

8 beats to a line . unstressed then stressed, key words like stalks and prowls are stressed
stalking rhythm, inescapable.
Breaks at haggard . referring to self . lacks his composure.

Pursuit

Dans le fond des forêts votre image me suit,
RACINE

There is a panther stalks me down:
One day I have my death of him;
His greed has set the woods aflame,
He prowls more lordly than the sun.
Most soft, most suavely glides that step,
Advancing always at my back;
From gaunt hemlock, rooks croak havoc:
The hunt is on, and sprung the trap.
Flayed by thorns I trek the rocks,
Haggard through the hot white noon.
Along red network of his veins
What fires run, what craving wake ?

Insatiate, he ransacks the land
Condemned by our ancestral fault,
Crying: blood, let blood be spilt;
Meat must glut his mouth's raw wound.
Keen the rending teeth and sweet
The singeing fury of his fur;
His kisses parc, each paw's a briar,
Doom consummates that appetite.
In the wake of this fierce cat,
Kindled like torches for his joy,
Charred and ravened women lie,
Become his starving body's bait.

Now hills hatch menace, spawning shade;
Midnight cloaks the sultry grove;
The black marauder, hauled by love
On fluent haunches, keeps my speed.
Behind snarled thickets of my eyes
Lurks the lithe one; in dreams' ambush
Bright those claws that mar the flesh
And hungry, hungry, those taut thighs.
His ardor snares me, lights the trees,
And I run flaring in my skin;
What lull, what cool can lap me in
When burns and brands that yellow gaze?

I hurl my hear to halt his pace,
To quench his thirst I squander blood;
He eats, and still his need seeks food,
Compels a total sacrifice.
His voice waylays me, spells a trance,
The gutted forest falls to ash;
Appalled by secret wan, I rush
From such assault of radiance.
Entering the tower of my fears,
I shut my doors on that dark guilt,
I bolt the door, each door I bolt.
Blood quickens, gonging in my ears:

The panther's tread is on the stairs,
Coming up and up the stairs.

Comment [K1]: Obvious images of hunting suggesting male aggressors and female prey throughout ó also linked clearly with images of death and destruction. In some ways the free female is destroyed through submission to the male

Comment [K2]: In the í .. of the forests your image follows me!

Comment [K3]: French playwright based on a tragic Greek play. Queen Phaedra and King Theseus are married but she loves her step son, Hippolytus while he loves someone else. They think the king is dead ó she goes to tell son in law to be king and tells him she loves him. Theseus isn't dead ó Phaedra's maid fears her mistress will be destroyed if Theseus finds out about her love for his son, so she says Hippolytus tried to seduce Phaedra and Theseus has him killed. Phaedra tries to stop this but doesn't when she realises that Hippolytus loves someone else ó the devastating and destructive effects of love and also the inevitability of fate ó Plath perhaps thought this was inevitable ó like her death of himø

Comment [K4]: Sensuous, feline, strong, sexual

Comment [K5]: Pronouns indicate that this is a competition ó there is never union

Comment [K6]: Sibilance ó soft, sensuous, feline ó also threatening

Comment [K7]: Long vowel sounds create a sense of threatening elegance rather than harsh, brutal violence

Comment [K8]: Images of power, agility, arrogance - graceful and dangerous

Comment [K9]: Threatening, foreboding images

Comment [K10]: Health, vitality, lust

Comment [K11]: Irresistible passion and force to this man

Comment [K12]: The passion is inextricably linked to his destructiveness

Comment [K13]: Possible reference to Adam & Eve ó again the idea of inevitability

Comment [K14]: This powerful passion is attractive ó holds a deadly fascination for her ó hence this is emphasised by being placed at the end of the line

Comment [K15]: Confusion of the man, the animal and vicious plants ó he is all of these things

Comment [K16]: Rather than quenching his kiss take away, they leave a hunger for more ó passion and desire

Comment [K17]: As if she even dreams about him

Comment [K18]: Questions suggest a hopelessness ó what can cool me when he is gaze is burning me ó again sense of inevitability, inescapability

Comment [K19]: Almost a sacrifice ó again the rhythm emphasise the key words

Comment [K20]: Partly this is sexual desire ó but the idea of submission also reflects the dominant ideology of women submitting to men

Comment [K21]: She feels this passion and ardour too

Comment [K22]: Odd juxtaposition of assault (negative) and radiance (positive) ó as if she realises the danger in this passion, or perhaps also the danger of submission and how she, as an aspiring independent female poet on the verge of the women's liberation movement is in danger of reverting to stereotype

Comment [K23]: Odd ó dark guiltø suggests that she is worried ó about what? Passion? Seems to simple ó although this would be the 50s. Submission to a man ó maybe, especially considering the relationship with her father, (hence the mal symbol tower) but there's little other indication of that

Comment [K24]: Repetition and final rhyming couplet does not suggest escape but in fact a closing in