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ON MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS:  
A COMPARATIVE READING OF JELENA  
LENGOLD'S *BALTIMORE* AND SYLVIA  
PLATH'S *THE BELL JAR*

**Abstract:** This paper explores the literary interconnections between the 2003 novel *Baltimore* by Jelena Lengold and Sylvia Plath's 1963 novel *The Bell Jar*, with a focus on the mother-daughter dyad. Lengold's *Baltimore* bears a striking resemblance to Plath's only novel: both feature a protagonist/ narrator who is a writer struggling with depression, haunted by past childhood traumas and gloomy visions of the future; both novels are written in a confessional style, although the narratives transcend the confessional genre in different ways; both protagonists describe their relationships with their mothers as mutually antagonistic; and finally, they are both institutionalized for severe depression. Feeling abandoned and betrayed by their mothers, therapists and institutions in general, the protagonists in both novels have to forge their own strategies of empowerment, the most important one being writing, as an act of disloyalty and a possible path to freedom. As the paper analyzes the interactional, emotional, and symbolic aspects of the two models of the mother-daughter relationship, it examines the scope of Lengold's dialogue with Plath as reflected on the thematic, ideological, rhetorical and stylistic levels.

**Keywords:** Jelena Lengold, Sylvia Plath, motherhood, daughterhood, gender, trauma, counter-narrative

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The poetics of the widely acclaimed Serbian author Jelena Lengold, a poet, storyteller and novelist, resists neat classifications. In the words of Vladislava Gordić Petković, one of Lengold's most renowned critics, who has defined her fiction as both – and neither entirely “neorealist” nor “confessional” (2007: 77; 2019a: 134), Lengold “walks on the tightrope of poetics,” as she skillfully ballances the lyrical and the experimental: she writes about the private and the personal, and at the same time maintains full control of the confessional narrative mode (2007: 82). Gordić Petković further notes that her short stories are about “a higher order of reality – about love, as well as loneliness and death,” and about a certain “melancholy which Lengold presents in both ironic and lyrical modes” (2007: 81).

Even though Vladislava Gordić Petković rightfully points to Raymond Carver and Ann Beattie as Lengold's most obvious role models, given her recurring themes and stylistic minimalism (2007: 81–82, 89; 2019a: 134), it can be argued that, to a certain extent, Lengold also engages in a conversation with yet another American author, Sylvia Plath. This paper tries to explore the scope of their dialogue – what appear to be Lengold's deliberate or unintentional intertextual references and allusions to Plath's work, through a close reading of their two novels, Plath's “iconic” novel *The Bell Jar*,<sup>1</sup> published in 1963, and Lengold's *Baltimore*, published in 2003.

*Baltimore* bears a striking resemblance to Plath's only novel, thematically and stylistically, although the two texts are separated by forty years in the writing. Both feature a protagonist/narrator who is haunted by the past childhood traumas and gloomy visions of the future, both protagonists go to therapy sessions and they are institutionalized for severe depression; both novels are marked by a poetic diction, with a strong sense of rhythm and cadence, and they rely heavily on repetition and other rhetorical devices; both are written in a confessional style, although the narratives transcend the confessional genre in different ways; both protagonists describe their relationships with their mothers as mutually antagonistic and in this sense they also belong in the category of what has been described as “daughters' self-exploratory writings;”<sup>2</sup> finally, and importantly enough, the protagonists

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<sup>1</sup> Janet Badia, for example, begins her analysis of *The Bell Jar* by discussing the novel's importance in both literary circles and popular culture (2006: 124).

<sup>2</sup> See Boyd, 1989: 298.

in *Baltimore* and *The Bell Jar* are not only narrators of the story, but also writers. As they try to combat depression, they also struggle to write a novel of their own, and overcome a writer's block, which is at the center of both texts.

The essay addresses the various intersections of the two novels, focusing on the mother-daughter relationship as a defining theme, both literally and symbolically. As it analyzes the different aspects of the two models of the mother-daughter relationship (interactional, emotional, and symbolic), it will examine the extent of Lengold's dialogue with Plath across the temporal and spacial divide, as reflected on the thematic, ideological, rhetorical and stylistic levels.

Despite the shared themes and certain narrative techniques, *Baltimore* differs from *The Bell Jar* in a variety of aspects. *The Bell Jar* is generally perceived as a semi-autobiographical work, which Sylvia Plath first published under the pseudonym Victoria Lucas in 1963, for fear of hurting her "thinly disguised" family, friends and acquaintances (Badia 2006: 126-127), and it was published under her real name only a few years later, in 1967 in the UK, and in 1971 in the US. Scholars have largely defined it as a piece of "confessional writing", which is often used in autobiographies. For example, for Janet McCann, the novel is "somewhere between autobiography and fiction", and she warns that we mustn't "equate" the novelist and the protagonist, Sylvia Plath and Esther Greenwood. While Esther may be analyzed as Plath's "self-representation", she cannot be psychoanalyzed as Plath herself, like in a large number of earliest critical responses to the novel (McCann 2012: vii, 5).

On the other hand, Jelena Lengold's *Baltimore* can hardly be defined as the author's self-representation, although the protagonist is the same age as the author (at the time of the novel's publication), and she also appears to be writing a novel, as readers gradually come to realize. However, even though the story about the protagonist's problem with depression is also told in a confessional mode, within the popular framework of psychotherapy – the narrator announces in the beginning that she plans to tell us "everything about everything" (Lengold, 9), the storytelling tone remains rather playful and ironic. What is more, together with the "I", there is also the "you" to whom the story is told: "You get that, don't you?" (Lengold, 9), a silent naratee through whom Lengold possibly underlines the shared character of the protagonist's experience.

On the other hand, the plot in Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* relies heavily on the author's biography – the time she won a summer internship at a

well-known magazine in New York in 1953. In the novel this short spell of professional fulfillment and general well-being is followed by a breakdown after an attempted rape and the news that Esther Greenwood has not been accepted for a writing course taught by a famous author. As she becomes increasingly mentally unstable, her mother takes her to see psychiatrists, Dr Gordon and Dr Nolan, who proscribe insulin and electroconvulsive therapy for her. Meanwhile Esther struggles with a writer's block, and makes several attempts at suicide, including the sleeping pill overdose.

While Esther Greenwood is 19, the protagonist/narrator in *Baltimore* is 43, and she appears to have lived long enough to experience some of Esther's worst fears, mostly those of loneliness, wrong choices and what she feels is unfulfilled potential. *Baltimore* is a story of a Belgrade author who goes to therapy sessions after experiencing what she defines as a writer's block. Her problem is, as she tells her therapist, that she cannot write a novel, although she *confesses* to the reader that this may not be the real or the only reason for her autumnal mood – “*To me this sounded like an excellent explanation. I almost believed in it myself.*” (Lengold, 18, italics in the original). During the sessions with her psychotherapist, which are considerably less invasive than Esther's as they mostly include therapeutic interviews, drawing, role-play and symbolic decoding, she is asked to closely examine her choices connected to marriage, family and friends. As she comes to realize that she was deeply traumatized by her mother's abandonment in adolescence, she experiences a breakdown and falls into a profound silence. The childhood trauma resurfaces and she remains silent for almost four months during which her husband and mother take her to doctors and hospitals. In the end, in what appears to be a metafictional twist, she tells her therapist that she has finished her novel – the one we have been reading all along. However, despite this achievement, readers are ultimately unsure if she feels healed or suicidal, as the narrative closes with an invocation of Virginia Woolf, and the protagonist's final remark, “I'll go to sleep.” (Lengold, 134).

## 2. WRITING ABANDONMENT

Even though *The Bell Jar* ends on an ambiguously positive note (with Esther's words “I stepped into the room,” 200),<sup>3</sup> we may read it as a story about the problems of becoming an author, as the 19-year old Esther, who

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<sup>3</sup> For further discussion on the ending of *The Bell Jar* see McCann 2007: 9-10.

wins a prize for writing, suddenly feels discouraged from pursuing the career of a novelist. If we accept Linda Wagner-Martin's analysis of *The Bell Jar* as a *Bildungsroman* (Wagner 1986: 55-68), or Vladislava Gordić Petković's argument that it is a novel about an artist as a young woman, i.e. a *Künstlerroman* (Gordić Petković 2019b: 319), we can compare Plath's text to some other portraits of artistic becoming. In this sense, we could analyze this moment in the novel as a speculation on how Stephen Daedalus might have felt if he was a female character – or if he had a twin sister with a writing ambition. Indeed, Esther is preparing to write a study of twins in *Finnegan's Wake*, and allusions to James Joyce can be recognized throughout the novel. However, unlike Joyce's Stephen, Esther repeatedly experiences moments of counter-epiphany and abjection, as in the following example:

I lay on the couch on the breezeway and shut my eyes. I could hear my mother clearing the typewriter and the papers from the card table and laying out the silver for supper, but I didn't move.

*Inertia oozed like molasses through Elaine's limbs. That's what it must feel like to have malaria, she thought.*

At any rate, I'd be lucky if I wrote a page a day.

Then I knew what the trouble was.

I needed experience.

How could I write about life when I'd never had a love affair or a baby or even seen anybody die? A girl I knew had just won a prize for a short story about her adventures among the pygmies in Africa. How could I compete with that sort of thing? (Plath, 99)

Esther decides to postpone the novel until she travels across Europe and finds a lover. She amuses herself with thoughts of delaying college, taking up pottery, and working as a waitress in Germany to learn the language – all until “plan after plan started leaping through my head, like a family of scatty rabbits.” (Plath, 100). On such instances we may recognize what Janet McCann has described as “Esther's change from apparent knowledge and self-confidence to ignorance and uncertainty as the apparently open horizon shrinks to a point” (McCann 2012: 9).<sup>4</sup> Like Elaine, who appears to be Esther's mirror-image in a similar way in which Esther can be observed

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<sup>4</sup> In this sense *The Bell Jar* arguably contains elements of both *Bildungsroman* (Wagner), or *Künstlerroman* (Gordić Petković), and of what Janet McCann has identified as “*unbildungsroman*” (2012: 9).

as Plath's self-representation, the young author-to-be is suddenly struck by inertia and passivity rather than thoughts of a bright and fulfilling future.

Interestingly enough, for Janet Badia Esther's general "feeling of paralysis" is induced by her "inability – or, if one prefers, her rebellious refusal – to make choices about her life" (2006: 133). Badia reminds us of an important scene in this sense, in which Esther compares her own life to a green fig tree branching out in front of her and imagines herself "starving to death, just because I couldn't make up my mind which of the figs I would choose." The figs refer to the various choices she is presented with in the novel: from a husband with a "happy home and children," to a "famous poet," a "brilliant professor," travelling across Europe, Africa and South America, her future lovers, etc. While Esther wishes she could pick all of these figs, she feels that if she chose one she would lose all the rest, and as she is ultimately unable to make her choice she imagines the figs falling to the ground one by one, all black and wrinkled (Plath, 62–63). The imagined scene with the fig tree is often seen as one of the most important metaphors in the novel which speaks about the limited options a woman was presented with in the 50's America. In short, what appears to be the problem is that Esther believes – or is made to believe – that her choices are "mutually exclusive", and that she is "neurotic," in the words of her boyfriend Buddy Willard, for wanting them at one at the same time (Plath, 76).

However, Buddy, who tells her she will not want to write poetry once she has had children (69), is not alone in limiting her options. Esther's inner conflicts apparently stem from the various discussions she has had with her mother and mentors, who have urged her to take up typing & shorthand (mother), or languages (Jay Cee). This is why the sound of her mother's typewriter at the same time triggers and shatters the daydream about becoming a novelist. She is suddenly reminded of her mother's unbearable compliance with the rules of patriarchy, what Plath herself defined as "the great fault of America" with "its air of pressure: the expectancy of conformity" (JSP, 411–412), reflected in the mother's insistence that the daughter learn "something practical" – shorthand rather than creative writing, so that she could serve other (male) authors, like her mother. In the words of Adrienne Rich, "Many daughters live in rage at their mothers for having accepted, too readily and passively, 'whatever comes,' as "the mother's [...] low expectations are the binding rags for the psyche of the daughter" (Rich 1981: 246–247).

Later in the novel, the mother will also fail to understand and support her daughter during the therapy sessions, and the second time Esther

realizes that she cannot write is right after receiving shock treatments at a psychiatric hospital: "Sitting in the front seat, between Dodo and my mother, I felt dumb and subdued. Every time I tried to concentrate, my mind glided off, like a skater, into a large empty space, and pirouetted there, absently." (Plath, 119). It is only symbolic that the realization comes at the time when she is sitting in a car between two women whose lifestyles so extensively comply with the laws of patriarchy which both of them appear to have internalized: her mother, "the compromiser" in the words of Janet McCann (2012: 11), and Dodo Conway, a likeable Catholic neighbour pregnant with her seventh child. It is only later that Esther will be able to say the unsayable: "My mother was the worst. She never scolded me, but kept begging me, with a sorrowful face, to tell her what she had done wrong. ... 'I hate her,' I said, and waited for the blow to fall." (Plath, 166). In other words, Esther finally recognizes in her mother's behaviour repeated acts of betrayal, underlying the mother's insistence that she should "behave better," "cooperate" and "decide to be all right again". Esther goes a long way between her hatred of "the idea of serving men in any way" (Plath, 62) to the source of the idea, which she now believes is her own mother.

Jelena Lengold's protagonist also exhibits what appears to be a chronic state of rage directed at her mother, due to her failure to understand and empower her. What can be viewed as a generation gap and a general failure of communication between the mother and daughter in *The Bell Jar* is further developed and augmented in *Baltimore* through the mother's both literal and figurative abandonment of the daughter. In short, the protagonist tells her therapist about the years she spent analyzing her mother's behaviour, and we gradually learn that after the parents' separation, the mother chose to take care of another man rather than her own daughter. When the therapist tells the narrator "Your mother abandoned you.", "softly, but very clearly" (55), the trauma reappears:

*There was nothing more to be said here. I knew, better than she did, that it was the truth. ... As if I'd suddenly been told I was an alien, or something like that.*

*See what's ahead of me now? Years and years and years. During which I'll know she had abandoned me. Dinners during which I'll know she had abandoned me. Birthdays during which I'll know she had abandoned me. Conversations during which I'll be pretending I didn't know she had abandoned me. Or, will I pretend to be bad at hiding the fact that I know.* (Lengold, 55; italics in the original)

She refuses to speak for four months, during which her husband and mother, as she believes, fail to understand her only two wishes: “to be completely passive and to be silent” (Lengold, 59). When they bring doctors and take her to hospital, she feels betrayed, like Esther: “Instead, they tricked me and brought me this doctor and his needle, after which silence lost its beauty and meaning.” (Lengold, 63).

By having the mother choose another man over her own daughter, Lengold literalizes the theme of a mother’s abandonment, which appears to be central in both Plath’s novel and, according to Adrienne Rich, possibly in Plath’s own life.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, even Rich herself testifies to a similar experience, which she perceives as inherent in and symbolic of the patriarchal tradition, when she says, “For years, I felt my mother had chosen my father over me, had sacrificed me to his needs and theories.” (1981: 223). In a figurative manner, Esther’s mother does the same by expecting Esther to serve men like she did. In this sense, both protagonists are trying to cope with the trauma of the mother’s abandonment, or with “strong abandonment issues” in the words of Lengold’s protagonist (74), as both mothers relegate their daughters to the status inferior to men.

### 3. OF JARS AND MEMBRANES

Interestingly enough, while the protagonists repeatedly feel failed by their mothers, in turn they also feel guilty for failing their mothers’ expectations. Lengold’s protagonist sadly and angrily remarks that she is “*not exactly her (mother’s) dream come true*” and wonders, “*What’s wrong with me? What I mean to say is, there must be something in me that could make a mother proud?*” (53; italics in the original). In a similar vein, Esther feels “dreadfully inadequate” (Plath, 24) and makes a list of all the (womanly) things she cannot do, unlike her mother, grandmother and some of her female friends like Jody, and the list includes such activities as cooking, shorthand, and dancing. Towards the end of the novel she sighs, “How easy having babies seemed to the women around me! Why was I so unmaternal and apart?” (Plath, 182).

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<sup>5</sup> Adrienne Rich writes about “a tendency to see this mother-daughter relationship as the source of Sylvia Plath’s early suicide attempt” (1981: 231).



In *Baltimore* there is a similar obsession with the maternal, even though the protagonist feels that in her forties she is well past her reproductive age: “Your family and friends resign themselves to the idea when you reach your late thirties. This is when they definitely lose all hope.” (Lengold, 48). At the end of the passage she half wistfully remarks, “But, there are always those times when you need to get your hair done,” elaborating that she finds it unbearable that women talk about nothing else but children in hair salons (*Ibid.*).

Interestingly enough, the protagonists’ obsession by what they both perceive as an oppressive politics of reproduction is reflected in the discourse itself, as both narratives are saturated with the images of mothers and newborns, typically in an upsetting and fearsome manner. In *The Bell Jar*, the suburbs have a “motherly breath” (93), and Esther feels she has “a baby hanging over [her] head like a big stick, to keep [her] in line” (181). The upsetting image of “a baby pickled in a laboratory jar” appears as early as on page 11, and later Esther will repeat it in various contexts, as in: “To the person in the bell jar, blank and stopped as a dead baby, the world itself is the bad dream.” (Plath, 193). The image of the bell jar is strongly connected to the scene in which Esther is taken to see fetuses in jars, which is eerily juxtaposed to another scene in which Esther’s boyfriend Buddy Willard takes her to see how a baby is born. This is an important day in the novel which she will often recall, as it was the very same day she found out about her boyfriend’s unfaithfulness. To Esther delivery table looks like “some awful torture table” (Plath, 53) and towards the end of the novel she remembers “a worrisome course in the Victorian novel where woman after woman died, palely and nobly, in torrents of blood, after a difficult childbirth.” (Plath 189).

The story and discourse of Lengold’s narrator reveal a similar preoccupation with the maternal. In one scene she describes a dream in which she is watching her mother giving birth and bleeding profusely, and someone says, “*Yes, the baby will be fine, but I can’t say the same for the mother.*” (Lengold, 41) One of the most important images singled out in this dream by her therapist is that of a “semi-transparent membrane, similar to a balloon,” which is wrapped around the newborn baby. When her therapist asks her to imagine what it may be like inside the membrane, she says, “*I’m thinking about how I can’t wait for them to remove the membrane. I want to be able to move around more. I want to breathe in the fresh air. I want to hear every sound, and experience the richness of every color and scent. This membrane is restricting me.*” (Lengold, 39; italics in the original).

Both “the bell jar with its stifling distortions” (Plath, 197) and the semi-transparent, parchment-like membrane (Lengold, 39) stand for the protagonists’ depression, as well as the social restrictions and expectations which are perceived as conducive to their depression. However, Plath’s images and metaphors appear to be far more radical and unsettling than Lengold’s, possibly due to the difference in the restrictions imposed on women then and now. For example, Esther compares marriage with children to a totalitarian state in which the mother is “brainwashed” (Plath, 69), and as she climbs up on the examination table to get fitted for a diaphragm, as proscribed by Dr Nolan, she is thinking to herself, “I am climbing to freedom”, and, finally, “I was my own woman.” (Plath, 120). For Esther birth control promises a release from matrophobia, which Adrienne Rich famously reframed not as the fear of motherhood or one’s mother, but “*of becoming one’s mother*” (Rich 1981: 237; italics in the original). Curiously enough, even though Plath wrote about a young woman’s experiences in early 50’s, before the second wave of feminism and Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique*, published in 1963, “just around the time of Plath’s suicide” (McCann 2012: 13), the metaphors we find in these two texts are strikingly similar.<sup>6</sup> Betty Friedan, for example, notoriously wrote that marriage to a housewife is just the same as a “concentration camp” (New York, 1963: 294).<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, Jelena Lengold does not juxtapose the birth of a baby with images of dead babies in bell jars, like Plath, or compare married women with children to the labourers going to their death in concentration camps, like Friedan, and her imagination is more “moderate” in this sense. The protagonist thinks of parenthood and procreation in general as “duration”, motivated by “socially acceptable narcissism” and fear of death, however “boring” and “monotonous” this life which spreads “from one generation to another” may be (Lengold, 110). Still, even though her narrative is ironized throughout the novel, the underlying ideology in *Baltimore* is similar to that in *The Bell Jar*, as both texts subvert the woman’s position in a society, reframing the dominant views of normalcy as forced motherhood.

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<sup>6</sup> Radojka Vukčević stresses the importance of the year 1963 for American female authors, as a time when the feminist movement entered the dominant culture through parallel publications of Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* and Plath’s *The Bell Jar*, among other. (2018: 486)

<sup>7</sup> Later Friedan apologized for using the analogy with Nazism (Friedan, *Live So Far*, New York, 2000, 132).

#### 4. CODA: MOTHERS, DAUGHTERS AND TYPEWRITERS

Evidently, conflicting ideas of motherhood can be recognized in both the story and discourse in both novels. While in *The Bell Jar* Esther wishes she had a different mother, one similar to her New York boss, the editor Jay Cee, on whom she feels she could rely for guidance, Lengold's protagonist learns from her therapist that she has "switched roles" with her mother (32), who has failed to provide the necessary care and support to her. Most importantly, however, both protagonists refuse to repeat the lives of their mothers. As Lengold's protagonist explains, "...*I always felt disdain for this archetype according to which women become saints the moment they fulfill their assigned womanly duties.*" (109; italics in the original). While she delays childbirth until she feels it is too late for her to conceive, Esther has a diaphragm fitted by a doctor, so that she can be "her own woman," counter to her mother's treatises on a girl's purity. However, even though she repeats she "hates" children, there is a hint that the older Esther, the storyteller, has become a mother herself. Lengold's protagonist, on the other hand, remains childless, by choice as it may be presumed from the novel.

What may be inferred from the protagonists' apparent revulsion to motherhood in both cases is possibly refusal to repeat the "woman-martyr" pattern passed from mothers to daughters. According to Adrienne Rich, "[t]he mother stands for the victim in ourselves, the unfree woman, the martyr. Our personalities seem dangerously to blur and overlap with our mothers'; and in a desperate attempt to know where mother ends and daughter begins, we perform radical surgery." (1981: 238). Lengold's protagonist apparently echoes Rich when she says, "*I told her I didn't want to repeat the concept of women-martyrs, which runs in our family so naturally*" (Lengold, 31; italics in the original). While Esther describes her mother as wearing a "sweet martyr's smile" in the last chapter of *The Bell Jar* (193), at this point in the novel she believes that she has already performed a radical incision within the woman-martyr tradition in her family – when she assumed control over her own body, and when she promised to herself, at the sound of the mother's typewriter, that she "would never learn a word of shorthand" so that she "would never have to use it" (Plath, 100), like her mother did. Indeed, she cannot bear the idea of serving men (Plath, 62), and instead has plans of being an author of her own narrative:

Then I decided I would spend the summer writing a novel.

That would fix a lot of people. [...]

A feeling of tenderness filled my heart. My heroine would be myself, only in disguise. She would be called Elaine. Elaine. I counted the letters on my fingers. There were six letters in Esther, too. It seemed a lucky thing. (Plath, 98)

Similarly, somewhere in the middle of *Baltimore*, Lengold's narrator gives us a hint that she may have started writing a novel:

As we take out our notepads to write down the date and time of our next session, I tell her that now I make notes of everything that happens during our talks.

"You may find yourself in a novel." (Lengold, 44)

According to Vladislava Gordić Petković, "what hides behind the guise of confessional fiction in *Baltimore* is an experiment in self-reflexivity" (2019a: 140). When towards the end of *Baltimore* the narrator says, "*I've almost finished my novel*" (Lengold, 128), this is not only an act of disloyalty to the mother, but also to the therapist and the reader from whom the process of writing was hidden all along (Gordić Petković 2019a: 140). Similarly, Esther expects that her authorial text will "fix" some people she knows – that is, put them in their place – namely, her mother, Buddy Willard, and her editor, among others. Such self-reflexive elements in *The Bell Jar* and *Baltimore* expand the character of these two novels from "daughters' self-exploratory writings" and "confessional writing" to daughterly counter-narratives, as both Esther and Lengold's protagonist ultimately refuse to accept the role of "[d]aughters [...] nullified by silence" (Rich 1981: 227). Since both of them feel betrayed by their mothers, therapists and institutions, they forge their own strategies of empowerment through writing, as an act of disloyalty and a way of both telling and living their own stories.

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#### O MAJKAMA I ČERKAMA: UPOREDNO ČITANJE *BALTIMORA* JELENE LENGOLD I *STAKLENOG ZVONA* SILVIJE PLAT

**Rezime:** U radu se razmatraju književne veze između romana *Baltimor* Jelene Lengold (2003.) i *Staklenog zvona* Silvije Plat (1963.), kroz prizmu sukoba majke i ćerke kao okosnice pripovedanja u oba teksta. Između *Baltimora* i *Staklenog zvona* mogu se izvesti višestruke paralele, kako kompozicijski tako i na tematskom planu: u oba romana protagonistkinje, ujedno i naratorke, predstavljaju svoje ispovesti kao vid (iz)lečenja od depresije; oba romana karakteriše tzv. ispovedni stil, iako odrednica “ispovedni roman” nije sasvim adekvatna ni u jednom ni u drugom slučaju; obe autorke problematizuju odnos majke i ćerke, prvenstveno kroz temu napuštanja – figurativnog i doslovnog; naposletku, obe junakinje su upućene na prinudno psihijatrijsko lečenje, što doživljavaju kao čin majčine izdaje. Kroz uporednu analizu dva romana rad istražuje domete njihovog dijaloga na planu naracije, tematike i stilistike, razmatrajući veze između dva predstavljena modela sukobljenih majki i ćerki, posebno u kontekstu njihovog emotivnog, ideološkog i simboličnog razmimoilaženja.

**Ključne reči:** Jelena Lengold, Silvia Plat, majke, ćerke, rod, trauma, kontrananativ.