’ denunciation and the admirers’ critical aplomb, Plath’s poetry needs to be experienced and then its author’s crafts(wo)manship shines through speaking for itself. This, in turn, renders a fruitful analysis, which any conscientious close reading should do for a most memorable world poet.*

Keywords: *identification, victimhood, self-display, confessional, Jewish, Holocaust, autofiction*

¹ The article is based on the author’s monograph entitled: *Feminine Selves in Sylvia Plath’s Prose and Poetry: The Perspective of Compared Lived Experience in Fiction.*