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Psychological Temperaments And Confessions In Plath’s Works

Dr. Suchitra Vashisth[1]*
[1]*Associate Professor, Department of English, Manav Rachna International Institute of Research & Studies.
Email: suchitra.1580@gmail.com

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Abstract-

Plath's confessional and condemnatory writing became a significant platform for analyzing her life. Plath's portrayal of a strong, victimized figure prompted reviewers to investigate how information from her personal life explained the subject matter of her poems; it is undeniable that Plath herself loved the idea of disclosing specifics from her personal life and feelings through her art. However, the underlying mental illness that she suffered from, with a history of despair and suicidal tendencies, is the source of her troubles as expressed in her poems. Her published poetry and unabridged journals attest to Plath's emotional swings; in a journal entry dated October 3, 1959.

Plath's Journals, according to critic Stephen Moss, are "evidence of madness." The entire 1957-59 edition has 730 pages of "raw and bloody stuff" from her private therapy sessions. The journals make Plath more "terrifying: self-obsessed, furious, living at an unendurable degree of intensity." This paper will demonstrate how she regularly employed symbols of death and trauma, referring to internalized and externalized transference interactions that replicate past experiences. Despite her attempts to transcend through sublimated literature, the death drive that preoccupied her, the overpowering power of these inclinations, eventually triumphed over her longing for life. Her horrible experiences, unhappy and traumatized state of mind, death drive, and suicide attempts acted as a spark to her creative mind, which eventually generated some subconscious pieces of art. And it is via these works that we can see the magnetic pull of these destructive powers.

Keywords: Plath, Psychological, Confession, Suicide, Depression

For many years, psychologists have been researching and interested in the relationship between mental illness and creativity. However, when Dr. James C. Kaufman completed his study into why female poets, in particular, were prone to mental illness and suicide in 2001, he highlighted the possibility of applying psychological research in the reading of literary works. Kaufman's research found that "female poets were much more likely to be mentally ill... more likely to endure personal tragedy than any other type of prominent woman." This psychological notion has been dubbed "The Sylvia Plath Effect" because "Plath is one of the most gifted and tormented poets in the sample...and has suffered from severe depression and suicidal behavior." Such studies enable literary researchers to obtain access to and a deeper understanding of poetry by poets such as Plath.

The majority of Plath's poems are about her personal life, and reading her poetry allows the reader to become acquainted with her tragic, sorrowful, and worried life. Plath's crisis includes statements from her depressed interior thought, and the social dimension includes a rejection of the public world in which she would eventually unveil herself. While she does present a persona in her poetry, the feelings expressed in the poems are those of Plath's inner anguish. The poems like "Elm," "Lady Lazarus," "Words," "Contusion," “A Birthday Present” and "Edge," penned in her final days, represent a sequence of suicidal signs.

Kaufman's hypothesis can be clearly expressed in Plath's book Ariel's themes. It appears that the inspiration is not only death, but also the concept of rebirth and its connection to identity. In reality, Ariel, while Plath's most lauded work, is also the most contentious. According to Cronin, the premise for this stems from the volume's original 1965 publication and Ted Hughes' rearranging of Plath's poems:

"Hughes erased around a dozen poems from the original draught and added about a dozen poems... [and] was chastised...as if his editing was censorship." Plath's daughter Frieda Hughes, writing in the prologue of Ariel: The Restored Version in 2004, refutes this assertion, stating, "This edition of Ariel by...Plath, exactly matches the arrangement of her last manuscript as she left it." Frieda's republication of the original manuscript is an attempt to reintroduce Sylvia's art, an art that, unlike her life, "was not to fall," concluding, "Each version has its own significance though the two histories are one." However, Lee Upton believes: "Hughes expanded the manuscript's emotional tone toward dread and a haunting inevitability by sealing Plath's intended ending and completing the book with some of her most depressing poems. As a result, the first published Ariel is a more dramatic text, with a tragic ending that mirrors Plath's final decision concerning her own life. It is a more powerful piece of art than Plath's original manuscript... Hughes provided an in-depth examination of Plath's poetic spectrum."

Some critics consider Plath's death to be her final gesture to her poems. At the end of his book Sylvia Plath: The Wound and the Cure of Words (1990), Steven Gould Axelrod posits that Plath's poetry initially appears to save her life, but ultimately consumes her, concluding that the tragic ending of her death had fully captured her poetic voice in person.

Her mental state has a strong influence on the connection between Ariel and Plath's own life. "Lady Lazarus," for Maronne, demonstrates a specific fascination with "Recurring suicidal ideas or fantasies," by choosing a religious figure to represent rebirth as an extended metaphor and demonstrating a flippant treatment of her own suicidal proclivities. Plath's religious reference, as the female equal of Lazarus, evokes a supernatural entity, whose tone bestows a sense of wonder in her ability to die, which maintains her sibylline status.

Plath writes in the first person, yet the topic of suicide is analyzed by more than just the speaker. According to Rosenblatt, Plath's use of dramatic monologue brings her listener "closer to the experience of suffering and transformation." And it is the nature of monologue that allows us to have an intimate relationship with Plath, listening as she confesses her inner emotions.

According to Rosenblatt, Plath's Ariel can "entice us into a type of death... the feeling of relinquishing our bodies and selves." According to Cronin, the decision to reject the self is made by the reader once they choose to read the poem; this is the 'body,' whereas the re-birth is witnessed once we begin to interpret and ascribe meaning to the poem; this is the 'self.' Plath's despair dominates her poetry and plays an important part in its creation. It may also explain why the textual "I" remains central in her final collection of poems. In his study published in Psychosomatic Medicine, psychologist James Pennebaker discovered that poets who committed suicide used the words "I," "my," and "my" far more frequently than non-suicidal poets. However, it should be highlighted that the textual "I" in this study is distinct from the main lyrical poetic style of Romanticism that arose in 19th century Europe, in the works of Wordsworth, which consisted of first-person accounts of the feelings and thoughts of a single moment, in which the feelings were severe but personal. The work of Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, and John Berryman, among 156 other poets of British, American, and Russian ancestry, was computer examined using the words and linguistic patterns of nine poets who died naturally.

Plath's poetry, penned in the final six months of her life, reads like her own obituary. According to Murray, there is often a "unity theme" in such writing, where repeating psychological issues in the dying assisting process surface. Plath's themes are: "unbearable anguish; an emotional condition of forlornness, deprivation, distress; heightened disturbance; overtaken by emotion; mental constriction; disorder in adjustment; frustrated... unsatisfied needs... wanting... needing to escape." The protocol of recognition and egression is most obvious in the first lines of Plath's final poem, "Edge," which Edward Butchser describes as a "stark suicide letter." "Edge," written on February 5, 1963, a week before her death, was Plath's final poem, according to Linda Bundzen, and one in which her mental state is clearly obvious. Plath foresees her literal death by imagining herself as a stoic stone-cold Greek statue:

The woman is perfected
Her dead (1-2)

For Plath, being "perfected" appears to be only conceivable in death, and symbolises pain from "losing an ideal," a "frustrated longing for perfection" that could not be met in life. Plath exemplifies "pitiful forlornness," and "nothing to be sorry about" denotes "emotional deprivation." The term "dead" appears twice; Plath states "it's over," implying that she needed to be gone...to be dead. Once again, the process for suicide readings is stringent. Plath's suicide became unavoidable. Her poetry provides glimpses into her mind when presented in the context of her existence. This is applicable to Plath's poem "Daddy." Her German father is represented through the references to Auschwitz and a Fascist. Litman contends that our ego attachments are deep, claiming that "ego is made up in large part of identifications." These identifications are particularly related with our earliest attachments, such as a mother/father, and prominent people such as Plath's husband. The energy or 'libido' in this relationship is withdrawn and seen as abandonment with loss and rejection. According to Fenichel, "the loss is so total that there is no hope of retrieving it." One is helpless...and hopeless." Plath embodies the perspective of many suicidal people: without love, there is no life.

Elizabeth Beam's further research on Plath considers the ephemeral character of Plath's moods, which are later represented in her poem "Edge." Plath portrays a convergence of moods by juxtaposing light and dark imagery, such as a statue's pure white marble with the shrouded moon's "blacks." While it is obvious that "Edge" is a manifestation of an unstable mentality. Psycholinguistic analysis reveals how bipolar people "effectively poeticize their cognitive states." Such content and construction parameters can be used to the bipolar linguistic term "Edge." On the surface, authors with mood disorders appear to misuse certain styles and tones of voice: "from magnification to personalizing, these rhetorical strategies are both conducive to creativity and prevalent in the works of poets with mood disorders." "Edge," for example, has various cognitive distortions and demonstrates the link between cognitive distortion and poetic creativity. We'll now look at the specific aberrations that appear in the poem.

Prior to the confessional form, it was unclear whether a poem's speaker was the author or a character. M.L. Rosenthal was the first to designate "confession" as a type of poetry in 1959, expressing the ubiquitous desire to "create a great poem out of the dilemma and anguish of the lost self." In her journal, Plath writes, "I will write until I begin to speak my deep self." Plath and company dispelled any concerns by clearly referring to their own lives. Readers will accept the realities of artistic expression more readily if they are drawn from personal experience. The advantages of the confessional mode contribute to "Edge's" reputation. As Rosenblatt argues, "the poem breaks the balanced footing with which readers guilessly approach the poem" because it exists between the gulf of the "dead body" being watched and the disembodied observer. Plath lures readers into conflicting selves, split between speaker and subject matter, misery and mania merging into suicide, death, and a living literary legacy. Considering the energy generated by this tension, Plath maintains a detached position of serene composure. When confronted with Plath's stone-cold numbness, the reader feels uneasy. Plath's suicide validates the prognosis of "Edge," and the poet retrospectively and painfully "earns legitimacy" for her suicidal meanderings.

While hypermania boosts productivity and vitality, despair or hypomanic depression saps creativity, ambition, and even the will to live. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders defines depression symptoms as "apathy, decreased energy, increased need for sleep, difficulty focusing, loss of pleasure in previously loved activities, and suicidal thoughts." Plath's "Edge," retrieved during a negative manic episode, reveals her attention to the dreary visuals of the "night flower" and a moon robed in "blacks." The description of the children and vases, as well as the use of distortive "minimization," reveals a sense of worthlessness penetrating her strained language articulation. Plath idealizes death in the shape of her deceased self, "perfected," exposing her sad state of mind in the week before she committed suicide. Plath's increasing energy, tainted with negativity, hurtled towards self-destruction in a state of dysphoric mania, only after it had been successfully directed through self-creation in poetry.

Poets suffering from bipolar disease lose coherence in their sense of self; writing is a way for them to forge a singular identity and nail it to the page. According to one hypothesis for bipolar poets' psychiatric motivation, competing identities were first propelled out of the mind and then posed in the poetry. The first principle of the concept claims that the universal motivator for all writers is to escape from thoughts. Flaherty joins the writers in supporting the prisoner's desire to fly free. Plath seeks to escape from an unstable mental condition through her notebooks, vowing in one piece to "immerse herself in the characters' feelings of others."

Plath flees her consciousness in "Edge," writing in the detached third person. In a futile attempt to escape from the reality of her own thoughts, she is embodied in the metaphor of a statue. Plath creates different realms in her poetry to escape from her brain's faulty neurochemistry. According to the model's second principle, writing acts as a "refuge from the tumult and incongruence of multiple selves; poetry is a type of peaceful coherence." Plath expresses this desire in "Edge," employing lyrical methods such as assonance and incorporating a feeling of "classical harmony and proportion" in the picture of the Greek statue for Lim. She achieves stasis in the form of a marble statue, undisturbed by life's tumult, "perfected." Poetry is a successful type of 'scriptotherapy' because, unlike fiction, which requires words to be sustained for extended periods of time, poems only need to express one narrow, distinct meaning; each poem is a unity and depiction of one identity. Poems allow the poet to define oneself.

Plath's confessional forms breach taboos that women weren't meant to break in the 1950s; via her confessional poems, and this chapter also focuses on the confessional tone in her poetry, the poet succeeds in generating a deep empathy with the reader through confession, which is the most personal style of communication.

In an interview with The Paris Review, Ted Hughes, Plath's husband, addresses confessional poetry, his thesis mirroring the broad principles that confessional poets followed:

{Why do people feel compelled to confess? Maybe you don't have a poem—or even a story—if you don't have that private confession. I don't have access to a writer. The method of concealing, of obliquity, may be so obsessive that it's nearly wholly effective, which is why most poetry doesn't seem to be confessional in any way. The smuggling analogy is full with intriguing cargo that appears to be there for its own sake— general interest topic matter [...]. The way they sought to cast off that cargo, the conscious way they pulled off the veiling comparisons, was the uniqueness of some of Robert Lowell's most touching pieces in Life Studies, some of Anne Sexton's poems, and some of Sylvia's. Sylvia went the extra mile since her secret was the most harmful to her. She felt compelled to share it. You can't overstate her need to write in that manner. She had no choice but to write such things, even if it meant going against her most fundamental interests." ("Art of Poetry").}

Hughes emphasizes that confession is something that must be uttered as part of human language, wants, and hopes. Confessing is akin to breathing, which is one of the reasons confessional poetry has become so essential since it comes from the heart.

The portrayal of the poet's private life, especially when subjected to the stress of emotional crises, is one of the major subjects of modernism, and hence of confessional poetry, according to M. L. Rosenthal:

It is frequently felt as a symbol of national and cultural catastrophe at the same time. As a result, our poetry's style may be both private and public, lyrical and rhetorical. The Romantic tradition's enduring strength is obvious here, with the *statement's modern twist being the statement's profoundly personal, literary self-exposing fragility. "Sexual candour, frankness regarding family life, and confessions of various psychological humiliations" (15).*

The abandonment in the hands of the unknown, which offers the joy of creation, alters everything when confession becomes a link between the writer and his reader. Furthermore, the confession imbues the reader with the poet's empathy, turning him or her into a victim in the same way that the poet is. Confessional poetry emerges when the poet completely recognizes the lack of intimacy, of the private, and that moment defines a public disclosure of all that has been kept hidden up until that point. The poet's individuality, the originality of the poetry in the cultural environment in which it is produced, or the poet's desire to form a close link with the reader are all motifs.

In one of her poems, "Tulips," Plath expresses deep sensations that only a woman may feel. The poem follows in the footsteps of confessional poets, tracing the patient's interest in the hospital and the sensations he or she expresses on paper, revealing a side of disease and suffering in the hospital that is significantly less visible.

The flowers received as a gift and a desire for recovery are mentioned at the start of confession, which reflects a little aspect of hospitalization. A tulip bouquet inspires confession. Flowers, like tulips, announce the arrival of spring, but the poet finds herself in the position of plants forced to survive winter, searching for herself, hopeless to reclaim her solitude, obliged to immobility in her hospital bed:

The tulips are too excitable, it is winter here.
Look how white everything is, how quiet, how snowed-in.
I am learning peacefulness, lying by myself quietly
As the light lies on these white walls, this bed, these hands." (160)

The poem's use of light, which is unusual for Plath, whose poetry is dominated by nighttime motifs. However, light has no therapeutic value in this situation. It appears to be part of the hospital's decor, the atmosphere that transformed Plath into a living form with no identity, no protective reality covering (clothing), no past, and no connection to the physical body.

The fascination for the outside, the relationship with the world, the hospital, and the impact of the outside on the body is sparked by the state of stillness. The outside rarely changes the inside in Sylvia Plath's poems. The majority of poems are inward reflections on the outside world. However, what happens around the patient is more significant than what is inside at this time, but the poet's concern in the outside, which runs throughout the poem, is essential for the poet to return to confession.

The exterior's function is to accentuate the self's influence. The poet watches some "gulls pass inland in their white caps, / doing things with their hands, one just the same as another, / so it is impossible to tell how many there are" as some "nurses pass inland in their white caps, / doing things with their hands, one just like another, / so it is impossible to tell how many there are" (160). They are the memories of a lost past that she accepted as she should not have, and they are now in a critical stage of existence, resulting in her constant desire to die.

Death brings serenity, security, the absence of impediments, and a long-awaited silence. This is, in fact, bringing personal space into the open, expressing the most private and deep thoughts and feelings to an unknown confessor or to herself through poetry.

Plath opens the door to the intimate cosmos that she presents to her confessor for inspection, and it is not at all handy, pleasant, or comforting. The idea of death is repeated and portrayed in many ways, forming a leitmotif in a Plath poem once more. Tulips, which appear innocuous at the start of the poem but later become the thing that causes death, are generators of the poet's worries, their red hue suggestive of the redness of blood, Plath's allusion to her wound, keenly conscious of it, producing death again, compulsively present via drowning: "a dozen red lead sinkers round my neck" (161).

The patient's relationship with the outside world is evident when she is followed by tulips with the power to reclaim control over the poet's mind and body, a symbol of death itself, this one sans any trace of self-control, continuing change for the only purpose of deleting the complete personality until the loss of self-recognizing:

And I see myself, flat, ridiculous, a cut-paper shadow
Between the eye of the sun and the eyes of the tulips,
And I have no face, I have wanted to efface myself.
The vivid tulips eat my oxygen. (161)

Tulips precipitate the poet's recognition of the crisis: "They concentrate my attention, that was happy/ Playing and resting without committing itself" (Plath 161). The refusal to grasp and address personal worries leads today, with the presence of flowers, to an instant crisis, a potent trigger of death by drowning, in fact, raising to the surface distant and possibly forgotten ideas.

When it comes to her most renowned novel, "THE BELL JAR," it also belongs to the confessional poetry genre, in which the author writes about real-life events that are covered with some fictitious aspects and characters. The narrative is so close to the author's personal experiences that it was first published under Victoria Lucas, a pen name for Sylvia Plath.

Esther Greenwood follows the same script as Plath, who lost her father when she was nine years old. "It had never occurred to me before that I was only fully joyful till I was nine years old," she says (75). The parallels established between Plath and Greenwood are striking enough to support the author's allegation that she was speaking about her own life. Esther, for example, attempts suicide by overdosing on sleeping tablets, but Sylvia commits suicide. Their fathers die when they are nine years old, and they are both severely depressed. Talking about her life experiences in the third person allowed the author to move outside of her subjectivity and address many themes that she felt influenced her life in the 1950s.

The fundamental point of the book is that depression causes mental health difficulties. The second half focuses on Esther's battle with chronic depression, which leads to her pondering suicide and then attempting it by overdosing on sleeping pills. Written in the 1950s, it is apparent that mental health therapy has progressed through time. Esther is subjected to electro-shock therapy in the story, which differs from the commonly employed cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT). This therapy method, however, was not available at the time. The book was successful in highlighting some of the concerns that were prevalent in the 1950s. Women, for example, are expected to choose specific vocations. Esther's mother is not pleased with her daughter's interest in poetry. On the reverse, she wants Esther to pursue stenography, which is a feminine endeavor. Furthermore, women face the same issues now as they did over 70 years ago. On a date, Marco assaults Esther and attempts to rape her, which is a typical occurrence in today's society.

Plath's argument is structured through the protagonist, Esther's, narrative. The reader experiences the world of the 1950s via the narrator's eyes. The flow of information and thinking allows the arguments made throughout the story to make sense. Although this book is about Plath's real-world experiences and she performed excellent work by expressing her life narrative in the third person.

"Miss Drake Proceeds to Supper" is an early poem, but it demonstrates how Plath used poetry to control her own horrific experiences. She did it by developing characters and later speakers who explain how the troubled mind works. Instead of speaking for the poet, they stage bizarre acts that are parodies of the imaginative act. Plath demonstrates via them how panic can hold the psyche and make it rigid. She projects her own grasp of hysterical control and the darker knowledge of its deadly subversion of the imagination through her speaker's projective illusions. While Miss Drake's intricate rituals are designed to keep her worries at bay, the poet who created her is dealing with her own terrifying knowledge of lunacy in the act of the poem, albeit indirectly. What is a way of avoiding reality for the insane lady becomes a means of controlling it for the poet. Unlike the speakers in the poems, the poems convey Plath's horrifying self-awareness.

Sylvia Plath's poems are more on her private and intimate life. Social topics have been tackled, although only infrequently. She did not bring up the societal concerns that individuals were dealing with. She has mentioned those that she has personally experienced. Furthermore, she discusses the nasty attitude of male sex because it angered her. She discusses psychiatric issues since her "over-thinking" troubles her. Thus, Plath does not write poetry for the purpose of writing poetry, nor does she address social issues. Furthermore, her poetry is devoid of satire. She does not discuss the eccentricities and follies of individuals, but rather their repercussions on her daily life. As a result, it is impossible to deny that Sylvia Plath's poetry is totally confessional.

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