
Representations Of Violence Towards Women In The Works Of O'Connor, Carver, And Plath

In the works of O'Connor, Carver, and Plath, violence against women is a major and serious problem that menaces the wellbeing of women and has a negative effect on their lives. The word, violence can evoke many images of assault, abuse, and even murder. Violence is one of the main topics in O'Connor's, Carver's and Plath's works. It appears in various ways in these writings. Violence can be categorized differently. For instance, there is physical violence, emotional abuse, verbal abuse, and self-harm. Accordingly, suicide can be classified in the category of violence, too. It should be noted that not all violence is physical. There are several cases when emotional pain is much worse than physical pain. The principal cause for a person who is often being violent is that he or she wants to establish, maintain power and control another person. In the past male-dominant societies, violence against women has been tolerated because many cultures have treated and some of them continue to view women just as subservient or as a commodity. Because of this, women had to comply with the orders of the male who dominated them. Therefore, beating women was prevalent and a part of the culture in several places. Moreover, the violence was considered legal in some cases, like raping women in the time of war, or the execution, the burning of witches.

The theme of violence is really significant in Sylvia Plath's poetry. In the poem "Daddy" she criticizes the male aggression towards the women and also refers to the domestic violence that she experiences in her own life. It is estimated that about 25% of women experience intimate partner violence over their lifetimes in western countries (Gracia, 1). It is an unquestionably serious problem in our societies, in terms of how widespread it is (Gracia 1). It is prevalent that the stories of abuse are unreported or often kept as a secret. As a consequence, it does not raise people's attention to this issue and seemed less important to society. The poem "Daddy" not only reflects the relationship with his father but also makes references to his husband, Ted Hughes. Plath writes in the poem "Daddy" that: "I made a model of you, / A man in black with a Meinkampf look / And a love of the rack and the screw." (Plath, 31). It implies that her relationship with Ted Hughes was troubled. He was tender towards her through frequent crises during the seven years they were together. Plath asserts that his husband, Ted Hughes beat her two days before she miscarried their second child and Hughes wanted her to be dead as it was revealed in some unpublished letters. (Kean, no page.) The stereotype of women who like abusive, strong men is accurate considering Sylvia Plath. She writes in her poem, that "Every woman adores a fascist, / The boot in the face, the brute/ Brute heart of a brute like you." (Plath, 31).

In Flannery O'Connor's short story "A good man is hard to find" the central topic is violence and cruelty which appears in various ways against the female characters. Flannery O'Connor has this statement about violence in her stories: "In my own stories I have found that violence is strangely capable of returning my characters to reality and preparing them to accept their moment of grace." (Alberg, no page.). It does not mean that being exposed to violence makes us better people, but experiencing violence can change us. On one hand, the Misfit is considered the miscreant, but on the other hand, the members of the family are often atrocious to one another and seemingly not so good people. For example, the father is cruel to the grandmother, because he always speaks disrespectfully to her. In addition, the children find the

pleasure of making fun of the grandmother, insulting her and speaking disrespectfully to her. The family seems to find the grandmother aggravating and really irritating. For instance, they completely ignore her after the car accident, when the grandmother said: 'I believe I have injured an organ.' (O'Connor, 10). Nevertheless, no one gave a response to her. The Misfit treated the grandmother in the most atrocious way. She was the last alive person in the family and she had to see how the Misfit kills her entire family and after that, she had to face the killers alone. The grandmother believed, that The Misfit would not shoot a lady, as she asserted in the story 'You wouldn't shoot a lady, would you?' (O'Connor 11). Although, the Misfit does not show grace or mercy.

In Raymond Carver's short story "What we talk about when we talk about love", the characters constantly hurt one another in the name of love and the story demonstrates how love can easily become hate and generate violence. Violence against women is a constantly present image throughout the narrative and appears in different ways in the lives of the characters. Both, Terri and Mel experience violence in their previous relationships. In Terri's relationship with Ed, the husband became aggressive and beats her a lot. In Mel's relationship with Marjorie love changes into hate. First of all, violence is strongly connected with love because Terri believes that the violence, she experienced from his ex-husband derived from love. Ed abused Terri physically and he also threatened to kill her. This kind of love can be really unhealthy when a person becomes too possessive and dependent on another. What is more, the line 'I love you, you bitch' (Carver, 8) can be truly outrageous. If someone honestly loves a person, he or she should not speak to her in such a dreadful, appalling manner. Secondly, Mel is definitely an alcoholic person. He dominates the conversation between their friends and the tone of the conversation changes as he becomes increasingly drunk. Mel behaviour also shifts as Raymond Carver writes in the story: "When he was sober, his gestures, all his movements, were precise, very careful." (7). Mel started to seem aggressive when he became increasingly drunk. He not just threatens her wife and shows no respect for her, but also has a vicious thought to murder his ex-wife. He explained in the story that Marjorie is allergic to bee stings and contemplated releasing a swarm of bees into her house.

Throughout the stories, different acts of violence both physical and verbal acts are portrayed and shown. In the works of Carver, Plath, and O'Connor, women characters suffered a lot because of violence that they had to experience. It could easily destroy someone's life or make someone miserable and in the most brutal cases could kill a person. Violence serves a purpose in all of the stories. For instance, in O'Connor short story it helps the Grandmother to see how hateful her prejudice is towards others. In Carver's work, simply demonstrates how love can easily turn into a disparate emotion and in Plath's poems, she demonstrates her tragic relationship with her husband. Feminist movements of the 20th century drew attention to this problem and they started to find an appropriate solution for it. In the present day, campaigns and demonstrations are organised to stand up for the rights of women. The aim of the several demonstrations in 2018 was to eliminate the violence against women. Individuals and organizations fought the kind of violence that affects more than a third of women all around the world. (Minder, no page.) Furthermore, gender-based violence affects families, schools, and workplaces too. (Minder, no page.). As Mr Tajani said about gender-based violence: "It is not normal that it's normal". (Minder, no page.).