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Smith has manifestations of the real stage through art, poetry has turned into a way to salvage the imaginary world of harmony with mother, the real other. Therefore, the physical as well as the psychological pains of abandonment have been vented out in the creating of poetry. According to Lacan "literature ... arises from deep within our unconscious psyche and reminds us of a time of perfect wholeness when we were incapable of differentiating among images from the real order" (Bressler, 2003:136).

To conclude, on applying Lacan's psychoanalytic approach, this research paper has shown Smith's childhood experiences as determining and shaping her opinions and attitudes towards life, love, and death. The early death of her mother has bereaved her of the idealistic oneness with the "other" or mother. This has developed into the reaching of another stage in which another "other" or father takes control. The father occupies the realm of the symbolic thus, turning into an "Other," symbolizing "other" forces. In this the idea of Lacanian signification is foregrounded, the "Signifier" father appears to represent other "signified" claiming the image of an omniscient Patriarchal overpowering control. Such Patriarchal figures are represented by man as lover, and even God representing the divine power. Feeling trapped in a "vile" life, Smith seeks to salvage the old and lost union with the "mother" by returning to the previous imaginary stage to reach a Real state of equilibrium. Thus, in an initial stage the study has concentrated on Smith's Imaginary stage of oneness with the mother, a stage that looks on father as a rival and an imposer of law, hence viewing father as villain who deserts the family. As the study develops and upon entering the Symbolic stage, Smith takes her father as symbol of patriarchal powers, a fact that results in her distrust in any love relationship culminating into marriage. Further developing in the Symbolic stage, Smith comes to view the divine power as one representation of another patriarchal and transcendent force. Finally, Smith looks upon death as an out let. At this point she approaches the stage of the Real upon which she can achieve a lost reunion with the mother. Smith resorts to the theme of death to express her refusal of her "vile" life of various patriarchs. So, with death, upon losing her mother, she has started her course and again with death she seeks a settlement.

One important contribution introduced in this research paper is the approaching of Smith's poetry from a psychological perspective. However, the present study has managed to apply this approach without marginalizing the due attention that should be paid to the examining of the poetic formal elements which give poetry its especial character among other literary genres. Therefore, besides the offering of an application of Lacan's theory about the psyche, the research has also concentrated on such aspects of form as structure, rhyme, rhythm, as well as the choice of words and their etymological significance in the elucidation of the poems selected. Navigating through the aspects of Lacan's theory in the light of Smith's poetics of form, this interdisciplinary perspective services for the embarking on an ample understanding of Smith's autobiographical volume, *A Good Time Was Had By All (1937)*. A volume that has shown Smith's three developmental stages of the psyche introduced by the French psychologist Jacques Lacan.

I'll wait a while
And then I'll go.

Why wait at all?
Hope spring alive,
good may befall
I yet may I thrive.

It is because I can't make up my mind
If god is good, important or kind. (*Collected Poems*, p.52)

Starting with an affirmative sentence running through four slim, diametric iambs, Smith declares a judgment: she "hates" her "life [that] is vile". However, rhyming "vile" with "while" suggests the transience of that life, so that she is in a waiting stage before moving to another inevitable one. In the second stanza, she develops her logic to reach a conclusion: "Why wait at all?", if life is a stage of waiting before the coming of death. She waits because sometimes she finds a hope encouraging her to "thrive". Finally in the closing couplet she declares that her fluctuation between hope and despair, which leads to her inability to "make up [her] mind", is because of God's delayed redemption despite His being "good". Smith attributes an image of a dominating patriarchal father to God in the symbolic stage. Facing a "vile" life, Smith decides not to wait for death now imaged as a lover. Smith arranges for a meeting with that lover.

Smith, then, resorts to the "Real" which forms the lost state of equilibrium of infancy, the stage preceding the use of language, where a kind of "oneness" is experienced with the Mother. Since her mother is now dead, Smith resorts to death to salvage that real stage of equilibrium. Such stage of equilibrium, love, and satisfaction is embodied in her company with a personified death seen as lover in "The River Deben":

All the waters of the river Deben
Go over my head to the last wave even
Such a death were sweet to seven times seven.

Death sits in the boat with me
His face is shrouded but he smiled I see
The time is not yet, he will not come to reality.

But smiles and I smile it is pleasant in the boat at night
There is no moon rising but from the east a light
Shines in the sky, is it dawn or dawn's twilight? (*Collected Poems*, p.48)

In "The River Deben" Smith seems to be considering suicide looked upon as not tragic at all. In the poem "death" is a friend or even a lover found to compensate her for love and familial frustrations. Masud approves that Smith "considers death as a satisfying final release from the trap of pain and fear" (Masud, 2018: P.443). Thus as she gets submerged in the water of the river, death starts the courting. For the first time Smith is seen happy and satisfied. Such a feeling promotes pitying her situation. The setting in the poem is romantic and promising; the "moon [is] rising" as "light" is still lurking from the "east". Smith is speaking optimistically of a "dawn" marking a new stage in her life; the Lacanian stage of the "Real" upon which she can re-experience the lost moments of union with the mother who previously passed away through the gates of death, this time death is her gate way to attain what she considers as "Real".

Smith groups an image of water, a symbol of the unconscious, with that of death seen as a lover-substitute. Smith looks upon death as a friend. Smith did not fear death, "she looked up to it, ran to it when she was hurt, needed its love" (Bedient, 1975:139). In "The River Deben", Smith writes in rhyming triplets of a nursery lulling note. Smith's harmonious relationship with death is echoed in the perfect rhyme. The lines, however, "suggest a sophisticated, adult, metaphysical awareness of the rhythms, edges and physic depth of life. And continuously, there is the drowsy acquiescence in a dream with its insistent glimpse of death" (Lawson, 1982:100). Smith has looked upon being alive as "being in the enemy territory" (Dick, 1971: 45). The contrast puts death in the camp of friends; however, "The River Deben" introduces "death" as a lover who "smiles" and speaks of "smiles ... in the boat at night". Smith reaches the order of the Real through death as a stage of reunion with the ideal other or mother. Smith, then, finds compensation of the previous abandonment of father and lovers through the company of death.

Unquickened by the questing conscious flame
That is my glory and my bitter bane.
What care I if the Skies are blue,
If god created Gnat and Gnu,
What care I if good God be
If he be not good to me. (*Collected Poems*, p.18)

The title, "Egocentric", unfolds much about Smith's concept of life; the poem unfolds a realistic vision that views God as supreme and overpowering. The same realistic vision looks upon humanity as fallen. However, the very title could refer to a bereft life devoid of familial warmth and love. Smith builds her stance upon a feeling of divine abandonment and as consequence she overtly requests God to prove His "goodness" the same as He has demonstrated His creativeness. Smith appeals for one basic principle of Christianity: that which attributes "goodness" to God; in agony she doubts "If [God] be not good to" her. Moreover, her questioning tone of "what" followed by the conditional "if" repeated in the poem intensifies her agony and her doubting attitude. Repetition is one important technique witnessed in "Egocentric". At one level, Smith employs conjunctive "and" several times in the poem. Through this technique Smith parodies the biblical style. "And" as verse opener is frequently used in Genesis in which God is speaking of the process of creating the universe. In the Bible "and" as starting a verse is a paratactic device employed to impart an atmosphere of abruptness looming around the creative experience; an experience that needs no introductory stage or preparation. The same way, Smith uses paratactic phrases starting with "He made", the abruptness of which parodies the abrupt creative process.

Aware of her human imperfections, Smith speaks of a supreme God who might delay His compassion with her miserable condition. In "Egocentric", she expects God to be "good" for all His creatures; however her melancholy and loneliness push her to the verge of doubting the Christian dogma of God's "goodness". Smith's stance reveals a skeptical soul; however, she admits the existence of God. Smith's God is seen through a realistic vision revealing Him as transcendent. This brings to the mind the realistic view on man as a helpless creature who is thrown into hostile surroundings. The poet gives a patriarchal image of an all-powerful God who afflicts the Eden-fallen man with pains and sufferings because of an ancestral sin. Smith suffers a predestined punishment. Smith's self-centered father seems to be the punishment allocated to her by God. Therefore, Smith suffers from having a careless father seen as "not good". This situation is aggravated upon resorting to a transcendent God irresponsive of her petitions. She admits the creativeness of God as shown by a sequence of semi-paralleled structures: "He made the sun", "He made the infant owl", and "He made the silent inhumanity". Thus, Smith tries to soften her sense of despair through referring to God as creator responsible for His creatures. Shedding light on this issue James Najarian finds that Smith's "religious sense often mutes her frequent sense of despair" as "God is personified as Creator and Protector"(Najarian, 2003:474). However as her despair increases, her need for God the protector intensifies.

Smith deplores her plight as thrown in a community of "silent inhumanity". The symbolic image of the father lurks again. At the symbolic stage Smith correlates unconsciously between the leaving of the father, the "unrespected papa", and the inattentiveness of a caring God described as "good". In "Egocentric", despite her anger and helplessness, Smith is still a believer who is distanced from the agnostic view on deity. Such view shows objection to some argument about the existence of God.

Atheistic agnosticism does not claim to know the existence of any deity nor believing in any deity, for there is no proof of either the existence or the non-existence of any deity since it appears unconcerned about the universe or its inhabitants (Slater, 1996:238).

Smith admits the existence of God through an exposition of His creativeness, yet she grieves her inability to experience His mercy and care. Angry as she is, Smith declares: "What care I if the Skies are blue, /If god made gnat or gnu". That is why she chooses to be "Nescient and quiescent". However, without a caring God her life becomes unbearable, Smith cannot cope with being God-forsaken. Reaching this stage, Smith has judged her life as "vile" in a world controlled and overwhelmed by the male figure, the "silent inhumanity," and the bereavement of God's care and love. Smith's realistic vision of the miserableness of her life appears again in "The Reason" in which she takes her anger into a further developmental step; a step that leads her to ponder on suicide:

My life is vile
I hate it so

"any man's frown". The repetition of "Forgive me" echoes such determination; moreover, she even adopts a "careless" stance with regard to any future relationship. However, such a stance has developed into a pathetic one at the final stanza as she faces loneliness with "no friend" in an isolated and hostile "desert of sand".

The poem opens with a technique of repetition enhancing the speaker's authoritative voice over her destiny. It is a voice that shows a determination to remain practicing a tight control not to be spoiled by any male overpowering force. Clearly shown also is the speaker's view on love as a threat to her personal independence, this is felt from the tone of fear upon asking: "Yet would I not keep it forever alone"? Irony here does not spring from her fear of being lonely and isolated; it springs from her keenness to remain lonely and independent. Smith offers a contrast between her meditative "fancy" that "carelessly roved" and her "heart" that claims a status of a rational mind "unmoved" by passion.

The rhyme scheme also reflects an authoritative tone as well as a theme of independence. Each stanza contains three rhyming lines ending with suggestive words. In stanza one, thus, the possessive word "own" rhymes with the individuality indicating word "alone" despite the "frown" at the medial position.

The strict structure of poem echoes Smith's strict determination. The poem is written in iambic pentameter; however, variation occurs to pinpoint some emphatic points. Therefore, the initial line in each stanza contains an extra stressed syllable; those lines introduce three affirmative statements: "my heart is my own", "I thought that I loved", and "I stand". The same way, the final line in the poem shows Smith as left alone in her "desert of sand". Smith finally finds herself in a chaotic and loveless desert of sand reminiscent of the frightful "sands of the desert" in Yeats's "The Second Coming" imaging a chaotic existence and a frightening situation "somewhere in sands of the desert/ A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun" (Allison, *et al.*, 2005: 1196). In spite of this, Smith will not succumb to any imprisoning power even if it is love, for she is still suffering the aftermath of her father's abandonment and she cannot relive that experience with any man torturing her with his "frown". It is true that "She was heterosexual, but she found the rituals of courtship mainly idiotic and she became extremely skeptical about the alleged connection between marriage and happiness; solitude was preferable to entrapment" (Halliday, 2009: 297).

The poem offers a contrast between "love" as occupying the realm of "fancy", or the imaginary, and being "alone" as a status quo formed by the symbolic order that offers the father as signifier and other men as "signified". Lacan's "signification" uncovers Smith's trauma as she predicates her "fancy" with the verb "roved" to show her doubting attitude towards love. The signifier "rove" descends from Middle English meaning the "shoot[ing] with arrows", the word also comes from Dutch *roover*, meaning pirate (Skeat, 1993: 455). Sea images persist to emerge to mark her father's escape to sea. It is clear that Smith takes a hostile stance against an enslaving type of love ending up with abandonment. Her fear even aggravates as she fuses the concept of the authoritative and patriarchal father with the concept of God who is frequently referred to as Father. In a recent article Masud and White have remarked that "Smith has attracted many readings as a feminist writer who performs subversion of patriarchal norms" (Masud & White, 2018: 293).

Further developing her argument, Smith touches upon religious issues. In her young age, Smith "delighted as a child and as a young woman in the ceremony, ritual, and Prayer Book in Church" (Mahoney, 1998: 322). However, Smith's religious affiliations and her rather religious upbringing failed to make her accept a God claiming a patriarchal authority. Consequently, and in application of Lacan's concept of signification, Smith develops her symbolic powers in face of all patriarchal authorities including the divine power of God claiming a universal Fathering figure. Smith fears that the previous abandonment of father can be echoed again and reinforced by the abandonment of a loving God. Stuck in her uncertainties, Smith worries that the divine care to which she resorts might be practicing the same male authority. Smith communicates this in "Egocentric":

What care I if good God be
If he be not good to me,
If he will not hear my cry
Nor heed my melancholy midnight sigh?
What care I if he created Lamb,
And golden Lion, and a mud-delighted Clam,
And Tiger stepping out on the padded toe,
And the fecund earth the blindworms know?
He made the sun, the moon and every star,
He made the infant owl and the baboon
He made the ruby-orbed pelican,
He made the silent inhumanity,
Nescient and quiescent to his will,

The poem opens with an optimistic tone of a girl in love with an officer described as "the sweetest major". The second stanza witnesses a shift in tone as the young girl discovers that he is "such a bore", a phrase repeated to stress a feeling of disappointment. Such a fact leads to a final declaration that her love to him was not true. This discovery issues from a contrasted situation that springs from the two contrasted phrases; "I used to think" and "I don't think". The third stanza marks the final phase in the love story. Smith shifts into a detached or even sneering tone as she tells of Spruce's death hinted at as if it forms no significant part of the story. Thus, the progression the poet speaks of is an ironic one.

"Progression" opens with a love theme, however later on the poem turns into an elegy. The poem has an elegiac form of three quatrains, however the poem is not a fully structured elegy if compared to traditional elegies; it seems that Smith takes the death of Major Spruce lightly. In stanza one Smith refers to Spruce as the "sweetest", this does not go ajar with traditional elegies that open with enumerating the virtues of the deceased. The early death of Spruce is spatially indicated by a three-foot line echoing his short life: "And only 39". In the second stanza, Spruce is described twice as "bore" and that she "used to think [that she] was in love with him". She concludes that she does not "think so any more". In the third and final stanza Smith contradicts elegiac traditions and reaches a high level of comedy as she tells us that he is now dead: "Didn't I tell you"? Smith cannot repeat her mother's tragedy and get married even to a person that she loves; she is against all patriarchal authority. If her father stands for the "signifier" then Major Spruce will acclaim the position of the "signified". Smith has been involved in a love relationship twice.

The first, Karl Eckinger, was a dashing German intellectual, whom some of Stevie's friends believed to be affiliated with Nazi beliefs. His relationship with Smith likely fell apart due to politics. Shortly thereafter, she met with the lackluster but enduring Eric Armitage, an insurance worker (Spalding, 1988: 15).

The two relationships never culminate into a marriage. If "Spruce" as a word is taken as a "signifier," it can expose an aura of "signified" shedding more light on Smith's personal life. First, "Spruce" is etymologically related to the term "pruce" which means related to Prussia that was a German province which was originally located in northeast Europe. "Spruce" means "fine [and] smart. Hall's Chronicle tells us that a particular kind of fashionable dress was that in which men were appareled after the manner of Prussia or Spruce" (Skeat, 1993:510). For this reason, Major Spruce could be a representation of her first fiancé, Karl Eckinger. Being accused of Nazi affiliations, Karl Eckinger widens the scope of the symbolic order to embrace political overtones.

However, the "name of the father" is still lurking as a symbolic force, "Major Spruce" echoes again the old pain caused by the father who abandons the family for the sea. Describing Spruce as the signifier, the word "bore" relates him to the figure of the leaving father or rather the leaving lover as signified, for the word links both to the sea. The word "bore", "issuing from Scandinavian, means a tidal surge, a wave. Perhaps from Icelandic *bara*, [which means] a billow caused by wind" (Skeat, 1993:56). Smith is psychologically scarred by the abandonment of her father: "In 1906, Charles Ward Smith ran off to sea to work on the commercial White Star Line, leaving behind his sickly wife and two daughters" (Walsh, 2004:58).

"Forgive me, forgive me" is a poem that continues in taking the "signifier" father for another "signified" lover. Thus, Smith, in the symbolic stage, takes the male figure as a representative of the oppressive authorities that curb a person from practicing his/her freedom. However, she grieves the possibility that she may remain living alone forever. The poem shows her attitude concerning any future relationship with man.

Forgive me forgive me my heart is my own
And not to be given for any man's frown
Yet would I not keep it forever alone.

Forgive me forgive me I thought that I loved
My fancy betrayed me my heart was unmoved
My fancy too often has carelessly roved.

Forgive me forgive me for here where I stand
There is no friend beside me no lover at hand
No footstep but mine in my desert of sand. (*Collected Poems*, p.23)

"Forgive me, forgive me" is a strictly structured poem in rhyming tercets in which Smith declares her determination not to be controlled by any overpowering patriarchal authority even if it is of a lover. She would not bear

The poem reveals a state of feminine double helplessness of a "baby" girl and her abandoned mother. Both seem to fall under the oppression of a patriarchal order and a hostile world of "alarms" and fragmentation. According to Lacan, the lack of being whole and unified is a feeling created once a child is separate from mother. Thus, "many alarms" are issued to warn the "baby" before being "born". A fact intensified with the employment of a war lexical field looming through the first four lines in the poem; the connotations of "arms" and "alarms" never miss some aggressive overtones. Also, the contrast between the prenatal oneness with the mother and being abandoned by father in a sad world further stresses the Lacanian lost equilibrium with mother as the baby develops in age. Smith, then, refers to the predicament of a mother who is left "sad" and "without a friend". The absence of the father and husband, fleeing away from his responsibilities as he "tarries in Ostend", enhances the condition of fragility.

In the poem, Smith further develops in the symbolic stage at which she takes the oppressive father as representing all repressive rules of the society. For this reason, the girl becomes "cynical", a powerfully expressive adjective meaning the showing of contempt for accepted standards and leading to a complicated feeling of distrust. Etymologically, "cynic" issues from Latin *cynicus* which means "dog-like" (Skeat, 1993:126), it also refers to an action motivated by base desires. Recalling Freudian Psychology, base desires are put in check by the law of the father. On the other hand the signifier "babe" could be signified in slang English as "an attractive woman". In reference to Electra's complex Smith desires the father who departed thus turning from a lover into an object of hatred fixation.

This leads to a condition in which Smith is grieving a lost lover, father. At this stage, father becomes the repressive power of whatever curbing a person from restoring the imaginary stage of union with the mother in the pre-speech stage. Surprisingly, "babe" comes from "babble" which means "to keep on saying *ba, ba*, syllables imitative of a child's attempts to speak" (Skeat, 1993:34). Sometimes Smith, the child, resorts to utter silence, she "had the habit of suddenly turning cold and stiff" (Spalding, 1988: 15). In Lacan's analysis, the father represents culture as well as language. Thus, by imposing the "*nom du pere*", the father imposes the law and becomes the one who shapes "the Symbolic world, dominated by patriarchal order, [which] posits a hostile environment for the poet. The Symbolic Order is fundamentally all that [Smith] has to fight against and surpass in her struggle to survive" (Ragland-Sullivan, 1986:16). In the poem, it is "the father" who makes the "mother sad" and is heedless of the family as he "tarries in Ostend". The rather long sentence opening the poem contributes to the hasty confessing mode and the quick pacing of the speaker. Still, the confused state of the speaker is echoed in the structure of the poem, no rhyme or rhythm schemes are kept.

Being able to speak, she has psychologically, according to Lacan, developed further into the stage of using language even becoming "cynical", thus approaching the symbolic. The cause for being "cynical" is quite clear; however, her early stance developed against her father mirrors all her subsequent relationships with those who represent his patriarchal authority. Add to this is her love frustrations echoed well in her poem, "Progression". In this poem Smith has referred to her attitude towards a love relationship of which she is not sure. She expresses her ambivalence and even doubt towards a relationship hardly called love ended with the death of the lover, "Major Spruce" who has "grown such a bore". The disconcerted tone of the poem and the aloof stance of the speaker stress that feeling:

I fell in love with Major Spruce
And never gave a sign
The sweetest Major in the force
And only 39.

It is Major Spruce
And he's, such a bore, such a bore,
I used to think I was in love with him
Well, I don't think so any more.

It was the Major Spruce.
He died. Didn't I tell you?
He was the last of the Spruces,
And about him too. (*Collected Poems*, p.24)

In the poem, the speaker focuses on her love affair with "Major Spruce". As the title "Progression" indicates, the story ironically progresses from love which is a Freudian symptom of the Eros-drive to reach the opposite extreme, that of "death". Thus, Smith intends that progression to be a process of deterioration and descend as indicated by the structure of the poem. The poem appears with a form of quatrains arranged to give the shape of a descending staircase.

The very title of the poem, "Papa Love Baby", reflects a child-like language of a loose grammar and no accurate formal structure. Adding to this is the confessional tone that retains a touch of innocence characteristic of a "baby in a carriage". However, the poet adopts a realistic vision as revealed in her freeing the poem from imaginative figurative language. In the revealing of a reality of "fate" and "foolish marriage", Smith employs a taut style of clear and conversational words embedded within a succinct syntax. What is ironic is that the speaker is a "child of three", yet able to offer a judgment about her mother's marriage as "foolish". Therefore, the poem clearly shows a reciprocal relationship between innocence and awareness. Stephen James notices that "many Stevie Smith poems prompt the reader to consider the 'equivocal' relationship between innocence and awareness and in particular between a precarious childish naivety and incipient or tacit adult perception" (James, 2018:336). Though the speaker in the poem is a "child of three", she speaks of the insignificance of the romantic experience of the father-mother union. Smith concludes that the mother's being a "romantic girl" has brought about all the disastrous consequences. Not at full grasp of the language, the child "sat upright" to decide about the marriage, a decision that is shown in the "eyes" rather than in spoken words as the "baby" is still under the influence of the mirror pre-language stage.

The speaker's chaotic experience echoes the rather confused order of the poem's structure. The exigencies of the childhood experiences of a girl opens her mirror stage with a double separation: that form the oneness with mother and the union with a departing father. Smith was not an Electra; father is not the lover-like attraction. He is rather an "unrespected papa". Such disrespect is echoed in a form that lacks a well-wrought rhyme scheme. Provided that the lines exhibit various metrical structures, Smith exposes no fixed rhythm scheme. Therefore, the resulting metrical disorder is meant to echo the psychological disorder that the poet experiences. It seems that Smith's disrespect for her father echoes a poetic form pertinent for the situation. So that in the first two lines "girl" rhymes with "curl" as the poet is speaking about her naively "romantic" mother who fell in love with a man because of styling "his hair in curl". The equilibrium of rhyme here is not echoed in the third and the fourth lines; "papa" is left with no rhyming echo so as to signal a lack of a sound relationship between a daughter and her father. It seems to some extent that Smith develops an oedipal relationship with the father figure. Freud believes that girls, the same as boys, could suffer an oedipal complex. Commenting on Freud's libido theory, Nagera concurs that "the Oedipus Complex in a girl issues from a state of phallic envy which is powered by the recognition of both herself and her mother as 'castrated', powerless beings" (Nagera *et al.*, 1969: 62).

Smith's attitude springs not from viewing father as oppressive of desires but as negligent of his duties towards his family. Consequently, "around the time of her father's departure, Stevie Smith began suffering from episodes that can only be described as fits" (Walsh, 2004:60). For this reason, she refuses the Freudian principle that "daughters are always supposed to be / In love with papa". Significant also is the rhyming of "leave" with "grieve" in the final stanza. The abandonment of the father for his family causes great and cureless sadness. At this point she first indicates her approaching of the symbolic stage that occurs as the child starts to speak. The symbolic stage marks the law of the father. Indirectly referring to it, Stevie speaks of "the sad fate" befalling a "child of three". Applying Lacan's principle of signification, the signifier "fate" could very well refer to the symbolic order at which the child starts using language. The word "fate" originates from Latin *fatum* meaning "what is spoken", "fate" also derives from *fari* meaning "to speak" (Skeat, 1993:180).

As concerning rhythm, the little figure of the fragile girl is indicted by the four-syllable line; "A child of three", which is put in face of a long unsuccessful marriage spoken of in a fourteen-syllable line: "And wished mama hadn't made such a foolish marriage". Moreover, the enjambment technique adopted in the poem is an indicator of a hasty arguing and confessing. Smith is revealing her traumatic childhood experience shaping the future life of a three-year-old girl initiating into a poet. In "Papa Love Baby", a poem-com-psychoanalytic session, Smith appears as a confessional poet who presents a revealing of the self.

In her "Infant" Stevie shows the experience of living alone with mother without a caring father. A situation that aggravates the difficulties that Smith the young girl faces. Therefore, she becomes skeptical about familial relationships:

It was a cynical babe
Lay in its mother's arms
Born two month too soon
After many alarms
Why is its mother sad
Weeping without a friend
Where is its father – say?
He tarries in Ostend.
It was a cynical babe. Reader before you condemn, pause,
It was a cynical babe. Not without cause. (*Collected Poems*, p.33)

other hand, Smith, the artist, aspires for an imaginary world of autonomy. Stevie develops to a more advanced state to reach what Lacan terms as the Real; the real is the final circle in the Lacanian trilogy of the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real. Failing to accomplish her imaginary world of equilibrium, Smith resorts to death as an inevitable truth and as an undoubted real, a stage at which she could be reunited with the mother. In fact, Smith rejects the symbolic order represented by what Lacan terms (Name-of-the-father), more clearly described as the imposition of law by the father. According to Lacan, the father represents the culture and language. Moreover, imposing the law of the father puts to the foreground "the symbolic order and the separation from the state of non-consciousness of the Imaginary" (Carbonell, 2015: 23). Stevie Smith emerges as unable to come to terms with the masculine, hostile world of the symbolic order.

Closely related to the three orders is Lacan's introduction of three *Others* which play a crucial role in dominating or even shaping an individual's psyche basing his argument on Saussure's concept of signs. Saussure has viewed a sign as made up of two elements; the signifier and the signified. Lacan has countered Saussure's structural unity of the signifier and the signified. Instead, Lacan introduces a concept of a *Signifier* referred to with "S" that has no structural unity with the signified referred to with "s". This condition opens the issue for the interplay of the postmodern maneuvers with the unbound signification of words. The Signifier is the primary notion and stands above the signified and separated by a dividing bar. The bar is important because it indicated that the signifier bears no relation to its meaning effects. The function of the signifier is to found a basis for the symbolic dimension covering numerous images of the signified. That is why the symbolic order starts at an age during which the individual starts to use language. Therefore, the *Other* could stand for different *others*. Summing up Lacan's concept of the *Other*, Ragland-Sullivan writes:

For Lacan, the *Other* had various meanings: on the first level it means the various external forces that structure a primary and secondary unconscious, that is, in the mirror stage, the relationship with the Real Other or mother, (m)Other; on a second level, it means the unconscious as the discourse of the Other; and on the third level, it is the father, the Symbolic Order representative of the cultural character of the Other (Ragland-Sullivan, 1986:16).

Father as a suppressing Other has a critical role to play in shaping Smith's familial and emotional lives. Her mother's fragile health condition has been aggravated with the abandonment of Smith's father. Smith herself has fallen ill to the point of being sent to convalescence. "Smith's separation from her family was complex, functioning on emotional and physical planes. Neither parent was dependable" (Barbera and McBrien, 1985: 13). Being lonely and losing the first equilibrium with the Real other or mother at an early age, Smith finds herself put in an endless search for claiming back those moments of union with the mother at the mirror stage salvaged through the imaginary order regained through art.

From early childhood the figure of the father represents the villain in Smith's life, this is shown clear in her "Papa Love Baby" from *A Good Time Was Had By All* (1937).

My mother was a romantic girl
So she had to marry a man with his hair in curl
Who subsequently became my unrespected papa,
But was long time ago now.

What folly it is that daughters are always supposed to be
In love with papa. It wasn't the case with me
I couldn't take to him at all
But he took to me
What a sad fate to befall
A child of three.
I sat upright in my baby carriage
And wished mama hadn't made such a foolish marriage.
I tried to hid it, but it showed in my eyes unfortunately
And a fortnight later papa ran away to sea.

He used to come home on leave
It was always the same
I could not grieve
But I think I was somewhat to blame. (*Collected Poems*, p.16)

A mid-twentieth century English poet; Stevie Smith was first published in 1936. She did not become popular until the 1950s and the 1960s. She received the Queen's Medal for poetry in 1969, two years before her death in 1971. She has exposed a wide range of themes mostly handled with a comic touch. Smith's style is "lyrical-sardonic", featuring "shocks of pain and laughter" that were "grimly entertaining" (Barbera and McBrien, 1985: 102). However, love and death have always been the most recurrent themes in the poetry of Stevie Smith. Love issues from a life-drive while death stands at the other extreme, both have preoccupied Smith to the point of obsession. However, death-drive has been superseded to be looked upon positively: George Stonier finds that "she is in love with Death" (Stonier, 1938: 930). Perhaps because of a frustrated love, and a frustrated father-daughter relationship, she resorts to death as lover. The argument, thus, touches upon issues in psychology, since the autobiographic element is forcefully present in her early poetry. Referring to the confessional, self-revealing character of Smith's poetry, Philip Larkin described her writing as that of "...the feminine doodler or jotter, who puts down everything as it strikes, no matter how silly or tragic" (Larkin, 1991:76). Jacques Lacan's model of the human psyche is applied in Smith's poetry.

Lacan believes that the human psyche consists of three *orders*: the imaginary, the symbolic and the real. "The imaginary occurs in the pre-mirror and the mirror stage, before the subject enters the symbolic world, which imposes the Law" (Lacan, 1977: 216). Somewhere between the age of six and eighteen months, we enter what Lacan calls the looking glass or mirror stage. In this stage, we literally see ourselves in a mirror while metaphorically seeing ourselves in our mother's image. Once we learn that we are individual beings who are separate from our mothers, we are ready to enter Lacan's second developmental phase, the symbolic order. At this stage, "it is the symbolic and not the imaginary that is seen to be the determining order of the subject" (Lacan, 1977: 216). Whereas in the imaginary order "we delight in the presence of our mother, in the symbolic order we learn that our father comes to represent culture norms and laws. The third element of the psyche is the real order" (Bressler, 2003:134). On the one hand, this order consists of the physical world, including the material universe and everything in it; while the real order also symbolizes all that a person is not, sought again by recalling an imaginary state of a reunion with the mother. Therefore, Lacan's three constituents of the psyche express three versions of awareness:

The Imaginary expresses the image of the ego created through identification with a mirror image, namely, a reflection through the eyes of the other, for example, the (m)other. ...The Symbolic Order is the expression of culture and the social world that is structured by laws which regulate kinship and exchange relations. In contrast to the Symbolic Order, which is built upon contradictions, for example, the contradiction between presence and absence, the Real contains no contradictions and is always complete (Schreiber *et al.*, 2019:183).

Lacan believes that "literature has the particular ability to call up a brief moment of joy ... or desire" (Bressler, 2003:136). Thus, an artist could live the experience of the real order upon obtaining moments of artistic fulfillment and stability. Such stability is created in the realm of literary creation. So, it becomes clear that the order of the real marks "the lack of [the patriarchal authority of] the Name-of-the-Father..., a point at which signifier and signified are stabilized in metaphor" (Lacan, 1977: 217). Add to this, Lacan claims that "the unconscious is structured like a language" (Lacan 2007: 112). By calling the unconscious "like a language", Lacan emphasizes the role of representation in psychological formation. Literature achieves its function through the creative use of language. Looking upon the creative writer as an analyst and or a person who is undergoing psychoanalysis, Lacan takes literature as a medium that can reveal much about an author's unconscious. Commenting on this Richard Coble writes:

The unconscious, then, is "*like a language*" in that it holds the place of and seeks to express unassimilated desire not spoken in words and therefore unknown by the person. This unconscious desire comes out in failures and interruptions of language and thought, in Freudian slips, in speech and nonsense that make desires known beyond the speaker's control (Coble, 2019: 566).

Early in her poetry, Smith has always rejected the symbolic order represented by the law of the father. In Lacanian terms, this research work focuses on Smith's surpassing of the symbolic to arrive at the imaginary. On the personal level, Smith does not show much respect for her father who has deserted her mother when Stevie was just three years old. Therefore, Smith exposes her breaking off the symbolic authority of all figures that stand for the patriarchal forces curbing her from attaining herself as person and as an artist finding her true identity in the world of the imaginary. Smith's imaginary world is a world of equilibrium in which she gets identified with the figure of the mother, the perfect image discovered at the mirror stage in which the young child becomes aware of him/herself as identified with the other. On the

الإبحار عبر الرمزي إلى الخيالي والتوق للواقعي في شعر ستيفي سميث: دراسة تحليلية نفسية من منظور جاك لاكان

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ملخص الدراسة

يهدف البحث إلى دراسة شعر ستيفي سميث (١٩٠٢ - ١٩٧١) في إطار رؤية جاك لاكان للتحليل النفسي وبالتركيز على ديوانها الشعري "وأَمْضَى الجميع وقت طيب" (١٩٣٧)، ويعد البحث دراسة نفسية تحليلية لسيرة الشاعرة الذاتية التي ترصد تجارب طفولتها وشبابها، وذلك في ضوء مفهوم لاكان للنفس البشرية حيث يرى أن النفس البشرية تتشكل عبر ثلاث مراحل هي المرحلة الخيالية والمرحلة الرمزية والمرحلة الواقعية حيث يكون الطفل في المرحلة الأولى غير قادر على الكلام وفيها يشعر بالأمان والتوحد مع الأم. ثم تبدأ المرحلة الرمزية عندما يصبح الطفل قادراً على استخدام اللغة، ويعزو فيها كل الإحباطات المفروضة على النفس إلى الأب، والنظرة إليه كونه منافساً له في علاقته بالأم، وينظر للأب على أنه رمز لكل أشكال التسلط الأبوي والاجتماعي، ويتضح هذا في صورة الأب عند الشاعرة الذي هجر بيته وترك أسرته، وأيضاً صورة الرجل المتمثلة في خطيبها الذي لم تجد فيه ضالتها، وتتبني سميث فكرة الموت باعتبارها ممثلاً للمرحلة الواقعية، والتي تمثل التوازن الذي يمكن من خلاله أن تستعيد الشاعرة لم الشمل مع والدتها المتوفاة، والتي كانت مصدرها للحب الحقيقي والأمان.

الكلمات المفنحية: الخيالي، لاكان، الحقيقي، الرمزي، الأم، الحب، الموت.

Navigating from the Symbolic to the Imaginary and Craving for the Real in the Poetry of Stevie Smith: A Lacanian Psychoanalytic Study

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Abstract

This study examines the poetry of Stevie Smith (1902-71) with the adoption of Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic approach. Special reference is made to her volume entitled, *A Good Time Was Had By All* (1937), an autobiographical work that figures out her childhood experiences. Pivotal to this study is Lacan's concept of the psyche where the three parts, or "orders", of the human psyche are examined. According to Lacan, these orders are the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. The imaginary or the mirror stage is marked by a state of security resulting from a condition of oneness with the mother. The symbolic stage, which starts at an age when the child is able to use language, attributes all the frustrations imposed on the child's psyche to the "nom du pere" or the name of the father seen as rival, where he stands for the law imposed by the society. Smith implements the father's image as a symbol of all patriarchal authorities and hostile powers represented by the male figures in her life; including her two fiancés. Finally, Smith focuses on death with the aim of arriving at the developmental stage of the Real order which represents an equilibrium at which the poetess could regain moments of reunion with her dead mother, the source of real love and security.

Keywords: The Imaginary, Lacan, the Real, the Symbolic, Mother, Love, Death.

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