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FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA**

**LIVES OF SYLVIA PLATH IN SLOVAK TRANSLATIONS**

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### **Declaration**

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and effort. Where other sources of information have been used, they have been acknowledged.

Banská Bystrica, 23 May 2018

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*Signature*

### **Acknowledgement**

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## **ABSTRACT**

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The bachelor thesis is focused on the selected themes and motifs in poems by Sylvia Plath, which were identified and compared with the themes and the motifs in Slovak translations of them. The aim of the bachelor thesis is based on the theoretical resources of author's biography, poetics, journals and literary work.

**Keywords:** Sylvia Plath, poem, theme, motif

## **ABSTRAKT**

SKOKANOVÁ, Radovana: Životy Sylvie Plathovej v slovenských prekladoch. [Bakalárska práca] / Radovana Skokanová - Univerzita Mateja Bela v Banskej Bystrici. Filozofická fakulta; Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky - Vedúci: : PhDr. Ľubica Pliešovská, PhD.

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Bakalárska práca sa orientuje na jednotlivé témy a motívy v básňach Sylvie Plathovej, ktoré boli identifikované a porovnané s témami a motívmi v slovenských prekladoch. Cieľ bakalárskej práce je založený na teoretických zdrojoch autorkinej biografie, poetiky, denníkoch a literárnej tvorbe.

**Kľúčové slová:** Sylvia Plathová, báseň, téma, motív

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## INTRODUCTION

The aim of the bachelor thesis is to identify and appraise the theme and motifs in Sylvia Plath's poems as well as in Slovak translations of them. The poetry of the significant American poetess was translated by Mila Haugová. The collection of poems translated by Haugová was published in 1989 (*Luna a tis*) and the second edition was published in 2003 (*Hrana*).

The literary work and status of Sylvia Plath stigmatized her suicide, when Sylvia decided to commit suicide in 1963. Diversity of her own ambitions paradoxically limited her: 'I can never read all the books I want; I can never be all the people I want and live all the lives I want. I can never train myself in all the skills I want.' (Plath, 2000, pg. 43)

The bachelor thesis proceeds from publications, which are dedicated to author's poetry and biography. Author's journals help us to understand the author's way of thinking and also to identify the connections between her confessional poetry and her personal life.

The bachelor thesis is divided into three parts. In the first chapter, which is also the shortest chapter, the task is to present the personage of Sylvia Plath. It includes her biography from her birth to her death. The second chapter describes Plath's poetics and also identifies the themes and the motifs in her poems. In the last chapter we focus on identifying and comparing the themes and motifs in original poems with the Slovak translations. Specifically, we concentrate to the collection of poems named *Hrana* from 2003.

In the bachelor thesis, we emphasize to term and appraise the themes and motifs in poems as well as in their translations. At first, we perused the author's biography, we tried to understand her way of thinking and recognized her experiences throughout life, which also had a huge impact on her literary work. Then, we searched and analysed poetry of Sylvia Plath. The circumstances, which lead to specifics of author's writings. Also, we identified the themes and the motifs of Sylvia's poetry and defined them. At the end, the most significant themes and motifs, we identified and compared with Slovak translations.

We reveal the various 'lives' of Sylvia Plath in Slovak translations through her themes and motifs, which are been transferred from the original poems from the collection of poems *Collected Poems*.

## 1. BIOGRAPHY OF SYLVIA PLATH

Sylvia Plath was one of the most admired poetesses of the 20th century. Unfortunately, she committed suicide at the age of 30 and people were starving for her poetry more than ever. Sylvia Plath was born on October 27, 1932 in Boston. Her mother, Aurelia Schober Plath, was European American of Austrian descent. Her father, Otto Emile Plath, came from Polish town called Grabowo. She had younger brother, Warren Joseph Plath, who was born on April 27, 1935. (Čermák, Kodrlová, 2009)

At the age of 15, Otto Emile Plath emigrated to the North Dakota in the United States of America. In 1910, he graduated from Northwestern College, then he attended the University of Washington in Seattle. He graduated from Harvard, where he focused on entomology. After that, he was professor at Boston University. There, he met his future wife – Aurelia Schober, who was his student at that time. They got married in 1932. Aurelia Schober Plath obtained Master's degree of the English and German language from Boston University, where she was teaching after her husband's death. (Čermák, Kodrlová, 2009)

Sylvia was trying to appeal to her father, she even memorized scientific names of different types of insects. Sylvia was feeling a fear and anxiety of loss of his love and holding hostility to him at the same time. She felt that it is not important who you are, but what you can achieve. Vaillant describes Sylvia's father as lonely, aloof and schizoid person, who cared more about bees than about the humans, that's why, Sylvia could hardly get closer to him. (Vaillant, 1993) Ted Hughes wrote about his wife's childhood that she grew up in a family, where was the atmosphere of the competitiveness and the German strictness. (Haugová, 2003)

In 1935, Otto Plath became seriously ill. Otto was convinced that he had cancer like his friend, who died. And thus, he refused to visit a doctor. In 1936, whole family moved out to the Winthrop, where Sylvia spent her childhood. In 1940, Otto's leg got infected and the doctors claimed that he had diabetes not cancer. They decided to amputate his big toe, but it was not enough, and thus on October 1940, Otto Plath got amputated his left leg. The gangrene was arteriosclerotic and Otto lost strength. Sylvia celebrated her eighth birthday and just nine days after, on 5 November 1940, Otto Plath died because of embolism and the complications caused by untreated diabetes. His daughter, Sylvia, declared that she will never ever speak to the God



again, she withdrew into herself and she began to write the poems in her diary. (Čermák, Kodrlová, 2009)

Sylvia suffered from sinusitis. She was intelligent, she had IQ about 160 and whole life she tried to achieve public recognition. At age of 8, she published her first poem in the newspaper named Boston Herald. After Otto Plath's death in 1942, the rest of family moved to the Wellesley. Sylvia studied at Wellesley High School and on August 1950, for the first time, she published a short story And Summer Will Not Come Again in magazine Seventeen. At the same year, she obtained scholarship from Smith College in Northampton. She was still writing poems (during her study at Smith College, she wrote over 400 poems) and short stories, which some of them got awarded in writing contests. (Čermák, Kodrlová, 2009)

At that time, she had a relationship with Dick Norton (Buddy Willard from the novel *The Bell Jar*), they were dating for two years. Dick Norton came from upper-class background and he studied medicine, he fulfilled the requirements of 'good company'. However, Dick made personal and literary innuendoes to Sylvia. From the start of their relationship, Sylvia was using Dick just to increase her social status. In next years, after her first attempt of suicide, she continued her relationships with multiple men at the same time. (Butscher, 1976)

On June 1953, Sylvia won in writing contests with her story Sunday At The Mintons. She obtained internship at New York's magazine *Mademoiselle* as a visiting editor. In New York, Sylvia realized that her college achievements are insignificant. She lost meaning of her life. She didn't care about her appearance and hygiene because she sank into severe depression. (Butscher, 1976)

On August 1953, Sylvia Plath visited grave of her father, shortly afterwards she attempted suicide for the first time – she took an overdose on sleeping pills and hid at cellar. After three days, her brother found her, Sylvia was transported to Framingham Hospital at Wellesley and then to psychiatric ward of Massachusetts General Hospital at Boston, where she was treated by insulin coma therapy. (Hayman, 1991) Thereafter, Sylvia was transported to McLean Hospital at Belmont, where she was treated by electroconvulsive therapy (ECT). On September 1953, she met with Dr. Ruth Tiffany Barnhouse Beuscher (Dr. Nolan from novel *The Bell Jar*), who was her long-time therapist and she kept in touch with Dr. Ruth Beuscher until her own death in 1963. However, Sylvia was one of the first patients of Ruth Beuscher. (Maroda, 2004)

On Februar 1, 1954, Sylvia was released from McLean Hospital with Ruth Beuscher's recommendation and she resumed her studies at Smith College. However, she travelled monthly to Boston for consultations with Ruth. It is obvious that the therapy was ineffective. Moreover, the lacking health care of suicidal individual is considered as one of the risk factors of suicide, even this factor played a fatal part in Sylvia's life. (Čermák, Kodrlová, 2009)

After return from medical institution, Sylvia changed from self-conscious girl, who read books and cleft on her own belongings into talkative extrovert. In this period in her life, the main interest of Sylvia were men, she introduced them to her friends as trophies. She had several suitors – McCurdy, Davison, Sassoon, Woeber. She was able to keep each one of them in delusion that she is devoted exclusively to him. (Butscher, 1976)

During the 1954 – 1955 school year, Sylvia was awarded the Fulbright scholarship to study at Newnham College of the University of Cambridge, she immersed into dutiful studying again. On June 1955, she graduated from Smith College with highest honours, even she won the first place in the Glascock Poetry Contest with her poem Two Lovers and a Beachcomber by the Real Sea. In 1956, Sylvia attended Cambridge, where she continued to write and publish the poetry in journal of university called Varosity. In 1957, she obtained master's degree. Without Ruth Beuscher's therapy, emotional and physical problems reappeared to her, that is why on January 1956, Sylvia decided to visit university psychiatrist just to make sure that there is an expert in case of need. (Stevenson, 1989) A month later, she met English poet named Ted Hughes and since then she has never contacted university psychiatrist again. His poetry enchanted Sylvia, on February 26 she recorded in her journal: 'He said my name, Sylvia, in a blasting wind which shot off in the desert behind my eyes, behind his eyes, and his poems are clever and terrible and lovely.' (Plath, 2000, pg. 213) On June 16, 1956, Sylvia got married with Ted Hughes. The newly-wed couple spent summer by travelling across the Europe. In august, the couple travelled to Yorkshire, where Sylvia met her in-laws for the first time. They had no idea that his son got married. (Čermák, Kodrlová, 2009)

On April 1957, Sylvia was offered a teaching position at Smith College, therefore, on June 1957, Sylvia and Ted moved in the USA, where they lived until the year 1959. They spent summer on Cape Cod and they published their poems in literary journals. On September 1957, Sylvia started her teaching position at Smith

College – she taught English literature and creative writing. But soon she found the work to be exhausting, between reading and correcting her students' works, Sylvia hadn't enough time for her own writing. Meanwhile, her husband achieved one success after another in writing and also in publishing. After a year, the couple decided to terminate their positions at universities and moved to Boston, where they engaged to writing. At this time, Sylvia attended literary seminars with significant American poet Robert Lowell. These seminars were really inspiring for Sylvia's own literary works. There she also became friend with poetess Anne Sexton. (Čermák, Kordlová, 2009)

The married couple earned money from poems published in journals or from occasional jobs (Sylvia even worked as a secretary in a psychiatric clinic at Boston; there she gathered material, which she used in her collection of short stories called *Johnny Panic and The Bible of Dreams*; it was published posthumously in 1977). (Čermák, Kordlová, 2009)

A year later, in 1958, Sylvia attended more intensive therapies with Ruth Beuscher again. However, the problem was that therapeutic relation changed into friendship. Ruth even accepted an invitation for visit from Sylvia, during this visit Ruth met with Sylvia's husband – this behaviour during therapy is not considered as standard procedure. (Maroda, 2004)

At the beginning of the year 1959, Sylvia's literary work was repeatedly refused and she also had problem to become pregnant, in a consequence of these, she suffered from anxiety and depression. Three months of holidays, Sylvia and Ted spent by travelling across the USA. In this time, Sylvia didn't write any poem, but she successfully became pregnant, because of that she was satisfied. Between September 9 and November 19, 1959, Sylvia started to write poems again. On December, the couple returned to England to settle down there. On February 1, 1960, Sylvia and Ted settled in a rented apartment near by Regent's Park in London. On April 1, their first child was born – a daughter named Frieda. In the same year, British publisher Heinemann, Ltd. Published Sylvia's first collection of poems – *The Colossus and Other Poems*. 'Miss Sylvia Plath is, however, a young American poetess whose work is most immediately noticeable for the virtuoso qualities of its style. In *The Colossus*, which is her first collection of poems, she writes with a degree of assurance that

would be rare in her contemporaries of either sex on this side of the Atlantic.<sup>1</sup> reviewed Bernard Bergonzi for the Guardian on November 25, 1960. '(...) Bergonzi is full of praise for the American's first collection, admiring Plath's 'highly personal tone and way of looking at the world', concluding that he 'read this collection with considerable pleasure' (...).'<sup>2</sup>

With publishing her first collection and tending of her child, Sylvia hadn't enough time for her own writing again. Sylvia always solicitously noted the dates of written poems, as a result of this, we know that she wrote just 12 poems in 1960. Most of them were published posthumously in 1981 as a part of collection of poems called *Collected Poems*, which was edited by Ted Hughes. On February 1961, Sylvia had spontaneous miscarriage. At this time, several of her poems was inspired by this terrible experience. Shortly after that, she had to undergo an appendectomy, which it means another exhaustion and stress in her life. The same year, she obtained a grant for writing her novel. In this year, Sylvia wrote 22 poems, which some of them became a part of the collection of poems called *Ariel* (e.g. *Morning Song*, *Tulips*). In the summer 1961, the couple with children moved to the country, where they bought old country house in small village at Devon. Their apartment in London sold to the Canadian poet David Wevill and his young beautiful wife Assia. A year later, on January 17, 1962, their second child was born – a son named Nicholas Farrar. On May, she published her collection of poems *The Colossus* for the first time in the USA. In the summer 1962, Sylvia discovered that her husband was unfaithful to her with another woman. His lover was Assia Wevill, woman of poet, who is rented an apartment after Sylvia and Ted in London. After six-years marriage, they were separated, not divorced. On October 1962, Sylvia with their children moved to London to an apartment, where once also lived laureate of a Nobel Prize, Irish poet William Butler Yeats. (Čermák, Kodrlová, 2009)

On October 1962, Sylvia was creating new poems an incredibly apace, in a month, she wrote exactly 25 poems. It was included for example: *Stings*, *Wintering*, *Lesbos*, *Lady Lazarus*, *Daddy*, *Ariel*, *The Applicant*, *Cut*, *Nick and the Candlestick*

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<sup>1</sup> Sylvia Plath – reviews from the archive, The Guardian [online] [cit. 2018-05-04] Available on the internet: <<https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/from-the-archive-blog/2012/oct/27/sylvia-plath-reviews-archive>>

<sup>2</sup> Sylvia Plath - reviews from the archive, The Guardian [online] [cit. 2018-05-04] Available on the internet: <<https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/from-the-archive-blog/2012/oct/27/sylvia-plath-reviews-archive>>

and many others. On November 1962, she wrote for example: *The Couriers, Getting There, Gulliver* and *Death & Co.*

That year, in the United Kingdom was the coldest winter in last 150 years. Sylvia was alone with her children in her new apartment, she suffered from relapsing influenza. She was without a telephone, without her friends. She was often without heating and running water.

On January 1963, Sylvia published her only and semi-autobiographical novel named *The Bell Jar*, where she described hospitalization and first attempt of suicide. The novel was finished on August 21, 1962, at first it was published under the pseudonym *Victoria Lucas*.

On January and February, she continued to write poems, during 15 days, she finished even 12 poems. Some of them are: *Sheep in Fog, Kindness, Balloons, Totem, The Munich Mannequins, Paralytic, Words, Contusion* and *Edge*. *Edge* was her last written poem (written on January 5, 1963), where she described a dead woman.

On February 11, 1963, Sylvia prepared breakfast for her children. She locked them in their room and perfectly sealed their door. And then she gassed herself.

Sylvia wrote to her mother in letter that she submitted a divorce petition, nevertheless Ted Hughes contended in interview for *The Guardian* that Sylvia wasn't considering a divorce, but the otherwise they were planning their future together. Ted Hughes became administrator of Sylvia's literary estates. Sylvia is buried in Heptonstall in west Yorkshire. During her life, she published only one collection of poems and one novel, but another collection of her poems, letter for her mother and brother, journals and short stories were published posthumously. In 1982, thanks to her collection of poems *The Colossus*, she was the first person, who was awarded posthumously Pulitzer Prize for poetry. (Čermák, Kodrlová, 2009)

## 2. POETICS OF SYLVIA PLATH

On May 20, 1959, Sylvia noted in her diary: ‘...my lack of technical finish (!) was what deterred him, my roughness, indecision, my drift in all but four or five poems. When my main flaw is a machinelike syllabic death-blow. (...) How few, if any will see what I am working at, overcoming? How ironic, that all my work to overcome my easy poeticisms merely convinces them that I am rough, antipoetic, unpoetic. (Plath, 2000, pg. 492)

Poetry of Sylvia Plath is associated with the Confessional Poetry, just as poet Robert Lowell and her friend, poetess, Anne Sexton. This poetry has been described as poetry of the personal. It is focusing on extreme moments of individuals, the psyche and personal trauma. It has been including also taboo themes such as mental illness, sexuality, and suicide. (Čermák, Kodrlová, 2009)

In poetry of Sylvia Plath, we can find repeating motifs, such as: problematic relationship with her mother, missing the element of her father, husband’s infidelities, mental disorder, attempts of suicide. Sylvia’s early poems are influenced (even imitated) by poets as Hopkins, Yeats, Auden, Wilbur, Stevens, Thomas, then later also by Lowell, Roethke and Hughes. (Perloff, 1981) Even, Ted Hughes proclaimed that the collection of poems *Ariel*, he considered as literary work, where for the first time, Sylvia spoke with her own poetical voice in poems. (Hughes, 1998)

### 2.1 The death of loved ones and its impact on Sylvia’s poetry

In late work of Sylvia, the theme of death is appearing as reaction of frustration, rejection, lack of love and narcissistic trauma: ‘Must you kill what you can? There is this one thing I want today, and only you can give it to me.’ (Plath, 1981, pg. 207) It relates to breakup with Ted Hughes. Sylvia Plath even made parallel between breakup (rejection) and murder: ‘That is the valley of death, though the cows thrive. (...) And this is a man, look at his smile, The death weapon?’ (Plath, 1981, pg. 208) The poems of Sylvia are seemed to be illustrations of rejection and aggression – murderous impulses pointed initially against to object, they are turned against to inside of herself: ‘I wish him dead or away.’ (Plath, 1981, pg. 227) Sylvia was coping with death of her father and relationship with him in her poems. This period can be seemed as stage of development of suicidal process in author’s life, where relationship with father played an important role. At the beginning, in years 1950-1958, Sylvia’s father is idealized

and Sylvia was avoiding the theme of father in her literary work. In her poems and diaries, she mentioned about her father, but it had unemotional character, even it is associated with his death. (Čermák, Kodrlová, 2009) In 1950, she remembered him in her diary: 'There is your dead father who is somewhere in you, interwoven in the cellular system of your long body which sprouted from one of his sperm cells uniting with an egg cell in your mother's uterus. 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.' (Plath, 2000, pg. 64) On February 1956, Plath in her diaries connected loss of her lover Richard Sassoon, who abandoned her, with loss of her father: '(...) it hurts, father, it hurts, oh father I have never known; a father, even, they took from me.' (Plath, 1997, pg. 145) Two days later, she returned to theme of father in her diary again: 'My villanelle was to my father; and the best one. I lust for the knowing of him; I looked at Redpath at that wonderful coffee session at the Anchor, and practically ripped him up to beg him to be my father; to live with the rich, chastened, wise mind of an older man. (...) Perhaps a young man with a brilliant father. I could wed both.' (Plath, 1997, pg.151) Plath wrote about her father in connection of her future husband as somebody, who can ensure her internal stability: 'Why these dreams? These last exorcisings of the horrors and fears beginning when my father died and the bottom fell out. I am just now restored. I have been restored for over a year, and still the dreams aren't quite sure of it. They aren't for I'm not. And I suppose never will be. (Plath, 1997, pg.189)

In her poem *Lament*, she described admired, self-confident and powerful character of father, who however died for his own negligence: 'The sting of bees took away my father who walked in a swarming shroud of wings and scorned the tick of the falling weather. (...) Trouncing the sea like a raging bather (...)' (Plath, 1981, pg. 315) At this point, Sylvia hadn't grieved over loss of her father yet. But in her poem, she also let died her mother: 'A scowl of sun struck down my mother, tolling her grave with golden gongs, but the stings of bees took away my father.' (Plath, 1981, pg. 315)

In next period, between years 1958 – 1960, in literary work of Sylvia is appeared ambivalence against father along with sense of guilt and hatred. Number of poems about father are increased in 1959, specifically one year or two after marriage with Ted, which is significant, when we realized that husband could remind of father character. In 1959, when Sylvia is 26-year-old, the theme of father appears in these poems: *Electra on Azalea Path*, *The Beekeeper's Daughter*, *Man in Black*, *The*

*Colossus* or *The Burnt-out Spa*. On August 28, 1958, Sylvia Plath noted in her diary: 'What is there to look to? (...) a girl's search for her dead father – for an outside authority which must be developed, instead, from the inside.' (Plath, 1997, pg. 302) Perhaps thanks to therapy with Ruth Beuscher, Sylvia started to realize that peace of mind will be not brought to her by her husband Ted or any other external object. In following months, in her poetry reappeared the theme of father, who she perceived as missing part of herself. (Čermák, Kodrlová, 2009)

In her poem *Electra on Azalea Path*, there is a girl, who is grieving on her father's cemetery. This event is connected with Sylvia's first attempt of suicide in a symbolic way, when she hid in cellar of house of her mother, after she took a sleeping pills: 'I had nothing to do with guilt or anything when I wormed back under my mother's heart.' (Plath, 1981, pg. 116)

In her poem *The Colossus*, she likened father to gigantic ancient statue of god of the sun Helios, known as the one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. There, Plath wrote: 'A blue sky out of the Oresteia arches above us. O father, (...) ' (Plath, 1981, pg. 129) She pointed to the myth about Orestes, who with his sister Electra revenged their father (Agamemnon) death by killing their mother Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus (Svoboda & Co., 1973)

*The Burn-out Spa*, is a poem, where is described another collapse of architectonic giant. Plath wrote: 'And we shall never enter there where the durable ones keep house.' And she kept distance from a girl walking in maze of her own mind occupied by archaic image of her father: 'I encounter one blue and improbable person. (...) Seated beneath the toneless water! It is not I, it is not I. (Plath, 1981, pg. 138)

In the last period of Sylvia's life, between years 1960 – 1963, author started to transfer her hatred from mother to father. One of her most quoted poems is poem *Daddy*, which she wrote just four months before her suicide, on October 12., 1962. She wrote: '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, 1981, pg. 222) Sylvia's father was died for 22 years, but she was still living locked up in his *shoe*. This *shoe* can be understood as metaphor of her inner world, where author's real mind is trapped. The poem continues: 'Daddy, I have had to kill you. You died before I had time ---- Marble-heavy, a bag full of God, ghastly statue with one grey toe big as a Frisco seal.' (Plath, 1981, pg. 222) Father of Sylvia became for her as a representation of God. God, who she hated because he abandoned her, but



still God, who she brought gifts in form of results, achievements and recognitions. (Čermák, Kodrlová, 2009) Plath linked her first attempt of suicide with her father's death again: 'But no less a devil for that, no not any less the black man who 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, 1981, pg. 223-224) The father, who Sylvia desired to coalesce with, is also a father, who died and broke her heart at the same time. The poem continues: 'And then I knew what to do. I made a model of you, a man in black with a Meinkampf look and a love of the rack and the screw. And I said I do, I do. So daddy, I'm finally through. (...) If I've killed one man, I've killed two ----- The vampire who said he was you and drank my blood for a year, seven years, if you want to know. Daddy you can lie back now. (...) Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through.' (Plath, 1981, pg. 224) Sylvia Plath obviously wrote about her father with hatred. Thanks to biographical material about Sylvia, we know that Otto Plath most likely didn't do anything worse to her daughter than that he died, when she was 8 years old. (Čermák, Kodrlová, 2009)

## **2.2 The maternity**

Sylvia Plath characterized her mother as person, who complained about how she sacrificed herself for her children after her husband's death. (Kukil, 2000) Mike Lotz claimed that Sylvia didn't talk about her mother almost never in her normal life, while she talked about her father a lot. (Butscher, 1976) The theme of desire and fear of symbiosis is important in Sylvia's relationship with her mother. In years 1950 – 1956, Plath described her craving for symbiosis with her mother Aurelia in her diaries: 'You want to go home, back to the womb.' (on November 18, 1952, pg. 82) '(...) I need a mother. (...) ' (on February 19, 1956, pg. 120) Demonstrations of Sylvia's pure hatred about her mother are appeared in her diaries from year 1958. In this time, Sylvia within her therapy discussed exactly her relationship with her mother. (Butscher, 1976) From the records of her diaries, it is obvious that therapy provoked her to write a long entry. On December 12, 1958, she wrote: 'Ever since Wednesday I have been feeling like a "new person". Like a shot of brandy went home, a sniff of cocaine, hit me where I live and I am alive & so-there. Better than shock treatment: "I give you permission to hate your mother." (...) In a smarmy matriarchy of togetherness it is hard to get a sanction to hate one's mother especially a sanction one believes in. (...) I don't imagine time will make me love her. I can pity her (...) On top she is all smarmy

nice: she gave herself to her children, and now by God they can give themselves back to her: why should they make her worry worry worry? (...) she worked to give those two innocent little children the world of joy she'd never had. She'd had a lousy world.' (Plath, 2000, pg.311) Plath also felt guilt towards her mother: 'My brother and I made her sign a promise she'd never marry. When we were seven and nine. Too bad she didn't break it. She'd be off my neck. (Plath, 2000, pg. 433) Plath hated her mom for marrying much older man, who died earlier than Sylvia separated from him in a natural way. (Butscher, 1976) In Sylvia's poems and diaries, Aurelia is described as murderer of Sylvia's father. (Čermák, Kodrlová, 2009)

Split-up with Ted raised an emotion of hatred and aggression in Sylvia's heart. On October 1962, Aurelia spent summer in Devon with Ted and Sylvia at the time, when her daughter was breaking up with her husband. Afterwards, Sylvia wrote a poem called *Medusa*: 'In any case, you are always there, tremulous breath at the end of my line, (...) I didn't call you. I didn't call you at all. Nevertheless, nevertheless you steamed to me over the sea, fat and red, a placenta (...) Green as eunuchs, your wishes hiss at my sins. Off, off, eely tentacle! There is nothing between us.' (Plath, 1981, pg. 225-226) It seems that Sylvia experienced through her relationships with her parents a condition of losing her own identity. And she felt that someone is surrounding her (manipulating and suffocating her), which aroused an anxiety in her life. (Holland, 1977) For the first time, Sylvia described her relation with her mother in a poem called *The Disquieting Muses*. In this poem, Sylvia successfully unified ambivalent feelings against her mother in one unit. (Vaillant, 1993) Sylvia reproached to her mother that she couldn't protect her and give her enough love and instead of that, she tried to provide her a good life by sending her to the piano's lessons, even she knew that Sylvia was tone-deaf. In a poem, the protagonist got in balloon, where is her mother, then she realized that her company consisted of apparitions of stones without faces. Perhaps, Sylvia tried to explain in a poem that her mother has never really understood her. (Čermák, Kodrlová, 2009) Aurelia Plath considered Sylvia's attempt of suicide in 1953 as result of failure in her literary writing. Aurelia even denied that Sylvia committed suicide in 1963, she printed a message in newspapers that Sylvia died because of pneumonia. (Butscher, 1976)

Sylvia wanted to be married. In her diaries, she didn't hide her ambivalent feelings about men. She desired for them, but at the same time, she was afraid that they would leave her alone as her father did.

Sylvia's last collection of poems called *Ariel* is full of anger and aggression aimed to her husband Ted, who left her in autumn in 1962. Sylvia was always attracted by men, who had a destructive strength, power, invincibility and passion. This is how she described her first meeting with Ted Hughes: 'Then the worst happened, that big, dark, hunky boy (...) who had been hunching around over women, and whose name I had asked the minute I had come into the room (...), came over and was looking hard in my eyes and it was Ted Hughes.' (Plath, 1997, pg. 132) 'he kissed me bang smash on the mouth and ripped my hairband off (...) and my favorite silver earrings: hah, I shall keep, he barked. And when he kissed my neck I bit him long and hard on the cheek, and when we came out of the room, blood was running down his face. His poem 'I did it, I.' Such violence, and I can see how women lie down for artists. The one man in the room who was as big as his poems, huge, with hulk and dynamic chunks of words; his poems are strong and blasting like a high wind in steel girders. And I screamed in myself, thinking: oh, to give myself crashing, fighting, to you.' (Plath, 2000, pg. 212) In poem named *Epitaph in Three Parts*, which is full of motifs of destruction, Plath wrote: 'Receive no roving gallant who seeks to dally in the port till dawn, for your fate involves a dark assailant.' (Plath, 1981, pg. 337) While she humiliated and ridiculed other men in her diaries and her novel, she celebrated her father and her lovers – Richard and Ted: 'I only want the moon that sounds in a name and the son of man that bears that name. In the beginning was the word and the word was sassoon and it was a terrible word for it created eden and the golden age back to which fallen eva looks mingling her crystal tears with the yellow dahlias that sprout from the lips of her jaundiced adam. Be christ! She cries, and rise before my eyes while the blue marys bless us with singing.' (Plath, 1997, pg. 109) Plath's relationship with her father, Richard and Ted is portraying the same pattern; idealization → internalization → breakup → aggression → devaluation/destruction: 'I need you to do this one more thing for me. Break your image and wrench it from me. I need you to tell me in very definite concrete words that you are unavailable, (...) that you do not want to save me from death. (...) for it gets harder and harder to free myself from that abstract tyrant named Richard who is so much more, being abstract, than he really is in this world. (...) For I must get back my soul from you; I am killing my flesh without it.' (on March 1, 1956, Plath, 1997, pg. 138)

After breakup with Richard, in a short time, Sylvia met Ted, who immediately assumed Richard's role in her life. In this time, she wrote a poem called *Ode for Ted*:

‘From under crunch of my man's boot green oat-sprouts jut; (...) For his least look, scant acres yield: each finger-furrowed field heaves forth stalk, leaf, fruit-nubbed emerald; bright grain sprung so rarely he hauls to his will early; at his hand's staunch hest, birds build. (...) how but most glad could be this adam's woman when all earth his words do summon leaps to laud such man's blood!’ (Plath, 1981, pg. 29-30)

### 2.2.1 The theme of children

From analysis of Sylvia's literary works and diaries emerged that Sylvia had an ambivalent relationship with children until her daughter Frieda was born. Plath wasn't just afraid of responsibility of taking care about children, but even of losing her own identity as poetess, because she doubted a possibility to combine role of mother and writer together. (Čermák, Kodrlová 2009)

In 1959, she had severe depression from failure of becoming pregnant. In poem named *Childless Woman*, Plath identified infertility with death. The poem was written, when Sylvia discovered Ted's affair with another woman, Sylvia considered Ted's lover Assia to be interfile. (Butscher, 1976) Sylvia couldn't understand how her husband could leave her for another woman, who is even interfile physically and also creatively: ‘The womb rattles its pod, the moon discharges itself from the tree with nowhere to go. (...) Uttering nothing but blood— Taste it, dark red! And my forest, my funeral, and this hill and this gleaming with the mouths of corpses.’ (Plath, 1981, pg. 259)

The theme of children is appeared in Plath's poetry soon after their birth. In 1962, The birth of Nicholas could cause that Sylvia felt anger and aversion to both of her children. It was a result of her early interactions with her mother Aurelia. (Firestone, Catlett, 1998) Her poem *Brasilia* could be interpreted as transferring destructive voices on her own children: ‘And my baby a nail driven, driven in. He shrieks in his grease bones nosing for distances. And I, nearly extinct, his three teeth cutting themselves on my thumb —’ (Plath, 1981, pg. 258) Plath partly felt the need to protect her children: ‘This one mirror safe, unredeemed by the dove's annihilation’ (Plath, 1981, pg. 259) Plath got depressed, because she wasn't able to bottle up her unacceptable feelings towards her children. (Firestone, Catlett, 1998) Her next poem called *Lesbos* gave the same impression as poem *Brasilia*: ‘You say I should drown the kittens. Their smell! You say I should drown my girl. She'll cut her throat at ten if she's mad at two. The baby smiles, fat snail, from the polished lozenges of orange

linoleum. You could eat him. He's a boy.' (Plath, 1981, pg. 228) There, Plath also identified that destructive voice: 'Your voice my ear-ring, flapping and sucking, blood-loving bat.' (Plath, 1981, pg. 229) Also in the poem named *Child*, which was written on January 28, 1963, Plath expressed love to children, and even her inability to give her own children what they need. In her last poem named *Edge*, which was written on February 5, 1963, six days before she committed suicide, can be found motif of children and motif about suicide of their mother: 'Each dead child coiled, a white serpent, one at each little pitcher of milk, now empty. She has folded them back into her body as petals of a rose close when the garden stiffens and odors bleed from the sweet, deep throats of the night flower.' (Plath, 1981, pg. 272 – 273) The poem expressed mother, who wants to protect her children from mother's pain. (Firestone, Catlett, 1998)

## **2.2 Reflection of the self**

In her poem named *Mirror*, Plath wrote: 'I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions. Whatever I see I swallow immediately just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike. I am not cruel, only truthful— The eye of a little god, four-cornered. (...) Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me, searching my reaches for what she really is. (...) She rewards me with tears and an agitation of hands. I am important to her. She comes and goes. (...) In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish. (Plath, 1981, pg. 173 – 174) In a poem is woman, who is looking in the mirror and she is trying to reveal her true self.

In the poem named *The Couriers*, which was written on November 4, 1962, is expressed nostalgia, sadness and need of love. There is a reference to disappointment of broken marriage: '(...) A ring of gold with the sun in it? Lies. Lies and a grief. (...) A disturbance in mirrors, the sea shattering its gray one love, love, my season. (Plath, 1981, pg. 247) In poem *Brasilia*, we can also find the motif of mirror. Plath didn't hide her anxiety and fear for son. The author metaphorically compares her son to a mirror, which takes her energy and causes her pain. In poem *Childless Woman*, Plath wrote about woman, who is childless, that is why, she feels emptiness, which she compares to the death. The mirror had to be covered because of emptiness in woman's face, which has to be concealed.

The motif of sado-masochism is appeared in her poem named *Totem*: '(...) There is no terminus, only suitcases out of which the same self unfolds like a suit bald and shiny, with pockets of wishes, notions and tickets, short circuits and folding mirrors. I am mad, calls the spider, waving its many arms. And in truth it is terrible, multiplied in the eyes of the flies. They buzz like blue children in nets of the infinite, roped in at the end by the one death with its many sticks. (Plath, 1981, pg. 264 – 265) There is emphasized the idea that human doesn't die at the end of the path, but his true self will open as old coat.

Sylvia understand the power of illusion, and maybe because of that in her late poetry she presented her true self as *Lady Lazarus* or as '*Bitch Goddess*' – the women, who consider themselves as immortal myth. (Butscher, 1976) The poem *Lady Lazarus* was written on October, 1962: 'Herr God, Herr Lucifer beware beware. Out of the ash I rise with my red hair and I eat men like air.' (Plath, 1981, pg. 246 – 247)

### **2.1.1. The role of victim**

In last period of her life, Plath used the writing a poetry as strategy to cope with Ted's infidelity. Shortly after her split-up with Ted, Plath wrote the poem named *The Detective*: 'What was she doing when it blew in (...) In her garden the lies were shaking out their moist silks and the eyes of the killer moving sluglike and sidelong, (...) The fingers were tamping a woman into a wall, (...) ' (Plath, 1981, pg. 208) Author identified herself with defenceless victim of infidelity and betrayal. The character of victim can be found also in Sylvia's autobiographical poem named *Words heard, by accident, over the phone*, when Sylvia reacts to phone call between Ted and his lover Assia, which Sylvia heard by accident. (Butscher, 1976) It was a terrible experience for Sylvia: 'O god, how shall I ever clean the phone table?' (Plath, 1981, pg. 202) In the end of the poem, Sylvia describes the need for revenge: '(...) Now the room is ahiss. The instrument withdraws its tentacle. But the spawn percolate in my heart. They are fertile. Muck funnel, muck funnel — You are too big. They must take you back!' (Plath, 1981, pg. 203) Also in the poem named *Stings*, which was written on October in 1962, is expressed Plath's need for escape from the character of defenceless victim: '(...) They thought death was worth it, but I have a self to recover, a queen. Is she dead, is she sleeping? Where has she been, with her lion-red body, her wings of glass? Now she is flying more terrible than she ever was, red scar in the sky, red comet over the engine that killed her --- The mausoleum, the wax house.' (Plath,

1981, pg. 215) In poem, Plath identifies herself with queen bee, she fights for her own recovery.

## **2.2. Need of rebirth**

In Plath's poetry, the fantasies about author's death are associated with rebirth, transformation and transcendence. In the poem named *Getting There*, which was written on November 6, 1962, can be found this motif: '(...) All the gods know is destinations. I am a letter in this slot I fly to a name, two eyes. (...) And I, stepping from this skin of old bandages, boredom, old faces step to you from the black car of Lethe, pure as a baby.' (Plath, 1981, pg. 248 – 249) Sylvia wrote the poem named *Love Letter* on October 16, 1960. The theme of this poem is development of Sylvia's and Ted relationship, which is linked to Sylvia's suicide. Motif of transformation in the first line of Sylvia's poem: 'Not easy to state the change you made' (Plath, 1981, pg. 147)

From the latest Plath's poems (Plath, 1981), can be composed a story: 'The blood jet is poetry, there is no stopping it. You hand me two children, two roses.' (Kindness, pg. 270); 'Color floods to the spot, dull purple. (...) The heart shuts, the sea slides back, the mirrors are sheeted. (Contusion, pg. 271); 'The sap wells like tears, like the water striving to re-establish its mirror over the rock that drops and turns, a white skull, (...) (Words, pg. 270); 'Your small brother (...) Seeming to see a funny pink world he might eat on the other side of it, he bites, then sits back, (...) A red shred in his little fist.' (Balloons, pg. 272); 'The woman is perfected. Her dead body wears the smile of accomplishment, (...) Each dead child coiled, (...) She has folded them back into her body as petals of a rose (...) (Edge pg. 272 – 273) This story reflects the signs of decline and destruction.

In 1981, Ted Hughes, Sylvia's husband, critic, editor and significant British poet, edited Sylvia's poems in the collection named *The Collected Poems*. Hughes's sequence of poems is different as original by Sylvia (*The Colossus and Other Poems*; 1960, Ariel; 1964), it is chronological.

### 3. SYLVIA PLATH IN SLOVAK TRANSLATIONS

Selected poems from *The Collected Poems* were translated into Slovak language by Slovak translator and poetess – Mila Haugová. She compiled, translated selected poems into collection of poems named *Luna a tis* in 1989. Then in 2003, she compiled the second edition of selected poems in collection of poems named *Hrana*, where we can also find translated passages from *The Journals of Sylvia Plath* and compiled biographical facts and facts about her literary work named *Kalendárium života a diela*. Mila Haugová assumed the same method as Ted Hughes in *The Collected Poems*, the sequence in her collection named *Hrana* is also chronological.

In an interview, Haugová describes her own view of her translating as a very good substitute activity, because she can read and learn from the poets she translates. (Haugová – Juránová, 1992, pg. 34) In this chapter, we identify selected themes and compare original poems with their Slovak translations by Haugová from collection of poems *Hrana*.

#### 3.1 The theme of death

Many of poems, which were written by Sylvia Plath, indicate the motif of death. We will mention the most significant from collection *Hrana*. The poem *Birthday Gift*, is the first, which we will mention. Haugová translated the title of poem as *Dar k narodeninám*. In this poem, the theme of death appears as reaction to frustration, rejection and lack of love. Author felt that the relationship with her love was going to the end.

‘Must you kill what you can ?

There is this one thing I want today, and only you can give it to me.

It stands at my window, big as the sky.

It breathes from my sheets, the cold dead center

Where spilt lives congeal and stiffen to history.

Let it not come by the mail, finger by finger.



Let it not come by word of mouth, I should be sixty  
By the time the whole of it was delivered, and too numb to use it.

Only let down the veil, the veil, the veil.  
If it were death

I would admire the deep gravity of it, its timeless eyes.  
I would know you were serious.

There would be a nobility then, there would be a birthday.  
And the knife not carve, but enter' (Plath, 1981, pg. 207 – 208)

‘musíš zabiť všetko, čo sa len dá?  
Dnes chcem len jedinú vec a len ty mi ju môžeš dať.

Stojí to pri mojom okne, obrovské ako obloha.  
Dýcha to z mojich plachiet, chladný a mŕtvy stred,

kde rozbité životy tuhnú a mrznú na minulosť.  
Nech to nechodí v listoch, kúsok po kúsku poštou.

Nech to nechodí slovami, budem mať šesťdesiat,,  
kým sa to všetko doručí, a mne to už nebude na nič.

Len strhni tie závoje, závoje, závoje.  
Ak je to smrť,

budem obdivovať jej hlbokú vážnosť, bezčasové oči  
Budem si istá, že si to myslel vážne.

To by bola šľachetnosť, ozajstné narodeniny.  
A nôž by nerýpal, vnikol by' (Plath, 2003, pg. 44 – 45)

The next poem is named *Edge*, it is the last poem, which the author wrote before she committed suicide. The theme of death is obviously described in this poem, specifically the motif of suicide. In the poem are expressed these motifs: the motif of children and the motif of mother's suicide. The title of poem is translated as *Hrana*. Haugová also named the collection of poems as the last poem of it – *Edge (Hrana)*. In translation is also expressed the wish of protecting the children from pain of their mother as in original.

‘Each dead child coiled, a white serpent,  
One at each little

Pitcher of milk, now empty.  
She has folded

Them back into her body as petals  
Of a rose close when the garden

Stiffens and odors bleed  
From the sweet, deep throats of the night flower.’ (Plath, 1981, pg. 272 – 273)

‘Každé mŕtve dieťa skrútené, biely had,  
každé pri svojej malej

miske mlieka, teraz prázdnej.  
Zložila

ich naspäť do tela ako lupene  
ruží, čo sa zavrú, keď chladne

záhrada a vône krvácajú  
zo sladkých hrdiel kvetov noci.’ (Plath, 2003, pg. 119)

The poem *Childless Woman* was mentioned previously, however in this poem can be also find the theme of death. In this poem, the author identified the motif of infertility with motif of death. The translation also depicts these motifs.

‘Uttering nothing but blood—  
Taste it, dark red!  
And my forest

My funeral,  
And this hill and this  
Gleaming with the mouths of corpses.’ (Plath, 1981, pg. 259)

‘a rodím iba krv –  
Skús, tmavočervenú!  
Aj môj les,

môj hrob,  
tento pahorok aj tento  
jas s ústami mŕtvol.’ (Plath, 2003, pg. 98 – 99)

### 3.2 The theme of maternity

In the next poem named *Childless Woman*, which is translated into Slovak language as *Bezdetná žena*. There is the theme of maternity, but in the negative meaning as infertility. This theme is expressed in these lines:

‘This body,  
This ivory

Ungodly as a child's shriek.  
Spiderlike, I spin mirrors,  
Loyal to my image,

Uttering nothing but blood—’ (Plath, 1981, pg. 259)

‘to telo,  
tá slonovina

bezbožná ako detský krik.  
Tak ako pavúk spriadam zrkadlá,  
som verná svojmu obrazu

a rodím iba krv- ‘ (Plath, 2003, pg. 98)

Sylvia considered that her husband lover Assia was infertile. That is why the image of body is ironical and critical in this poem.

In next poem, can be also found this theme. The poem is named *The Munich Mannequins* and the title is translated as *Mníchovské manekýnky*. In these lines, we can observe evident motif of infertility:

‘Perfection is terrible, it cannot have children.  
Cold as snow breath, it tamps the womb’ (Plath, 1981, pg. 262)

‘Dokonalost’ je hrozná, nemôže mať’ deti.  
Studená ako dych snehu, zapcháva lono,’ (Plath, 2003, pg. 101)

The next poem is named *Lesbos* and the title of poem in Slovak language retains as well. In this poem, the lyrical subject tries to approach the ideal of woman – become a mother. But the second lyrical subject considers the maternity as burden. We suppose that we can observe conflict between them. In translation, we Haugová used a word womb, even this motif is not used in original:

‘You who have blown your tubes like a bad radio  
Clear of voices and history, the staticky  
Noise of the new.’ (Plath, 1981, pg. 228)

‘Ty, čo máš lono vypálené, ako zlé rádio  
bez hlasu, bez dejín, a to nové je len praskot a šum.’ (Plath, 2003, pg. 61)

In her next poem, which is named *Child*, we think that there we can find the theme of maternity. There, Plath expresses the love to children and also the inability to give them what they need. The title of poem, Haugová translated as *Diet'a*.

‘Your clear eye is the one absolutely beautiful thing.  
I want to fill it with color and ducks,  
The zoo of the new

Whose names you meditate—  
April snowdrop, Indian pipe,  
Little

Stalk without wrinkle,  
Pool in which images  
Should be grand and classical  
Not this troublous  
Wringing of hands, this dark  
Ceiling without a star.’ (Plath, 1981, pg. 265)

‘Jediná absolútna krásna vec je tvoje číre oko.  
Chcem ho naplniť farbou a kačiatkami,  
zoo budúcnosti,

pre ktoré vymýšľaš mená –  
aprílová vločka, fajka mieru,  
malá byť

úplne hladká,  
jazierko, v ktorom by obrazy  
boli klasické, veľkolepé,

a nie toto ustarostené  
zalamovanie rúk, táto tmavá  
povala bez jedinej hviezdy.’ (Plath, 2003, pg. 106)

### 3.3 The theme of mirror

In the poem, which is named *Mirror*, can be find the theme of mirror as the title indicates. Haugová named this poem as *Zrkadlo*. The mirror points to something, what is between the individual and the objectivistic. The mirror points to the substance of the truth and reality. We suppose that we can observe this motif in these lines, as well as in translation by Haugová:

‘I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions.  
Whatever I see I swallow immediately  
Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike.  
I am not cruel, only truthful—’ (Plath, 1981, pg. 173)

‘Som strieborné a presné. Nemám predsudky.  
Okamžite pohltím všetko, čo vidím,  
tak ako to je, neskreslené láskou či nenávisťou.  
Nie som kruté, len pravdivé –’ (Plath, 2003, pg. 24)

The motif of mirror is also expressed in the second stanza, which is also the last stanza of poem. The lyrical subject likens herself to lake, which reflects the reality as it is.

‘Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me,  
Searching my reaches for what she really is.  
Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon.  
I see her back, and reflect it faithfully.’ (Plath, 1981, pg. 174)

‘Teraz som jazero. Skláňa sa nado mnou žena  
a v mojich hĺbinách skúma, čím naozaj je.  
Potom sa obráti k sviečkam či mesiacu, tým klamárom.  
Vidím jej chrbát a verne ho odrážam.’ (Plath, 2003, pg. 24)

In the last lines is expressed the revelation that the young girl is not young and girl anymore, but she is becoming the old woman with time and she looks like ‘terrible fish’.

‘I am important to her. She comes and goes.  
Each morning it is her face that replaces the darkness.  
In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman  
Rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish.’ (Plath, 1981, pg. 174)

‘Som pre ňu dôležité. Prichádza a odchádza.  
Jej tvár každé ráno vystrieda tmú.  
Vo mne utopila mladé dievča a zo mňa sa deň čo deň  
vynára pred ňou stará žena ako hrôzostrašná ryba.’ (Plath, 2003, pg. 24)

In the poem, which I mentioned previously, *Childless Woman*, is also expressed the motif of mirror. Sylvia wrote about emptiness of woman, who doesn't have children and this emptiness she likened to death. The mirror had to be covered, so that, it hides the woman's face, where the emptiness could be seen.

‘The womb  
Rattles its pod, the moon  
Discharges itself from the tree with nowhere to go.

My landscape is a hand with no lines,  
The roads bunched to a knot,  
The knot myself,

Myself the rose you achieve—  
This body,  
This ivory

Ungodly as a child's shriek.  
Spiderlike, I spin mirrors,  
Loyal to my image,

Uttering nothing but blood—’ (Plath, 1981, pg. 259)

‘Lono

hrká svoj struk, luna sa  
oddelí od stromu, nemá kam ísť.

Moja krajina je ruka bez čiar,  
cesty zviazané na uzol,  
uzol som ja,

ja, ruža, ktorú dosahuješ,  
to telo,  
tá slonovina

bezbožná ako detský krik.  
Tak ako pavúk spriadam zrkadlá,  
som verná svojmu obrazu

a rodím iba krv –‘ (Plath, 2003, pg. 98)

In the poem *Totem*, author wrote about folding mirrors, which they are found, when after death, the self (in translation: I) will open. Haugová translated the title of poem as *Totem*. In translation, the motif retains:

‘There is no terminus, only suitcases

Out of which the same self unfolds like a suit  
Bald and shiny, with pockets of wishes,  
Notions and tickets, short circuits and folding mirrors.  
I am mad, calls the spider, waving its many arms.

And in truth it is terrible,  
Multiplied in the eyes of the flies.

They buzz like blue children  
In nets of the infinite,

Roped in at the end by the one



Death with its many sticks.’ (Plath, 1981, pg. 264 - 265)

‘Nijaké konečné stanice, iba kufre,

z ktorých sa to isté ja rozostrie ako šaty  
zodraté, vyšúchané s vreckami plnými želaní,

drobností, lístkov, krátkych spojení, spätných zrkadiel.  
Som blázon, kričí pavúk, kývajúc množstvom nôh.

Je strašný, pravdu povediac,  
Znásobený v očiach múch,

čo v sieti nekonečna  
bzučia ako cyanotické deti,

chytané nakoniec jedinou  
smrťou, množstvom jej úderov.’ (Plath, 2003, pg. 104 – 105)

The self of author is fragmented to notions and pieces and when the self is reflected in the eyes of flies, it is integrated in the complex image, but it is only posthumous illusion.

### **3.4 The theme of rebirth/transformation**

The poem named *Love Letter* is the title poem of the collection - *Hrana* (translated as *List Lásky*). As I mentioned in a previous chapter, the theme of this poems is about developing relationship between Sylvia and her husband Ted Hughes. In the first line of poem, we can find the motif of transformation:

‘Not easy to state the change you made’ (Plath, 1981, pg. 147)

In the translation, we can also observe this motif:

‘Zmenu, čo si spôsobil, nie je ľahké vyjadriť.’ (Plath, 2003, pg. 9)

The process of transformation is captured in last stanza:

‘Tree and stone glittered, without shadows.  
My finger-length grew lucent as glass.  
I started to bud like a March twig:  
An arm and a leg, an arm, a leg.  
From stone to cloud, so I ascended.’ (Plath, 1981, pg. 147)

This process is also captured in Slovak translation as well:

‘Bez tieňov sa trblietali kamene a strom.  
Celý môj prst priesvitnel ako sklo.  
Ako marcová halúzka začala som pučať.  
Ruka a noha, noha a ruka.  
Z kameňa k oblaku, tak som stúpala.’ (Plath, 2003, pg. 10)

The self is resembled as a rock, then as a snake, March twig and then as some sort of god. The process of transformation is finished. The self is ‘pure as a pane of ice’:

‘Now I resemble a sort of god  
Floating through the air in my soul-shift  
Pure as a pane of ice. It's a gift.’ (Plath, 1981, pg. 147)

Mila Haugová translated the last line of this poem as follows:

‘Na akéhosi boha sa teraz podobám,  
čo letí vzduchom do vrstiev mojej duše  
čistej ako kocka ľadu. Je to dar.’ (Plath, 2003, pg. 10)

The translation changes the object – from the self to the soul of the self. As we can see, in translation, Haugová used group of lexemes ‘vrstiev mojej duše’, which refers to soul of the self, not to the self as in original. But the theme of transformation retains in this poem.

The poem *Getting There* is translated as *Cestou tam*. In the poem describes a war scene with dead bodies, gunshots and the train, which is going 'there' – straight towards to the death. After death follows the rebirth. In the poem, the female protagonist takes a responsibility of death bodies:

'I shall count and bury the dead.' (Plath, 1981, pg. 249)

Haugová retains this motif:

'pochovám a zrátam mŕtvych.' (Plath, 2003, pg. 82)

The charred skirts and deathmask symbolizes woman body:

'It is so small

The place I am getting to, why are there these obstacles ---

The body of this woman,

Charred skirts and deathmask' (Plath, 1981, pg. 249)

As well as in Slovak translation by Haughová:

'Také malé je miesto, kam odchádzam, načo sú tieto prekážky –

Telo tejto ženy,

spálená sukňa a maska smrti,' (Plath, 2003, pg. 81 -82)

The death mask and the old bandages can be interpreted as some sort of package before rebirth, resurrection:

'The body of this woman,

Charred skirts and deathmask

Mourned by religious figures, by garlanded children.

And now detonations

Thunder and guns.

The fire's between us.

Is there no still place

Turning and turning in the middle air,

Untouched and untouchable.

The train is dragging itself, it is screaming ---

An animal Insane for the destination,

The bloodspot,

The face at the end of the flare.  
I shall bury the wounded like pupas,  
I shall count and bury the dead.  
Let their souls writhe in a dew,  
Incense in my track.  
The carriages rock, they are cradles.  
And I, stepping from this skin  
Of old bandages, boredoms, old faces

Step to you from the black car of Lethe,  
Pure as a baby.’ (Plath, 1981, pg. 249)

The translation retains the theme of rebirth. From the old bandages, boredoms, old faces the body of woman resurrects as pure as a baby. All pain and suffering from life are described in poem, it ends in pure death, which is liberating:

‘Telo tejto ženy,  
spálená sukňa a maska smrti,  
plačú nad ňou zbožní veriaci a vyobliekané deti.  
A teraz výbuch –  
Hrmenie a zbrane.

Strel'ba medzi nami.  
Nikde už nie je tiché miesto,  
čo by sa krútilo uprostred vzduchu,  
nedotknuté a nedotknuteľné.  
Vlak sa vlečie, kričí –  
zvíra  
posadnuté cieľom cesty,  
krvavá škvrna,  
tvár na konci signalizačného svetla.  
Pochovám ranených ako larvy,  
pochovám a zrátam mŕtvych.  
Nech sa ich duše zvíjajú v rose,

dym kadidla v stope, kadiaľ som išla.  
Kývu sa vagóny, sú to kolisky.  
A ja sa zvliekam z tejto kože,  
zo starých tvárí, nudy, zo starých obväzov,

vykročím k tebe z čierneho voza Léthé,  
čistá ako dieťa.’ (Plath, 2003, pg. 81 – 82)

In translation, Haugová translated the word pupa (in Slovak: kukla) as larva. The word pupa refers to coffin and resurrection, but the word larva refers more to burying alive.

In next poem, we can also observe the theme of rebirth. The poem is named *Lady Lazarus* (translated as *Lady Lazar*). The body is described as obstacle in the process of resurrection. This motif can be found in original as well as in translation:

‘Out of the ash  
I rise with my red hair  
And I eat men like air.’ (Plath, 1981, pg. 247)

‘Z popola dvíham sa  
s červenou hrivou,  
namiesto vzduchu hlcem mužov.’ (Plath, 2003, pg. 78)

The lyrical subject is independent of men, Lady Lazarus represents the victory over negative men. She rises out of ash as phoenix from chaos, which men created. In a poem, she faces against the devil and god, who she calls ‘Herr’ (man, master). She threatens them that they will be destroyed by mythical goddess:

‘Herr God, Herr Lucifer  
Beware  
Beware.’ (Plath, 1981, pg. 246)

‘Daj pozor, Herr Boh,  
Herr Lucifer,

daj si pozor!’ (Plath, 2003, pg. 78)

In the sixth stanza is described the motif of resurrection. However, translation loses the biblical meaning, which was intended by Sylvia Plath. The second line delineates the grave, from which the lyrical subject raises. Plath used the word cave with accordance of the Bible, but Haugová used the word abyss (priepať) and loses this biblical reference.

‘Soon, soon the flesh  
The grave cave ate will be  
At home on me’ (Plath, 1981, pg. 244)

‘Už skoro, veľmi skoro  
sa na mne udomácní mäso,  
čo priepať hrobu pohltí,’ (Plath, 2003, pg. 74)

The theme of transformation can be also found in the next poem *Stings*. Haugová translated the title of poem as *Žihadlá*. In the poem, the female lyrical subject identifies with the queen of bees. She liberated herself from the traditional roles of women – role of daughter, wife, mother and housewife. She liberated herself by transformation.

‘she is old,  
Her wings torn shawls, her long body  
Rubbed of its plush ---’ (Plath, 1981, pg. 214)

‘iste je stará,  
krídla má ako deravé šály, zamat  
dávno zodratý z dlhého tela –’ (Plath, 2003, pg. 48)

In this stanza is expressed that at the beginning the lyrical subject is old. But at the end of poem, she is reborn. In these lines, we can find the theme of transformation/rebirth as well as in translation:

‘Is she dead, is she sleeping?  
Where has she been,  
With her lion-red body, her wings of glass?  
Now she is flying  
More terrible than she ever was, red  
Scar in the sky, red comet’ (Plath, 1981, pg. 215)

‘Je mŕtva, iba spí?  
Kde bola  
s krídlami ako sklo, s telom ako levica červeným?  
hroznejšia ako predtým,  
teraz prilieta, červená  
jazva na nebi, červená kométa’ (Plath, 2003, pg. 50)

## CONCLUSION

The aim of the bachelor thesis was to clarify and term the themes and motifs of poems in Slovak translations as in original poems by the significant American poetess Sylvia Plath. We identified and interpreted them from the original collection of poems named *Collected Poems* from 1989, which was edited by author's husband Ted Hughes and also from the second edition of the collection of poems named *Hrana* from 2003, which was edited and translated by Mila Haugová.

The poetics of Sylvia Plath in this bachelor thesis were based on studies, which are researched the various aspects of her literary output. Sylvia's published journals and notes helped us to understand the author's way of thinking.

The first part of the bachelor thesis was devoted to the significant personage of American literature – Sylvia Plath. According to confessional character of Sylvia's literary output, it was important to delineate this complicated personage. In thesis was described her biography as well as her poetics. They helped us to understand and appraise Sylvia's way of thinking, her writing style. Also, we recognized her experiences throughout her life, which had a huge impact on her literary work.

In the second part of the bachelor thesis, we described the poetics of Sylvia Plath. In this chapter, there was integrated the excerpts from Sylvia's journals for better imagination of her life and the way of thinking as well as for better understanding her poetics. In this part was explained by who and by what life experiences was influenced this American poetess. Also, we identified and termed the themes and motifs in her poems.

In the final part of the bachelor thesis, we focused on the selected poems in Slovak translations, where we identified and compared the themes and the motifs with the original poems. We chose the poems, where the themes were significant and also reflected the poetics of author. We needed to mention that development and author's maturing as translator had a huge impact on the translations. And also, the fact that the translated collection of poems was published by an interval after publication of collection of poems *Collected Poems* by Sylvia Plath in 1989.

Haugová paid attention to semantic nuances of original and its transferring. Haugová also had a sense of detail and she retained the original atmosphere of poems. Mila Haugová chose the motif, the image, the idea and she didn't hold on formal perfection, despite the fact that she had experiences with formal verse. She



contributed to make accessible the poetry of the significant American poetess Sylvia Plath for Slovak people.

## RESUMÉ

Cieľom bakalárskej práce bolo identifikovať a zhodnotiť jednotlivé témy a motívy vo vybraných básňach Sylvie Plathovej zo zbierky *Collected Poems*, ktorá bola vydaná a zostavená jej manželom Tedom Hughesom po jej smrti v roku 1989. A taktiež vyhľadať, identifikovať témy a motívy v slovenskom preklade vybraných básní zo zbierky *Hrana*, ktorú preložila a zostavila slovenská prekladateľka Mila Haugová v roku 2003. Následne tieto témy a motívy zhodnotiť a porovnať s originálom a jednotlivými slovenskými prekladmi.

Literárna tvorba ako aj status Sylvie Plathovej bol poznačený jej samovraždou, ktorou ukončila svoj život v roku 1963. Ambície Sylvie Plathovej boli rozsiahle a paradoxne ju obmedzovali: “Nikdy neprečítam všetky knihy, ktoré by som chcela; nikdy nebudem všetkým, čím by som chcela a neprežijem všetky životy, po ktorých túžim. Nikdy sa nenaučím všetko, čo mám v úmysle.” (Plath, 2000, s. 43)

Bakalárska práca sa opiera o publikácie, ktoré sa venujú autorovej poézii a taktiež biografii. Denníky Sylvie Plathovej nám napomohli porozumieť autorkine myslenie a taktiež identifikovať prepojenie medzi konfesionálnou poéziou a autorkiným osobným životom.

Bakalárska práca je rozdelená do troch častí. V prvej kapitole, ktorá je zároveň rozsahovo najkratšou kapitolou, úlohou je nám priblížiť osobnosť Sylvii Plathovej. V kapitole je zhrnutá celá biografia autorky od jej narodenia až po jej smrť. Kapitola začína predstavením jej rodičov a brata. Ďalej je opísaný Sylviin vzťah s jej rodičmi, ktorý sa mení, keď jej otec umiera na embóliu. V tom čase mala Sylvia len 8 rokov. Táto udalosť Sylviu poznačí na celý život, čo sa prejavuje taktiež aj v jej literárnej tvorbe. V kapitole je spomenutý aj Sylviin život na akademickej pôde a Sylviine úspechy v literárnych súťažiach. Avšak napriek jej úspechom, Sylvia túžila po väčšom uznaní ako poetka a spisovateľka. Spomenutý je aj Sylviin rodinný život, jej prvé stretnutie s jej budúcim manželom Tedom Hughesom, úspešným básnikom, ktorého Sylvia obdivovala, a zároveň mu závidela jeho úspech. V kapitole je rozobratá aj Sylviina kariéra, jej tvorivé obdobie, keď každodenne písala básne a taktiež aj narodenie jej dvoch detí, ktoré nadovšetko milovala.

Avšak v tejto kapitole nájdeme aj negatívne udalosti, ktoré Sylviu poznačili a formovali, ako aj jej literárnu tvorbu. Opísaný je aj jej prvý pokus o samovraždu,

následne liečebné terapie, ktoré podstúpila. Jej priateľský vzťah s jej dlhoročnou terapeutkou Ruth Beuscher. Sylviina túžba mať otca, ktorý odišiel z tohto sveta veľmi skoro. Jej problematické manželstvo s Tedom, v ktorom zažívala psychické ako aj fyzické útoky na svoju osobu. Odhalenie manželovej nevery, ktorá ju taktiež poznačila a psychicky zdrvila. Obdobie, keď Sylvia žila s deťmi bez manžela, avšak denne vyprodukovala najväčší počet básní za celý svoj život. Aj osudový deň v roku 1963, keď sa Sylvia rozhodla skončiť so svojím životom a spáchala samovraždu, zatiaľ čo jej deti spali vo vedľajšej izbe. Táto významná osobnosť americkej literatúry sa stala po svojej smrti známejšou, slávnejšou, než kedykoľvek predtým, dokonca za zbierku *The Colossus* jej bola udelená Pulitzerova cena za poéziu v roku 1982.

V druhej kapitole je charakterizovaná poetika Sylvie Plathovej. Úryvky z jej denníkov nám napomohli pochopiť autorkine zmýšľanie ako aj jej štýl písania. Jednoducho všetky okolnosti, ktoré viedli k tomu, aby jej literárna tvorba bola tým, čím je. ‚Koľkí, ak vôbec niekto, si všimnú, k čomu sa dopracovávam, prekonávajú sa. Aká irónia, že celé moje úsilie o prekonanie ľahkého poetizmu ich presviedča len o tom, že som drsná, antipoetická, nepoetická...‘ (záznam v denníku Sylvie Plathovej z 20. mája 1958, Plath, 2003, s. 7)

Druhá kapitola je rozdelená podľa jednotlivých tém a motívov, ktoré boli identifikované v Plathovej poézii. Jednotlivé témy a motívy sú vysvetlené a opísané v Plathovej básňach, ako aj pozadie, ktoré definovalo Plathovej literárnu tvorbu. Jej životné skúsenosti mali obrovský dopad na jej kreatívne myslenie. V kapitole sú spomenuté všetky jej inšpirácie, ľudia a skúsenosti, ktoré ju ovplyvnili.

V poslednej kapitole sme sa zamerali na identifikovanie, zhodnotenie a porovnanie jednotlivých tém a motívov vo vybraných básňach zo zbierky *Collected Poems* z roku 1989 a vo vybraných básňach zo zbierky *Hrana* z roku 2003, ktoré do slovenského jazyka preložila slovenská prekladateľka a poetka Mila Haugová.

V bakalárskej práci sme sa zamerali na pomenovanie a zhodnotenie jednotlivých tém a motívov v básňach v americkom origináli a v slovenskom preklade. Najprv, sme si preštudovali biografiu autora, potom sa sme pokúsili porozumieť autorkine zmýšľanie a zaznamenali sme si všetky jej zážitky počas života, ktoré mali takisto obrovský dopad na autorkinu literárnu prácu. Potom, sme preskúmali a analyzovali poetiku Sylvii Plathovej. Všetky okolnosti, ktoré viedli k špecifikám v autorkinej tvorbe. Taktiež, sme identifikovali témy a motívy v poetike

Sylvie Plathovej a definovali sme ich. Nakoniec, najvýznamnejšie témy a motívy sme identifikovali, zhodnotili a porovnali so slovenskými prekladmi.

Vybrali sme si básne, v ktorých jednotlivé témy boli najvýraznejšie, a zároveň reflektovali poetiku Sylvie Plathovej. Taktiež je potrebné poznamenať, že vývoj a autorské dozrievanie prekladateľa malo obrovský vplyv na preklad. A taktiež, fakt, že preložená zbierka básní bola publikovaná s časovým odstupom (v roku 2003), nakoľko originál básnickej zbierky *Collected Poems* bol publikovaný v roku 1989.

Zistili sme, že Haugová venovala pozornosť jednotlivým sémantickým odtieňom originálu a náležite ich transferovala v slovenských prekladoch. Mila Haugová má taktiež zmysel pre detail, v slovenských prekladoch sa jej podarilo zachovať pôvodnú atmosféru básní. Haugová sa riadila dodržaním motívov, obrazov, myšlienok, nedržala sa striktné formálnej stránky básní, napriek tomu, že má skúsenosti s viazaným veršom. Mila Haugová prispela k sprístupneniu poézie tejto významnej osobnosti americkej literatúry Sylvie Plathovej pre slovenskú verejnosť.

V bakalárskej práci sme odhalili niekoľko „životov“ Sylvie Plathovej v slovenských prekladoch prostredníctvom jednotlivých tém a motívov, ktoré boli pretransformované z originálu z básnickej zbierky *Collected Poems*.

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