

The Parallax Between Daughters and Fathers

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“We discover, indeed that we do not know our part, we look for a mirror, we want to rub off the make-up and remove the counterfeit and be real. But somewhere a bit of mummery still sticks to us that we forget...” [Rilke, Notebooks of Malte Lauride Briggs, p.212]

In this paper I am putting forth an image, a parallax or view of daughters and a bit about fathers to show some of the dynamics arising from their distant, difficult or absent relationships. A parallax is the apparent displacement, or difference of position of an object as seen from two different stations or points of view. We explore through various stories, both personal and cultural the influence of fathers on the lives of the daughters with the hope both can move out of old entrenched positions into new styles of relationship.

This is exemplified through the dreams of a woman in analysis and the dreams and poetry of Sylvia Plath. Her dreams could be ours and show the archetypal significance that we find by looking back at someone who carried this energy from another era. It is an energy that continues to have relevance because it transcends time and space. And, as Jung contends, it is often those from another era who impart knowledge to our current one. “We are confronted, at every new stage in the differentiation of consciousness to which civilization attains, with the task of finding a new interpretation appropriate to this stage, in order to connect the life of the past that

still exists in us with the life of the present, which threatens to slip away from it.” [Jung, 1958, par. 267]

The Archetypal Construction

Western culture with its patriarchal heritage has silenced the daughter and worked against her accessing the full scope of her energy. For generations a daughter was regarded as the least important member in the family and suppressed. The daughter/father issues remained a dark terrain and their relationship relegated to the shadows. Cultural biases kept daughters docile and fathers untouched, as if they were not essential to their children’s lives. In fact, a father wielded so much influence that a daughter did not question her role with him and instead projected her disappointments and difficulties onto her mother, in another diminishment to the feminine.

This results in the feminine nature suffering as it lives through the masculine mind and leads to one-sided development. A daughter may unconsciously flee the feminine, gathering that it holds limited value. Patriarchal domination castrates men as well by justifying their lack of emotional development. Countless generations of fathers had no time or emotional accountability to participate in family life. The lack of fathers' emotional relationship to themselves and others currently contributes to broken homes, failed societal values, and increased violence. Moreover, the untouched space around fathers culturally, personally, and psychologically submerges their influence into the unconscious.

The daughter/father dynamic reaches to the intrapsychic depths and archetypal roots--to issues of self and culture wherein lie the complex aspects and the patriarchal biases that many daughters are raised on. Until recently, a rather strange conspiracy of silence surrounded the daughter/father relationship and perpetuated sealing off the painful, traumatic

limiting and dictatorial nature of their connection. We ask what has caused the erasure of the daughter as well as what internal and external signals are bringing attention to this dynamic?

Jung refers to this when he contends nothing exerts a stronger effect on children than the unlived life of the parent. He says the unconscious repetition of the family pattern can be disastrous; likened to psychological original sin. [Jung, 1963, par. 232] Too few opportunities for good experiences between a father and daughter pass on a legacy of non-involvement and personal detachment. A daughter's action becomes inhibited, emotional development arrested and adulthood feigned rather than realized. Without sufficient emotional connection attachment becomes difficult and inhibits satisfaction in relationships so that love is a difficulty not a pleasure. Yet, a mutual longing for personal involvement and empathic understanding signifies the importance of their relatedness.

Jungian analyst, Andrew Samuels puts forth a twist on understanding the archetypal construction in the psyche when he says, "Rather it is in the intensity of affective response to any given image or situation that we find what is archetypal. This can be something very small scale, not coming in a pre-packaged archetypal or mythic form. What stirs you at an archetypal level depends on you and where you sit and how you look at things and on your personal history. The archetypal therefore can be relative, contextual and personal. This reframing of archetypal theory as a theory of affects is something that has not yet reached conservative academic Jungians." [Samuels, This is from the forward he wrote for a book entitled, *Post-Jungian Criticism* edited by Baumlin, et. al.p. xiv]

According to classical Jungian thought we all have archetypal images of father and daughter, differently expressed by each person. We see the daughter/father range of the archetype through a variety of symbols. It is cast from not only their interactions but

additional images are internalized from the culture, religion, literature, myths, and fairytales. These timeless images contain the seeds of future consciousness.

The following quote gives another idea about the archetype and its workings on the psyche. “ Because our culture is a patriarchy the very air she breathes, the boundaries of her consciousness, the contents of her personal unconscious psyche, and the complete cast of the collective psyche, are full of The Man: his image, his history, his definitions, his requirements, his expectations, his needs, his desires, his threats, his power, his laws, his religions, his gods, his money, and his ambivalent, unrealistic image of her”. [Cowan, 2004, p. 12]

How does a daughter differentiate herself from this over arching script? How does a father? It is not just the fact that we have all been influenced in some way by a father dominated story but it is how we become aware of it and its effect on our lives that shapes our present and future. Emma Jung commented years ago that, "The dark sun of the feminine psyche is connected to the father imago...Unfortunately, this source is often sullied just where we would expect clear water." [1969, p.29]

We might ask how much the prevailing attitudes, determined as normal, perpetuate restrictive ideas and set up conflicts for men and women. Both father and daughter suffer, each in a different way, and both are affected by the abuse of unconscious paternalism. How does a daughter respect herself when so many fathers and so many societies see daughters as not preferred? And, how do we encourage and support those fathers who are interested in and joyful about the full growth of their daughters? Again, we are facing the challenges of proceeding into different daughter/father relationships.

A daughter's particular constellation of internalized fathering qualities and images become conscious as she examines their attachment. From the very beginning as a baby the daughter takes a look around and sees herself reflected back in the eyes of her father so that what she looks like in part is related to what she sees from him. Many daughters, however, do not have good experiences because they look and do not see anything related to them. When she looks she might see doubt, insecurity and absence in her father's love and care and this becomes a way she tends to treat herself. These experiences can create negative images and over time her life capacity begins to fold and she repeats what she learned in destructive ways. Such daughters are threatened by internal chaos and react with various forms of withdrawal, defensiveness and immaturity.

Fathers, of course, also mirror images of security, consistence and presence. A father can provide a doorway to the world. His interaction with her forms part of the foundation upon which a daughter builds her self. He is integral to her identity formation as a woman and to promote the unencumbered expression of her truth. "The feminine element can only get into its right place by a detour that includes coming to terms with the masculine factor...The first state is the withdrawal of the projection by recognizing it as such and thus freeing it from the object." [Jung, E.,1978, p. 13] In other words, a daughter has to experience a close enough attachment to father as part of understanding herself.

In the important role as an influencing 'other', a father helps establish individuality for his daughter. Obviously, an adequate relationship creates confidence, acceptance, love, stability, discipline, and self-strength. At each stage of a daughter's development, the relationship with her father affects her sense of self and, when sufficient, gives her the confidence to express her creative potential. [Kavaler-Adler, 1993, p. 187] He is part of what

contributes to her ability to be present to the many aspects of her inner and outer life and the form of their relationship affects the collective images carried about daughters and fathers.

Equally, a father's neglect can contribute to internal vacuity, vulnerability, and lack of psychological connection. These appear as melancholy and passivity, the avoidance of her spirit and a general loss of feeling. When a father cannot fulfill his daughter's needs for love and affirmation, self-denigrating habits and moods develop in her. A daughter experiences low self-worth, develops hesitancy in the world and avoids intimacy. The internalized negative energy creates self-isolation and both the masculine and feminine energies betray her from within and without. The internalized persecutory father figure creates a hostile inner world of rage, numbness, or manic reactions obstructing inspiration and arresting self-integration. [ibid, p. 40]

For example, a woman dreams her father put his hand on her thigh so forcefully it burned her flesh to the bone. Branded, she cannot rise against the resistance of his hand. Later, she thinks about filling the wound with concrete. How can this wound heal? Concrete will make her flesh inflexible, heavy, and non-human. The branding gives her a phallic father wound imprinted for life. The dreamer registers no horror at the dream's ghoulish image, neither rage nor defiance at her father, but passively accepts this as her fate. She needs what is referred to in the I Ching, hexagram # 18, "Work on What has been Spoiled" [Decay]. Throughout the hexagram is a call for "setting right what has been spoiled by the father". This happens through the process of destruction and construction and entails facing reality, mucking in the decay, and gradually fashioning an expanded father image. But, when there has not been enough nurturance and too much guilt, sorrow or betrayal the daughter is unable

to feel the safety or access the strength needed for the task. Paradoxically, these are the very wounds that open the world of self-discovery and provide the impetus for movement.

When the father figure has no limits by giving too much or too little, or is a rigid disciplinarian encased in a distant and foreboding authority position, a daughter cannot be personally or lovingly touched by him. She is betrayed, loses individual identity and is deprived of authority or voice. If he is emotionally absent or physically unavailable, no guidance is imparted but rather a vacuum of bewilderment forms, a void that fills with various adversities. And, as an extension of this the father figure can turn malicious and malignant to the feminine through her internalizing his sadomasochistic enactments. [ibid., p. 85]

Sylvia Plath recorded a dream in her Journal, [p. 138], “How many times in my dreams have I met my dark marauder on the stairs, at a turning of the street, waiting on my bright yellow bed, knocking at the door, sitting only in his coat and hat with a small smile on a park bench; already he has split into many men; even while we hope, the blind is drawn down and the people turned to shadows acting in a private room beyond our view...” This, like many of her dreams, had no associations recorded.

Daughter Complexities

Knowing the make-up of her own father complex for daughters is significant because herein contains the images showing the unconscious situation. Complexes are normal and belong to the basic structure of the psyche, but when unconscious, they can control personal destiny and the problem can go unresolved through the family and the culture for generations.

Classically, complexes occur where the energy is blocked and the nucleus of the complex draws more and more energy due to its magnetic quality. A complex is loaded with conflicting emotions difficult to reconcile with the conscious mind. Marking an unfinished area of the personality and originating from early traumas and/or emotional neglect, a complex splits off and functions autonomously. It can range in effect from hardly disturbing features to being strong enough to rule the personality, like an independent source at work within the psyche. When a complex is constellated there is a loss of energy in terms of conscious attention and the person may seem as if possessed. This changes with the conscious recognition of the formerly unconscious contents and the reflection on them assists in the unfolding of the personality.

The daughter/father complex can include self-alienation for both, affecting them so that each becomes estranged from self and other. Each can become drugged by inertia, live in a trance-like state with no sense of time or of life going by. A negative father complex adversely affects a daughter's intellectual confidence, promotes idealization of others, especially males and destroys initiative. It feeds an internalized cycle of self-hatred, oppression, and revenge. There is a coldness and impenetrability that gives a daughter little interest or access to anything outside herself. It may become so severe for the daughter that she slices off contact from the world and is taken over by an implacable helplessness, impotence and passivity. The real self remains silent and isolated in a state of non-communication with the rest of the personality.

Or, a daughter might take on the role of a femme fatale, an anima woman, living to please the man. Although appearing to have creativity and strength, she internally lacks a consistent focus, structure or belief in herself. For example, the American poetess Sylvia

Plath, living in the 1950's, had a life shaped by many of the personal and cultural factors women bring into consulting rooms today. In her Journal she wrote, [1982, p. 67] “ You have had chances; you have not taken them, you are wallowing in original sin; your limitations. You have lost all delight in life. You are becoming a neuter machine, You cannot love, even if you knew how to begin to love...You want to go home, back to the womb...You have forgotten the secret you knew, of being joyous, of laughing, of opening doors”.

Sylvia Plath's life and work exposed the many facets of a father complex, a bond composed of pain, yearning and an unconscious loyalty keeping her tied to destructive energy. Her writing was an attempt to deal with the pull toward the death and destruction she associated with her father. How is a woman supposed to value the "feminine principle" as highly as the "masculine principle" when there is neither precedent nor incentive to do so?

For Sylvia Plath part of her internal disconnection came from a father who was unapproachable emotionally, surrounded by psychological silence, and died when she was eight years old. She wrote in her Journal [1982, p. 26] about the image of her father in childhood. “ You remember that you were his favorite when you were little, and you used to make up dances to do for him as he lay on the living room couch after supper. You wonder if the absence of an older man in the house has anything to do with your intense craving for male company”. She wrote several poems referring to this situation as an Electra complex that affected her relationship to her mother, to males, to her father and most of all to herself. Because her father died when she was so young, Plath developed a phantom relationship with him epitomized by, “the power of the fathers: a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men—by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labor—determine what part

women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male". [Rich, 1981, p. 57]

The death of Sylvia Plath's father became felt as a crime against her; the psychological loss imposing on her a role of a vengeful victim while at the same time her creative process was a means of reparation. The specter of her father appearing everywhere became a way to mourn the dead god who ruled her life. [Kroll, 1976, p. 109] In fact, for Sylvia Plath, the male was either a god or a devil, reflecting the pain of the inner and outer losses. The need was to reinstate the parent who was lost, dead, unavailable, but doubting the ability to do this the libido emerged in various forms of self attack and self despair. As Plath notes, "If I really think I killed and castrated my father may all my dreams of deformed and tortured people be my guilty visions of him or fears of punishment for me? And how to lay them? To stop them operating through the rest of my life.? I have a vision of the poems I would write, but do not. When will they come?"[Hughes, 1982, p. 301].

She comments in her Journal [ibid., p. 85], "The worst enemy to creativity is self-doubt. And you are so obsessed...to face the great huge man-eating world, that you are paralyzed". Plath tried to extricate from the psychological agony and break the narrow cultural script of the woman allowed to be only sweet and pretty. Plath wrote to release herself and readers from the restraint of polite society to fully experience the range of emotions, despair, rage, frustration, and isolation. By exposing the different faces of identity imposed on her by social and paternal expectations, her writing could free her to revel in everything that is woman. However, culturally the brightest women of Plath's era were perceived as satellites to powerful men, a pernicious societal attitude with similar disastrous

effects on women and men to this day. At her commencement from Smith in the 1950's, Adlai Stevenson, the presidential candidate, told them that their vocation was to be wives and mothers who would support their husbands and children.

Throughout her work Sylvia Plath strives to deal with the internalized anguish from being immersed in a death-dealing father complex. The father complex became like a demon holding her in its clutches. [Leonard, 1983, p. 88] Internally, she formed attachment not to the missing father but to the gap from his absence. Laced with vengeance, her poetry is a character study of the conflictual set-up of a daughter and her father, a tragedy colored by anger, expiation, death, and sacrilege. In the poems she refers to him with the color black. Her father is unapproachable and yearning for a missed father and his affection, recognition, and security; Sylvia Plath describes what she knows--a father who is absent, dead, and oppressively influential.

Circling around the psychological damage and obsessed and tortured by her father's early death left her with horrific images of males treating females that are rampant in her poetry. She tries to extricate from the psychological agony and revolt is against the omnipotent, absent, and dead father who contributes to the development of her narcissistic wounds. His death left Sylvia Plath without feeling that he had ever been alive in relation to her. As Christopher Bollas writes, the patient deadens herself and her psyche due to the deadened object within. [crackingup, p. 74]

Her father's premature death and its detritus haunted her with fluctuating psychological symptoms. His death brought destruction to the childhood attachment prior to the natural separation between daughter and father. Negative self-images became hostilely projected onto the image of this inimical 'other'. He became a point of reference

as her poetry revealed a life repeatedly and painfully targeted back to the original wounds. “Her different forms of writing root in lack, estrangement or disintegration of selfhood; the text is organized around a lost moment of origin, which, though endlessly reconstructed, was not recovered.”[Britzolakis, 1999, p. 40] She was wrapped in a tenacious self-absorption and her writing was an effort to organize the internal material that is emotionally and psychologically disturbing in its self-destruction, guilt, and suffering.

Her language recounts trials of feminine repression, binding sexual differences and cultural alienation. Intensity permeates her work, angrily pricking the blind adoration of women towards men. Her poetic imagery describes a father’s various guises as hero, ideal, and controller. Mourning a lost father transposed him a specter that was large, aggressive, black, authoritarian, and feared. She vacillated between love for him, guilt for this love, and the wish to kill him.

Sylvia Plath’s words show reversals and inversions of meaning, presented in poetic parallax. The desire to erase the childhood father as an object of her vengeance morphs through her poetry where the language imagery is irreverent--undercutting despair while articulating the pain of loss. The father image moves from white to black, a figure robed in deathlike garb and demeanor. The color switch notes the displacement in a perspective from different angles.

Confronting the trauma of the daughter/father relationship fuels Sylvia Plath’s fury and her individuation. Her history was shaped by ‘Daddy’s’ domination and her victimization. Her writing replays the female serving a male torturer’s perverse needs; submitting to him as a sacrificial object. Her efforts to legitimize the feminine involve

experiencing a father/master demanding an identification he both holds yet refuses in "the paternal 'perversion' of an impossible paternal ideal" [Rose, 1991, p. 231]. . Plath writes in "The Jailer,"

I imagine him
Impotent as distant thunder,
In whose shadow I have eaten my ghost ration.

The devotion to him became a type of depersonalization; a mechanism of despair that was the psychological fallout from his emotional distance and physical absence. "She is sentenced to live her daughterhood as a father's priestess, votary, bride, and queen" [Kroll, 1976, p. 83].

Finding herself in the dilemma of women rendered powerless and their lives trivialized;, Plath determined to fight these restrictions, refusing definition according to the masculine model that undercut women. Her poetic revision of female identity laden with sanctions, taboos, and rage attempts to slough off old and ill-fitting roles. Her voice searches for a sense of destiny as the poems reveal disappointment, rage, and despair, the need for transformation and the reclamation of her body from male dominance.

Plath dreamt a partial answer to the animus/father question. "Dreamed last night I was beginning my novel...to 'set' the scene: a girl's search for her dead father—for an outside authority which must be developed, instead, from the inside" [Kukil, 2000, p. 416]. The male dream figures represent forms of the animus, a disputed term in Jungian psychology when used according to time or culture bound definitions. The animus in its negative forms, and when inappropriately in charge of her psyche, can be part of why a woman ignores her feminine instincts. When the masculine has been in the dark shadows and its positive energy unable to be accessed, it assumes a driven and consuming quality

that can hold a woman hostage and create psychological dismemberment.

For Plath, the early love for her father turned into rejection of him as tyrannous, brutal and life denying. The love/hate split exacerbated the persecutory forces and the suffering. The animus was harshly directed towards the father and driven in on her and revealed in her writings as the one persecuted, outdoing him through persecuting herself.

In her Journal Sylvia Plath recounts a dream. "I dreamed the other night of running after Ted through a huge hospital, knowing he was with another woman, going into mad wards and looking for him everywhere: what makes you think it was Ted? It had his face but it was my father, my mother. I identify him with my father at certain times, and these times take on great importance: e.g., that one fight at the end of the school year when I found him not-there on the special day...Isn't this an image of what I feel my father did to me?...Images of his [Ted's] faithlessness with women echo my fear of my father's relation with my mother and Lady Death. [Plath, 1982, p. 279-280]

The dream reflects her psychology and focuses attention on this painful and exacting complex, personified by destructive inner figures. The exit of Ted Hughes, her husband, from her life as he chose to be with another woman aroused the feelings of isolation after her father's death. The previous pain came flooding to the surface. She was again abandoned, enraged, bereaved and struggling financially, paralleling the time of childhood loss.

Graphically detailing her distress and laced with vengeance, Plath's poetry weaves a daughter/father tale of individual and collective proportions. Identifying with a father she could not fully understand nor get close to and whom she accused of wronging her in part is what shaped her verbal protests. She used vitriolic language as she describes a dead father

who remains psychologically present within her. “Such a dark funnel, my father, she writes in the poem, ‘Little Fugue’.

Sadistic masculine figures permeate her work as she angrily pricks the blind adoration of women towards men, and the culturally agreed dominance of men over women. In the poem, “Daddy” she writes, “A father bites his daughter’s heart in two”, words that represent his hostile presence. The poem allegorizes the destructive ramifications of the daughter/father relationship in the female psyche and in the culture. The poetic heroine in “Daddy” marries a husband who takes her blood, like her father. The poem relates that after seven years, the same amount of time she was married, she amasses enough strength to defeat him. This length of time synchronistically appears in fairy tales during which the maiden has been either enclosed in a castle, under the ground, or ensconced in a forest. The maiden’s emergence occurs after years of isolation and introversion. During this time the wounds heal by being in nature. And, usually she does not return to her father’s kingdom.

The psychological process canceling the dark shadow of the father’s claim on a daughter’s spirit requires a dance with him. The paradox is getting close enough to him, keeping an eye on him, being absorbed in him and incorporating the forces related to him, without being destroyed in the process.

Idealization

A daughter naturally goes through a stage of idealizing her father. But, if he stays ideal, for whatever reasons, a daughter cannot get a sense about the reality of either of them. By default, she falls into the male-defined ideal that Sylvia Plath so poignantly describes. Her poetic imagery unmasks a father’s various guises as hero, ideal, and controller. Mourning a lost father transposed him into a ruling god; his specter appearing

many places in her work and life. In the poem, “Daddy”, he was compared to a swastika, “so black no sky could squeak through,” identifying him with the Nazi oppression of the Jews. The speaker actually refers several times in the poem to being “like a Jew”, which reinforces the idea of being a victim to the father’s image. Continuing with the black theme of the poem, the father stands in front of a blackboard in a picture, representing authority and expectations of educational achievement. This sense of authority is reinforced when the speaker tells her father “I made a model of you,” indicating how deeply her identity was entrenched in the internalized image of her father. As the poem progresses, its tone seeps into disdain directed at herself and this image, before erupting into triumphant fury with the line Daddy, you bastard...

Sylvia Plath vacillated between love for him, guilt for this love, and the wish to kill him. The poem’s narrator confronts the image she has held of her father and declares, “Daddy, I have had to kill you/You died before I had time”. These lines reveal the speaker’s frustration that she has not been able to kill the image of her father before now.

Women buy the myth of being an object of perpetual youth, docility and sexual allure. As such, she becomes a personification or reflection, a passive servant, an object helplessly absorbed in the father. Through unconscious adoration and idealization, a daughter becomes buried in the father’s skin and acts in betrayal against herself. Assuming the required stance according to outer expectations, and using much energy just to survive, she is drained of inner spontaneity. She lives under wraps, her desires ignored, under the assumption that she does not deserve the goods of life. Confused and distracted, she is unable

to focus on herself. She is distracted and terrified and feels displaced. Even if externally achieving and in the limelight, she cannot stand to be with herself.

A woman named Victoria began analysis expressing what sounded like an idealized love for her father combined with confusion about manifesting her self. The idealization would imply a certain rigidity and inability to access her authentic self. {Renee is the name I give to this woman who comes to each session with an impeccable appearance--long blond hair, graceful manners and calm voice. Later in analysis it comes out that this purposeful presentation was to hide severe periodic depressions. She says the few friends she has are rarely allowed into her home where the remnants of smashed vases and figurines display a trail of the past and present self-destruction.

At the first session I found her presentation uncomfortable and almost too slick. Here is the indication that the transference, like in all her relationships, could remain still-born. Sensing her flair for the dramatic was to hold people off, I wondered if it signaled a possible distraction to our work. [And, Renee seemed preoccupied, as if inhabiting a place no one was allowed to enter. Indeed, as the analysis went along Renee revealed that the presentation, which she called the poseur, was an effort to disguise a deep loneliness. Renee's made-up word, poseur simulates the Jungian term persona. At one point Renee said she needed a "how to be a person manual".] To make a point about her life, Victoria brought to analysis favorite passages from the books she read about women who had complicated lives, depression and usually absent fathers, including poems by Sylvia Plath. Often this was with the idea that I also read them as a way for her to be understood, her life shared and witnessed.

Victoria commented that she did not want to grow up as adults appeared to have no light in their eyes and were deadened by conformity to the average.[She described herself in

her journal as follows: “This is a woman who would live inside herself, making her hair a long shading roof, her eyes the basement door, the space between her legs a half-opened window where only the most tenacious of thieves may enter. This woman would be stone. She would grow her own food in a damp place. Oh, look at this, pressing at her face, wondering if she can be opened. Decides she cannot. Picture this woman plucking at herself like cardboard.”.

Renee’s father was absent for as long as she could remember and she pined for him, knowing that life would be better when he appeared. She missed this primary connection with a father from the beginning. As an adult she went in search for him and was successful. She found him married but shortly after meeting her, while his wife was away on business, he asked her into his bed. A shift occurred between Renee and her father when he pressed this misguided union onto her—and she accepted. She assumed a position reflecting his idealized image of himself telling her sex between father and daughter was the custom among the kings and princesses of old. Psychologically, physically, internally, externally she took on his issues as her own and by receiving his projections mimicked how he wanted her to be, preserving the image he had of himself through her agreement to idealize and please him. Her father had her act out his fantasies while he proceeded to erode her sense of self and erase her individual identity.

For Renee, the enclosure with her father represented closeness and was better than the only alternative she knew—no father at all. She could not resist him even though her development depended on escaping his incestuous engulfment. } The shadow of the father fell on the ego of this daughter and she internalized the oppression. She did not realize that she

could not leave him to love another. [She felt shame and carried his stain. The devotion to him became a mindless form of depersonalization and a mechanism of despair.]

Enchantment with him constellated her petrification--an objectification producing disturbing sensations. [Rosenblatt, 1979] Her father's combinations of adoring attributes were impossible for Victoria to negotiate. His compelling power and her idealization were glaring assaults to her individuality. Like a puppet, deprived of independent action, she was vulnerable and unable to forge her own image. She so identified with anything positive about him that during much of the analysis she could not get conscious of how this was a detriment to her development.

Dreams help restore the missing pieces of the personality however Victoria's dream recall was scant at first, as she felt too tired and without energy to write them down. Then, gradually catching one fragment after another, she began to access the dream world. She brought in a recurring childhood dream. "In the dream I see a figure coming towards me with a dagger on a pillow. The figure goes to the closet and then leaves." She was always frightened by this dream and hid under the covers. She said this dream was scary due to the threatening intentions of the figure holding the dagger. It was ghost-like, as if from the underworld and represented the dark energy she felt surrounding her as a child that was still present. Moreover, the unconscious was frightening as demonstrated by the initial difficulty in remembering dreams and the anxiety bleeding through this one. She feared something awful was there, something unbearable about her hiding in the shadows that she could not bear to discover.

A wall grows up between the internal natural child and the wounded child that results in severance from instinctive sources and retards psychological maturation. A

significant dream Victoria brought to analysis was the following. “ I need to practice for something very important. My husband keeps coming into my room and interrupting me. I want him to leave. There is another person there, a man who is famous. Maybe a conductor? He set up a place for me where I can practice without distraction. Later someone else there tries to tell me that my playing is special—from my heart and set apart, even though my technique is sometimes lacking”.

She correlated her daily life with the dream scene because her husband interrupted each time she began to practice, In the dream the husband is also the part of herself that interrupts and takes the focus away. She commented about the dream that her heart, which to her symbolized the feminine side of her personality, came out in her violin playing. Victoria explained that the violin was a masculine instrument and bigger than the viola, a typically more feminine instrument and the one her husband played. Victoria said he was better than she at musical technique, which she aligned with the masculine. So, she played a traditionally masculine instrument from her heart. He played a traditionally feminine instrument from technique, or the head. This mixture could be exciting, but because both were unconscious of the opportunity and instead felt threatened, it was creating problems between them. In the dream the conductor recognized Victoria’s talent. She so longed to access the encouragement he offered that for several weeks she returned to the dream in analysis.

Some time later she dreamt, “ I am looking at houses. There is a big house that is mine. My husband takes me into a room with a high ceiling, a piano, and a beautiful rose-colored tapestry. I notice there is one small seam in the tapestry that is undone”. As Victoria talked about the dream she anxiously focused on the small tear, saying it

represented the perfection she could not attain.

Victoria assumed the dream husband was accusing her of imperfections by showing her the tapestry. The tapestry is also analogous to the process of analysis that takes time to bring life strands together, including those in need of repair. The house in the dream, appearing like a castle with the grandeur of high ceilings, piano and tapestry symbolized Victoria's self, but much was vacant and unused.

Along a similar theme and a bit later Victoria dreamt, " I have a silk bag. I want to show my mother who will appreciate its value. But because my father is present, my mother will not approve". The dream portrayed Victoria's father interfering in the relationship with her mother which was a different perspective than Victoria had presented. It also repeated the relationship she developed with her husband in actuality and within herself. Victoria presented the protection by her father and his all-encompassing goodness as different from her mother as the bad one who did not understand and to whom she could not get close. She sarcastically joked that hers was a typical Oedipal family—she emotionally aligned with her father and her brother with her mother. The joking was no doubt a defense to hide the anxiety about the unconscious material in this situation.

{During the course of analysis Renee had few dreams about her father. He was both so present in her conscious mind as well as so repressed that there was little that could emerge from the dream commentary. Here was one dream Renee remembered. "I am finishing a wonderful visit with my father. He lives in a beautiful home with every kind of animal. Including tamed falcons. I am preparing to leave, frantically putting all my presents in a paper bag to save them from disappearing. I've had a dream that foretells that at the end of my visit his wife will show up and stop all the joy. My father is jovial and happy—like

Old King Cole. He's dressed up for a party in robes and asks me to help him find his crown. The party is in his honor, an annual event at a neighbor's house where they crown him. It's a joke. He's very happy. His wife has not fulfilled my prophetic dream, but I expect it to begin any minute". In the dream Renee was to find the crown for him, referring to her position as the one who keeps him king. This father masquerading as a king induces strong loyalties in his daughter. According to the dream, Renee envisioned leaving him, but she wanted his gifts. She did not realize there was a huge cost to this. None of his gifts were ever without strings, but she was ignoring this fact. She would have to sacrifice something to get free. The dream contained another dream within it, accentuating that the knowledge is enfolded in layers of unconscious material. The dream impressed upon Renee the reality that her father had a wife and Renee must leave and break the psychologically and physically incestuous connection.}

In being true to her father emotionally, physically, and creatively, a daughter can be assailed by masochistic self-attacks. Over-identification with the male world can cause her to ignore the voice of her soul. Either the competent use or lack of attention to her intellect can be a defense behind which she hides and that society has supported. Uncovering the denials that guard against her truths, the fantasies that protect, and the bonds that keep her in inhibiting roles are some of Victoria's tasks in analysis. {After much time she could finally say, " I feel the presence of my father's shadow and the recognition is a small, cold comfort, but comfort, nonetheless, because I can name it now. When years ago he was unrecognized, that was the greater horror. To name it is to have some relief. In my mind I see him as a shriveled and unrealized cocoon, surrounded by darkness".}

Victoria, self-described as mannequin-like, with a persona put together for the approval of others as well to hide from them, explained that relationships with men complicate her life. She longs for her father to magically solve everything and decide for her. Her father was the over arching father--always there, supportive, interceding with her mother, giving so much that Victoria did not have to find her own way. Although attractive and talented, Victoria's internalized father mirrored self-doubts, keeping her from developing any serious attitudes about herself. Life through the eyes of a too-positive father complex keeps Victoria an innocent maiden, wrapped in fantasy.

During therapy, I watched Victoria rubbing her eyes, pushing the hair off her face, struggling to clear the fog in her psyche. Rain and overcast skies are intolerable to her because they reflect her depression. "I remember dancing and performing for my father because he loved it and encouraged me", she said. "We had a special relationship. I felt unsafe with my mother when my father was gone. I wondered what would happen if he ever died--who would protect me? Yet, I also knew that he would, in the end, side with my mother against me." The emotional union of this daughter and father substituted for a missed connection with her mother. Symbolically, his death would provide the psychological separation for awakening to her life, getting closer to her mother and establishing a broader range of femininity.

A daughter with an unconscious attachment to her father easily falls into the arms of a ghostly lover--a romanticized version of a relationship because it is shrouded in mystery and unreality. She is sleeping in some way, floating, and oblivious. Everything remains distantly charming, on hold, a statue acquiring dust. Unable to awaken, her life stagnates and she does

not form relationships of substance or consistency. She cannot commit to herself or others, be it in work or love. Like Victoria, a daughter is in continual ambivalence about commitment.

A father, wounded in his masculinity, lacks relatedness and cannot support his daughter, nor impart useful knowledge about life. He cannot meet her challenges to him and his immature attitudes falsely accentuate male dominance. This kind of father is psychologically connected to his mother as an eternal son and their dynamic impedes assumption of the adult role for himself or his daughter. It repeats an unconscious generational pattern and becomes a reenactment of the merged relationship with his mother. A father who is playing the son places his daughter in the mother role. He relies on her to care for him, although she is the child. The mother/son structure forms the basis of their connection and circumvents a healthy daughter/father relationship. Depriving his daughter of correct care, he leaves her prematurely fending for herself, so that she might not learn how to cope with the vicissitudes of life nor acquire the basics of developing as a person. His passivity and inability to see her create unmet needs and damage creativity so that the concentration and valuation of her endeavors seems meaningless. Her self-effacement comes in part from effects of how he harms her with his unconsciousness.

This kind of father and daughter become emotionally attached through her serving his needs so she can get love. He loves her when a child but as she gets older he detaches and she feels his absence, neglect or abuse. The father, by denying his daughter's essence, restricts her to a half-dead life while she remains emotionally and psychologically bound to him. She develops a hostile inner world, full of rage or numbness, obstructing inspiration and arresting self-integration. Acquiring self-depleting patterns and behaviors, she grows more and more lost. By being father dominated the daughter does not access the feminine and

cannot find her ground of being. The lack of the father as an anchor from within is reflected in part through the cultural lack of balance as women struggle to honor their mind, body and soul.

Victoria exhibited the behaviors of women who become the shallow breathers of life, unable to grasp her own essence, have a committed relationship or take life and work seriously. They are impatient, nervous and lack confidence. It is hard to find an authentic self and an 'as if' personality develops indicating the self has not yet congealed. This woman is not easy to reach emotionally as she is so heavily defended and resistant to intimacy, fearing her emptiness and despair would be seen. Yet, the bigger fear is that there is nothing inside of her.

When a daughter's identity stays caught in her father, she assumes depersonalized attitudes toward herself and others. The more unconsciously a father acts, the more a daughter acquires a similar behavior towards herself and she feels unreal and at odds with the world. She busies herself with looking functional while living below her potential. Passion is curtailed, individual thought unformed and life devalued. She just gets by. With little sense of personal constancy or cohesiveness, she fears autonomy but may adopt an attitude of isolation to preserve the shreds of her identity and hide vulnerability. This obstructs intimacy and relationships are unable to come to fruition. In the analytic situation she might recognize that no one knows her but also that she does not really want or expect anything different.

Feminine Body in Shadow

Generations of women struggle to feel secure and accepting of their body. A woman makes a severe sacrifice when she agrees to the cultural dictum that she is never young enough, thin enough or smart enough. She is caught in paternal attitudes and fantasies that

promote a worship of the unattainable, unrealistic and unnatural ideals that contribute to the lack of mature female models in our society.

Her inner system is blocked in a misconnection between mind, body and soul coming in part from the misconnections with her father. In flight from her body, she seeks the ethereal and lives in her head. The dissociation between body and psyche block the ability to love. At core she resists life, fades before the fruit ripens, becoming only possibility and promise, unable to carry her own meaning through to the end. By preferring the fantasy of perpetual youth this woman avoids exploring her abilities in depth. Lacking an inner holding place, she has trouble giving birth to herself because she identifies as a girl. Out of touch with her femininity, even though she may look the part, she does not find satisfaction in being a woman.

Victoria had a dream she related to the time of puberty when she sensed her father's growing discomfort with her awakening sexuality. Because she could not bear to grow away from him or disappoint him she began to deny her sexuality. Here is her dream that addresses the ramifications of such a decision. "A woman is going to commit suicide in a trash bin because she needs to be right for once. The importance of being right equals her very life." The dream figure, the trash and the trash bin can all symbolize that she has put herself into the shadow—the neglected potential, the unrealized aspect of her feminine being and the passions of her life. She becomes the rigid father who needs to be right—and her body then denied.

Until recounting this dream in analysis Victoria did not take seriously the extent of her self-denial, including the lack of relationship to her body. Missing a nourishing connection to her body makes a woman out of balance and Victoria felt a disturbing shock

each time she realized her body was indeed hers. She resisted the body instincts so it is not surprising that Victoria described herself as a mannequin. She appeared to have an excellent figure but said she hid it because her breasts sagged, her hips had cellulite and she was ashamed of her sexual feelings so tried not to arouse them. Preoccupations with aging and weight kept her negatively self-absorbed. She avoided being naked and physical display, like emotional exposure, was threatening to the fragile composure of her being to the point that she found herself thinking about how much she weighed while having sex.

A sense of fraudulence as an adult, a basic confusion and the need to control create tension and dissatisfaction, all bolstered by persona, and in this instance, false adaptation. A woman inordinately identified with the persona suggests that a significant part of her personality exists beneath the façade she presents to the world. Unable to value her depth as she feels flawed and life overwhelm her. She is vulnerable, a terrified child fenced off from others. This woman exudes a crystalline or brittle quality, an aura of aloofness and a stiff veneer behind which she exists in a lofty and untouchable domain. From there the world is observed from a distance and no one is let in. She remains lonely; the princess in the castle and no one able to get close to her.

This aloneness both results in and derives from a lack of engagement, restlessness and inability to inhabit the present. She feels like a void and empty at the core. The daughter is an aspect of the psyche which needs love and attention yet she engages in deception to herself and others by putting on a performance and acting ‘as if’. [Solomon, 2004, p. 639] Her personal history is erased in anxious self-concern, absorbed in watching the scale, her hair, the wrinkles, and what she considers any imperfections. The body is then associated with painful negative assessments and repression and becomes a focus of anxiety, often ending

with the defeating thoughts that there is no point anyway. So many women cannot eat what they want, wear what they want, and express what they want—because nothing will be perfect enough. A lack of basic trust and security leaves her chasing an ideal through cosmetics, body re-shaping, compulsive and negative self-thoughts and behaviors killing off desires and feelings and causing dissociation from self and others. Even in therapy, women hardly talk about what they really eat or how they are related to their body except when expressing dissatisfaction.

Sylvia Plath comments about her body in her Journal saying, "that old corruption I always feared would break out from behind the bubbles of my eyes" (J 91]. This comment closely echoes her poem, "Tongues of Stone," written a year earlier, which describes "poisons ... gathering in her body, ready to break out behind the bright, false bubbles of her eyes at any moment crying: Idiot! Imposter!" [JP 264]). Descriptive of her psycho-anatomy she writes that her mouth opens on "a large darkness," "the blind cave behind the face" where "the dybbuk" hides (BJ 82).

These daughters remain stuck on a treadmill of predictable responses, repetitive and self-deprecating behaviors and thoughts. Physical existence is a trial and body feelings are denied, ignored or escaped in order to circumvent feeling. A split off and unrealistic self-reflection, leaves no relationship with her body that gives joy or pleasure. Denying her body leaves a woman without desire and the dispossession of her body means a bulk of her libido is devitalized and scattered.

Sylvia Plath and Her Father

A non-nourishing self-absorption arises as a defense against intimacy, be it self to self or self to others. This leaves her unable to satisfy or understand the loss connected to feeling

unlovable. She experiences shame, smallness, vulnerability and fear. Again, all these reactions are registered 'as if' she is the observer of her life. The tragedy against her may be so subtle that the distressing ramifications are underestimated, mostly by herself.

Preserved in a state of suspended animation, a woman becomes numb to the moments of her life. Does she even realize what is happening? How can she find her ground of being when this is the very thing she assiduously avoids? She renounces identity and eaten from within, cuts off her feminine spirit from its innermost roots. She engages in an unending war between parts of the self--a war of internal voices that are sadistic, unrelenting, often paternally based, but which she obeys.

Victoria and Sylvia Plath are like many women who remark about the inner forces that interfere--the limitations based on sexual stereotypes, social and family pressures, etc., attempting to crush their bid for selfhood. Yet, this type of woman relies on holding herself together by following the paternal rules, the way to be according to father and societal conventions. These are the very things that undermine her spirit. The problem is that when the potentiality of the psyche is not used it becomes perverted. [Leonard, 1983, p. 89] Wrapped in self-denial she cannot access either aggression or desire--two components necessary for self-knowledge, use of talents and development of intimacy. Needing and seeking approval from others drives her into competition. But the competitive drive is also subject to being curbed by the fear that she must not threaten or surpass others because she cannot tolerate being hated or excluded by them.

In analysis these daughters face tasks that are difficult for them. From the distorted relationship to the father the transference could remain still-born, reflecting an inability and resistance to get in touch with reality and rather hold onto fantasy. "The daughters of such

fathers often arrive in analysis with a façade of self-sufficiency. They despair of earning their father's attention except temporarily and unconsciously, often as a sexual object, and they are caught in having to defend themselves while trying to prove themselves equal and worthy of their father's praise. They split off their sensuousness, capture men and/or accomplishments, but feel no tenderness and little self-regard. They are focused forever on seeking the father's blessing and personal attention". [Perera, 1981, p.66]

This reaction becomes a defense against getting close to the bone of her being because there is both a fear and need for regression that can intercede in the analysis. If she succumbs, the dependency that was formerly checked emerges. As this occurs, what was felt as the bad parts are resurrected and the emptiness along with the self-hatred becomes overt and apparent in the analysis. [green, on private madness, p. 55] She can begin to feel the experience that both she and the analyst are in the material together in a search for the silenced self. If she remains mute, she will be mutilated by avoiding self-knowledge, acting ineffectual and suppressed, cornered into immobility. The feminine ego is then wrenched from the true self and like a puppet deprived of independent action, the woman is erased.

In her journal Sylvia Plath wrote about the splintering and disintegration of self and silencing of voice: "Something deep, plunging is held back. Voice frozen" [Hughes, 1982, p. 185] "What inner decision, what inner murder or prison break must I commit if I want to speak from my true deep voice in writing...and not feel this jam-up of feeling behind a glass-damn fancy-façade of numb dumb wordage." [ibid., p. 297] Sylvia Plath's creative and relentless quest for deepening into self was both paralyzing and enabling.

Operating from the tradition of feminine passivity, many women stay dependent, immature and unaware, not knowing what they want or do not want and therefore unable to

express themselves. The continuing perception of these women as inferior while they are striving for perfection reflects the brutalizing and fragmented parts of the culture that they internalize and that crush the feminine.

Women deprived of full enough contact with father enact a dis-ease prevalent in our era—in that she does not breathe deeply, fears being emotionally touched and does not know how to be present to the basics of life, which is a collective discomfort. Jung [1956, p. 298] says, “The fear of life is a real panic...It is the deadly fear of the instinctive, the unconscious, the inner [woman] who is cut off from life by [her] continual shrinking back from reality”.

To grow out of the old daughter/father patterns means moving beyond merely remaining a copy of the collective female model built on maleness or male images. She can no longer substitute outer adulation or putting on of masks, but work to access the spark within, according to her own particular, real rather than ideal, standards. This involves engaging with the wounds, reclaiming the damaged parts, and essentially integrating the shadow aspects. By breaking down the ideal and using her individual nature she then can engage with life

The process requires a daughter, "To be present to the pain, to take down her defensive shields, to receive the hurt inwardly leads to a deeply reconciling experience. Gathering the pain which fell into the unconscious and bringing it to consciousness and suffering it is the only way to end it."¹¹ This is difficult for a woman caught in the father complex; yet, it is a part of the process redeeming a different father image. How much focus has gone to the father in the analytic process? And, how much more will result, as fathers are more active and less passive in the lives of their daughters. A daughter finds her authenticity

and opens to her reality when she no longer accedes to or rebels against the father, but honors her natural instincts in relation to him.

Summary

The girl becomes a woman through acceptance, acquiring patience and healthy self-regard without sacrificing attention or love to others. In the process, a daughter discovers the meaning in her personal drama that is concurrently a movement towards changing social determinants and collective attitudes. The appreciation of both daughter and father as separate yet linked comes from resolving the dilemmas while holding the tension of their opposition. This can foster genuine relatedness based on the conscious awareness and acknowledgment of their complexities. Jung said [1964, p. 130] "Woman today...gives expression to...the urge to live a complete life, a longing for meaning and fulfillment, a growing disgust with senseless one-sidedness, with unconscious instinctuality and blind contingency".

By unwrapping the various daughter/father complexes, bitterness and resentment no longer poison the wells of feminine individuality. Fathers likewise have the opportunity to become attuned to the emotional, psychological, physical life of their daughters by taking an active part in relating to them from the beginning. The daughter/father relationship that ceases to be one phallic energy is the solely interpreted as the power base. Instead, the father can express his roles as a nurturer, mentor and guide involved in daily attending to his daughter's emotional and psychological life.

On the other hand, Sylvia Plath's poems and life show how the daughter/father relationship can contribute to a woman's body hatred. "Father," she said in a small pleading voice. "Father." But he did not hear, withdrawn as he was into the core of himself, insulated

against the sound of her supplicant voice. Lost and betrayed, she slowly turned away and left the room". [Plath, 1979, p. 312] With the father's withdrawal into a deep inner space, this scene from her book of short stories, *Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams* [1979], suggests a possible psychological sequence of various internalizations and re-projections resulting from his distance and silence.

Her life was tragedy mixed with accomplishment. The destructive father power became a devouring aggression against her, while her words live on. They reflect a disturbing netherworld shaped by her father's influential absence and remind readers of their own daughter/father issues. Psychological oppression, desire for release, and vengeful reactions are central to her poetry. Her words put a visage on the anguish she exposes through her work.

Although she expressed desire for reconstruction, we are left with the fact that she did not hold the weight of the internal contradictions in life beyond the age of thirty. Paradoxically, her body became the place of carnal vengeance--and ultimately denied by her suicide. There was no way to recover and in the mirror of an absent and dead father, "She remains broken where she should be whole." [Kroll, 1976, p. 110] The discharge from her captor does not happen as Sylvia Plath was consumed in part by negative paternal spirits. The incorporation of these forces destroyed her but the presence of her struggle remains inviolable through the lasting effects of her words. In her poem *Purdah* she writes:

"I am his.
Even in his Absence, I
Revolve in my
Sheath of impossibles,"

The question remains for us how much farther the parallax has to shift...

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