

Between Life and the Dissolution of Self: Death and Suicide in Sylvia Plath's Poetry

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Summary:

This paper presents the phenomena of death and suicide in the poetic works of Sylvia Plath as the symbolic and linguistic systems, not just as the reflection of the biographical facts or symptom manifestation. The concept of analysis is focused on the poems in the collection "Ariel" (1965), especially on such poems like lady Lazarus, Daddy, Ariel and edge, and it shows how Plath works out human agony into the ultimate poetic constructions with the use of poetic images, rhythm, grammatical pattern and poetic voice. Death appears in her poems in the form of language, performance and organized symbolic machine, not just simple physical disappearance. Suicide as refined poetry discourse as opposed to the direct self-confession, and the identity becomes decoded into the form of poetry as opposed to being encapsulated into the conventional biographical discourse. The research uses a close textual analysis method supplemented with the current literature psychology theories and discourse analysis, to show that Plath is engaging in meaning-making semantic activity of annihilation. Her poetry rewrites the despair into symbolic structures in which trauma is changed into eloquent tropes and extinction a strict form of aesthetic. This view is not limited to reductive biographical interpretations, and Plath creative work can be seen as a unified poetic framework where death acts as an aesthetic structuring principle as opposed to a personal death. The results of the research substantiate that the poetry of Plath manages to convert personal misery into the entire human symbolic speech, and the readers have an opportunity to face death as a source of great meaning, not ultimate silence.

1. Introduction

Sylvia Plath (1932-1963) can be ranked among the brightest poetic voices of the twentieth century in America with not only the semi-autobiographical novel *The Bell Jar* but also her poetry books that marked her poetry in terms of thematic boldness. Her fiction was laden with prickly subjects to do with suicidal feelings, mental illnesses and a new feminist awareness, especially in her poems written in her last stage of a short and tragic life. Plath composes close to the boundaries between life and oblivion, creating a dynamic of death in the form of an external event, but an internal one based on human consciousness. She is not an annihilator, but she practices it; she does not see it as an outer observer but as an inner experience of living life and the words in her poems, focusing on symbolism.

The first line in the poem *Lady Lazarus* starts with the line: I have done it again, and this way repetition becomes one of the basic frames and the process of suicide is a circle and not an event. The very words *Once every ten years / I manage it* support the idea of cyclicity and transform suicide into an everyday routine (Plath, 1965:23). Death is ceremonial and premeditated and not arbitrary and unplanned. The language sets the repetition in order and changes the annihilation into a systematic experience with identifiable characteristics.

When Plath says that *dying / Is an art, like anything. I do it so remarkably*, she takes death out of the realm of biology and into the domain of art and obsessively artistic performance (Plath, 1965:23). Suicide is perfected poetic discourse and not pure silence. The way of identity functioning is language here and not the medium of identity disappearance. This unique way of rhetoric is what Lester (2023:340) refers to as symbolic suicidality, in which self-destruction is used as an eloquent metaphor and dramatic meaning, rather than a clinical pathological condition. Real withdrawal is substituted by glowing language. Good poetic voice is substituting the utter lack.

The outrageous words in the poem "*Daddy*" include *Every woman adores a Fascist* whereby the destruction becomes the center of intimate relationships and personal identity where the paternal authority, love, and violence merge together in a complicated system of symbols of control and breakdown (Plath, 1965:32). The stressful syllabic rhythm becomes supported by the compulsive repetition, the direct accusation, and the emotional discontinuity, which creates the increasing

psychological flow, which resembles the disintegration of identity, one after another. Death here is symbolic destruction of the self and not the physical biological decay. It is attested to by literary psychology that the suicidal imagery that Plath formed is an advanced discourse of identity fragmentation rather than simple outright confession wherein the poetic form accurately mirrors the psychological fragmentation (Gay, 2025:7). Further mental analysis shows that although depression may have a bearing on the content of their themes, the verse form stands as an autonomous aesthetic system, which transforms the sense of agony into strict artistic design rather than a chaotic disorderliness (Cooper, 2003:298).

In the research, it is affirmed that Plath does not attach easy escapes and solutions to suffering through suicide. She makes it a dramatic performance of extreme conflict of identity and destruction, that life and death are united in one poetic voice. Her poetry makes death one of her major discussions, and it does not disappear as a natural biological destiny but as a carefully made poetic form. The destruction is turned into the well-selected words. Trauma is turned into artistic architecture. The meaning-making semantic system, instead of the solitary individual event of death, is converted into meaning.

The proposed research paper follows a qualitative approach that is multidisciplinary; close textual analysis, literary theory, and literary psychological research are applied to the discussion of the chosen poems of the collection of poems titled Ariel (Plath, 1965:48) and individual poems Lady Lazarus, Daddy, Ariel and Edge. The three readings in the paper are poetic stanza-level of imagery, grammatical composition, rhythm, metaphor, and voice as systems of meaning whose relationship is controlled by structuralist and post-structuralist criticism of the poem as an autonomous form of symbols in contrast to a literal biographical document. The merits of the work in terms of the modern psychology of literature and psychology lie in the fact that it includes the representations of death and depression in a modern context and does not turn the poems to sterile clinical cases but rather, relies on Cooper medical model of depressive experience (Cooper, 2003:299), discourse-based suicidal symbolism (Lester, 2023:341) and discourse-based reader response theory, which sees suicide as a performative language, but not a literal invitation (Doche,

2023:985). This analytical flow has been developed through the paper in that it first identifies the common motif of death and suicide and then the methodical development of motifs on language and stanzaic rhetoric and then the synthesis of the results with the consequences of identity, performance and symbolic self-annihilation so that it is possible to see suicide in Plath's poetry as a consistent and connecting poem.

2. Death as Architectural Poetic Structure

Her emotional state and work creative activity were greatly affected and heavily impacted by Plath's complicated and difficult relationship with her father who passed away when she was only eight years old. As she has a strong connection to him, it is unsurprising that the anniversary of his death or other memorable dates surrounding him affected her more and more than previously (Kara, 2024:935).

Sylvia Plath builds the structure of death before it has any thematic content and, therefore, annihilation is a structural arrangement principle of poetry and not a phenomenon that is analyzed as an externality. There is total synthesis of the motion of color and suicide in stanza "Ariel" of the poem in the passage. The dew that flies / Suicidal, at one with the rush / Into the red (Plath, 1965:48). The rhythm is forced to go forth by the linear flow and the grammatical composition is driven forward in a forceful manner creating a speedy flow that is nearly a loss of control altogether. Here death is not dead and inert, but is very dynamic. What the poem lacks is to point to death as a certain end destination; instead, it views it as a running, formal process. A grammatical composition is an unstoppable course. Rhythm turns into a speeding downward spiral. In addition, even language is the process of disappearing in person. This metamorphosis of annihilation into motion is a challenge of the classical schema of symbolism of death as of stillness or eternal rest or absolute immobility. Death in Plath's poetry is vibrant moving energy, rather than inert deadness.

This is the logic of poetry that exposes death as architectural as opposed to being semantically substantial. It is through annihilation that rhythm, grammatical composition, imagery and poetic movement are made. Meaning does not stand impassively in the lines; it is indeed flowing out of the lines. The phrase at one with

the rush eliminates the obvious separation between the moving power and the acting subject and fully unites identity and movement. The speaker does not imagine death as something that is outside of her. It is an existential condition and which she fuses naturally. This art installation is consistent with up-to-date theory according to which destructive drives are regarded as the primary structural power in symbolic systems rather than the ultimate events (Zizek, 2017:91). Death is not delivered to the reader as something abstract but rather a living stream of words.

We find this theoretical norm well reflected in the poem, "Lady Lazarus" in which death is the one to create the stanzaic structure with systematic fragmentation. A sort of walking miracle, my skin / Bright as a Nazi lampshade, makes human identity lose its human form and result in a cold material object (Plath, 1965:23). The terrible simile in this case is not just an account of affliction, but it entirely reestablishes ontological life. Being is turned into such a hard tool. Personality comes to material reality. There are also deep symbolic cuts in the cracks and breaks where the stanza is divided. Fragmentation of language splits the body apart into discontinuous images. The degree of identity disintegration is on the basic structural level. The poem no longer has an integrated consistent voice. It is a harsh manifestation of the symbolic objects that are floating in space. Literary criticism describes this as poetic fragmentation, in which the identity is dismantled and redefined in terms of imagery, and the reader must create a meaning among fragments (Doche, 2023:982).

This structure does not bring death between fragments of the poem. It structures them completely at the base level. The text structure is founded on discontinuity, tearing and fragmentation. Linear flow is the symbolic excess of dissolving identity. Metaphor is the substitution of man by extreme objectivity. The grammatical composition becomes an accurate instrument of methodical elimination. In the poem, death is not specified as such. It performs it internally. Death is a formal mechanism that has been rooted in grammar, rhythm and stanza pattern.

This is the key motive as to why death in the poems of Plath could not be explained through any direct biographical or reductive psychological interpretation. It is not only a spontaneous outburst of uncontrolled despair. It is a cohesive and differentiated system of aesthetics. In her poems, destruction turns into a punitive

regime. Trauma is put into form. Self-erasure becomes a creative process of composition. Destruction is transformed into high artistic design. The process of creating meaning through the creation of fragmented identity using available symbolic representations in constructing identity is the simultaneous activity of readers, so death is not an object but actually a construction process (Doche, 2023:984). It is also this shaping of death that is the genesis of the paradox of the seeming control in the works of Plath. Although the very theme is annihilation, there is rigorous discipline as well as the greatest precision in art form. The poems are not placed in a haphazard assortment. They arrange disorder in the most artistic manner. They make the act of demolition graceful. This is referred to in modern criticism as controlled catastrophe, in which devastation is presented in a structured form rather than appearing as a crushing explosion (Lester, 2023:340). Death does not represent the anti-structure, the chaos. It is its solid foundation. Poems are built from erasure. Moreover, identity is destroyed to create artistic form. To enable the poem to exist, the self is lost. Death is a constructive creative power, not a nihilist end.

Death is a complex theme in the collection " Ariel" presented in a rather contradictory manner, as it is physical death on one side and a new birth or a new wind of spirit on the other. One turns out to be the unavoidable ill omen, and the other is the destruction of the death and the new resurrection. Death is usually presented with dramatic exalted emotions and actions, which suggests two opposite choices, ritual of real death or symbolic new birth. In the work Ariel, Plath puts emphasis on such themes as death, suicide, incest, resentment, violence, murder, and severe melancholy. The text and the tone are filled with the poetic persona, who is marred with unspent rage and is occasionally merciless and full of suppressed anger (Johonnudottir, 2017:56).

The real poetic achievement of Plath does not just imply the depiction of death; it also provides it with artistic form. She constructs the poems, which are not directed to death as an external destination, but are built of it as the main substance. Destruction is transformed into grammar. The trauma is put into musical rhythm. Spatial architecture is the erased self. The essence of death itself is the poetic structure.

3. Poetic Imagery in Plath: Embodying Death

Through turning mundane items, cozy home interiors, nature itself into a sophisticated system of demolition and art, Sylvia Plath makes death. Death in her poems is not conceptualized or taken in a philosophical context. It is invested in the shape of the reality of the image, vibrant color, tactile feel and weighty materiality. Extinction is embodied and expressed in visual language as one of the primary ways of expression. Death is not portrayed with just pictures. It makes it as direct sense perception.

Plath carries out domestic death ritualism in the poem "A Birthday Present". The kitchen that seemed like a safe place becomes a figurative door between life and annihilation. The traditional ritual of the birthday that was traditionally related to celebration and joy is turned into an existential conflict between life and death. The secret treasure promised is not the symbol of the anticipated joy, but the mark of stifled horror. Another psychological problem that the speaker faces death instead of evading it, is demonstrated by the fact that he is obsessive about the hidden thing (Lester, 2023:342). Death is not a sudden event but a nonidentity that is painful. There is secrecy created to create increasing terror. The fact that they are far apart contributes to terror.

Plath makes a row of white items that she continuously shows: the white bones, a pearly button and a cold ivory fang (Plath, 1965:72). These images are shallow in their possession of the innocence of white color but have their foundation on the bodies that once pulsed with life. Whiteness is a symbol of extinction and death, but not innocence. Beauty is transformed into dead rubble. Life turns into a museum object. This imagery language changes the living organism into a solid material one. This inclination is characterised as necrotic symbolism per the literary psychology wherein the aspects of life substitute life itself and the body becomes a non-living subject and a lifeless object (Lester, 2023:344). Death is not dark as is common. It is sterile twenty times, and glittering and horrendously cold.

The several wrappings that cover the gift are symbolic barriers between the person who gets it and latent death. This secrecy around the place creates panic. The direct vision turns into a need. The speaker does not desire any mediation symbolical, and he craves shocking direct collision. This is referred to as anticipatory terror in trauma theory, in which latent visible threats cause greater and more agonizing mental sense compared to an explicit threat (Caruth, 2016:119). Plath uses this suppressed fear when the speaker demands the utter truth. Death has to be seen but not imagined.

This is the artistic logic that is reiterated in the poetry of Plath. The imagery of speed, color and self-erasure in "Ariel" is an organic blend. Color is destroyed and causes itself to be burnt into red. Red does not portray throbbing life but predetermined death (Plath, 1965:48). The horse transforms itself into spiritual transcendence and material destruction at the same time. Moving itself becomes death. Energy is converted to systematic obliteration. Images do not just signify the externality of death. They become death embodied. The painful mood in the poems of Ariel is still a painful mood that was revealed in her first collection Colossus. All of these images of alienation, despair, destruction, and the absurdity of human life were effectively represented in her later poetry.

In the poem, Lady Lazarus, the human body is turned into horrific objects by using shocking lines of imagery. The living flesh becomes an object due to that atrocious simile of Bright as a Nazi lampshade (Plath, 1965:23). It is no longer the body which bears human identity. It is a rigid raw material. The cruel objectivity substitutes humanity. This simile is more poignant and deeper with the mention of the Holocaust where the personal genocide of individual people is connected with the genocide of people in history. The body is turned into a spectator and a testimony, not a living being. It generates what is referred to as symbolic reification, where identity is sacrificed and lost in the material image, according to the current critics (Doche, 2023:982).

This feature of death in the poem Edge is shown in the drawing of chastity and frozenness of the visual picture. The woman is perfected. The smile of accomplishment comes to her dead / Body wears the smile of accomplishment as

ultimate visual perfection (Plath, 1965:72). It is the beautification of the aesthetics of death that is brought out in the given image. Razing is tamed aesthetic. The body becomes a mould of formalization. The woman is completely symbolically built. In this instance, photographs produce the effect of ultimate closure and not the overpowering clutter.

Throughout these poems, Plath could extend the concept of death to be a continuation of concrete material language through her well-developed poetic images. The bones, ash, color, skin, veils, light, and movement are the symbols of annihilation as sophisticated carriers. The story events of narrative depict a nonexistence of death. It is inculcated in an instant visual representation. The image of death is not depicted to the reader externally. The reader sees and perceives it in the first place. The aesthetic development of death, according to the modern literary theory, is an organized system of symbols and not a visual image of a haphazard hopelessness (Lec et al., 2022:6). The image is the meaning-producing form which is the formation of perception. The trauma is transformed into visual coherent codes. The metaphor code of destruction is decipherable.

This is why the death in the poetry of Plath is not silent and obscure. It is clearly visible. It has sensed texture. It has a distinctive color. It has a defined shape. The sensory images convert extinction into language. The poem turns into graphic architecture of disintegration. Death is not the nothingness that is created by nothing, but a carefully designed image. Plath never writes about death as something abstract. She inscribes it on sensory perception. She renders it visible to the eye. She gives it a material reality. She simplifies it and makes it comprehensible. Destruction is symbolically achieved by sophisticated pictures. The trauma becomes a specific visual form. Death will be fertile poetic material (Ketab, 2020:455).

4. Freudian Death Drive and Its Influence on Plath's Poetry

The struggle of the forces of life and the forces of self-destruction is recurrently and cyclically restructured in the poems of Sylvia Plath, and this is consistent with the theory of the death drive developed by Sigmund Freud. Freud said that this drive is a profound psychological urge to compulsive repetition, self-destruction, and regression to the inorganic state, and works in immediate conflict with life instincts

that want to survive and continue (Holowchak et al., 2015:214). Death in the poems of Plath is not a momentary spontaneous impulse or a confined emergency situation. It is portrayed through an everlasting unremitting internal pressure that characterizes the aspects of desire, repetition, and identity. Destruction is not externally connected with the structure of the psyche as a chance threat.

This trend is easily followed in such poems as Elm, and Lady Lazarus. When the speaker in Elm refers to death as something known and close rather than as something unfamiliar and threatening, she says: She does not fear it because she has been there before (Plath, 1965:23). There is an indicative line in the poem "Lady Lazarus" named: Dying / Is an art, like everything else. I do it superbly, and turn it into a habitual ceremonious rehearsal (Plath, 1965:23). Suicide is a learned behavior and not a crisis. The final solution has been replaced by cyclical reconstruction. Such a tendency is one of the obvious signs of Freudian repetition compulsion when the psyche does not run away but goes back to traumatic experiences (Holowchak et al., 2015:217). Death in this case is a cyclic psychological incarnation, not an ultimate definite verdict.

This organic blend of motion and destruction in the lines The dew that flies / Suicidal, at one with the rush / Into the red of the poem Ariel demonstrates how vital force and self-destruction come to one flowing movement (Plath, 1965:48). Even the vital energy turns to the destructive force. This may be interpreted in the Freudian paradox wherein life drive has organically incorporated in it a drive towards death. Modern psychoanalysis demonstrates that there are no polar opposites between creation and destruction but structural correlations (Laplanche and Pontalis, 2018:34). The themes of lust and suicide in the poetry of Plath are not two distinct forces but one incestuous system.

The death drive does not come out in the abstract theoretical form in the poetry of Plath. Instead, it artistically creates it in visual, musical, repetitive, and vocal sensual communication. Symbolism of descent, erasure and cyclical returning are all organized. Death is the desire that becomes latent. The abortion is put into constructive language. Psychiatric and literary psychology research demonstrates that a symbolic refusal of self and the repetitive internal annihilation rather than the

suicidal intention itself is commonly characteristic of the depressive discourse (Cooper, 2003:298; Masoomi et al., 2023:3). The given form is accurately mirrored in the poetry produced by Plath: death is a cognitive and conceptual framework based on perceptions and words.

Plath does not then write about the death drive as an abstract scholastic theory. She writes out of it as unrefined poetic content. The movement, repetition and symbolic return of the drive are its manifestation. The realm of psychological conflict is worked out in language into disciplined aesthetic system. Her poetry is a living literary embodiment of Freudian wisdom according to which it is not only the drive to live that creates human consciousness, but also the structural inclination to self-resolution and gradual disappearance. Death shall not be any external other of life, but a part organic of its own internal logic.

5. Suicide as Language and Theatrical Performance

Among other general themes in her works, Plath is found to be heavily preoccupied with death and suicidal tendencies. This is, maybe, the reason why her works have such a profound meaning in the minds of physicians and other healthcare workers who are given an opportunity to see the disturbed psyche (Cordova & Young, 2024:131).

In her case of the tragic death, an analysis method of investigation should be employed to bring out the factors behind it. To solve the mystery of death, monitoring and collection of information related to the suicide case is required. In the situation of Plath, she did not leave behind any traditional notes about suicide but the poems serve this purpose by default. These are poetic hints which can be used as a starting point to determine her suicidal motives. Moreover, the progression of the ideas in the poems through time, carries the coded message of the purpose of their appearance as a manifestation of the motives of the poet before reaching the suicide decision. That is, research through language employed in the poems by Plath is one of the means to expose the hidden suicidal motive (Faradika, 2019:101).

The poetry of Sylvia Plath explores the shadow of a mental illness, extreme depression, and existential despair. Her poems are usually haunting as they are about thinking about death and how time slips away. There were acute personal

struggles to add to this pessimistic view. The fact that her marriage collapsed and that she has two small children and has to take care of them on her own contributed to a great extent to the intensity of her depression. The drugs that help her manage the condition have had side effects that could have led to more suicidal ideations based on Aurelia Plath, the mother of Sylvia (Mariya, 2024:4).

Sylvia Plath, in the poem Lady Lazarus does not build suicide as a specific individual psychological event but as a dramatic action in space and time. Death does not constitute an internal absolute silence, but rather the representational performance in the populace. Suffering does not go under the carpet but it is an open display to society. The poem forms the pattern of theatrical presentation in which the speaker is symbolically the annihilation of herself in front of the audience watching her, and the poem starts with the exciting opening scene. The words, the peanut-crunching crowd / Shoves in to see / Them unwrap me hand and foot, turning me into an acting subject rather than an object of observation, an exhibit rather than a disappearance (Plath, 1965:23). The body turns into a spectacle, a poem turns into a stage, and mass becomes the examination of the scolding eyes of people. Suicide is not eliminated, but turned into sophisticated acting.

This is a calculated dramatic background that entirely refines the definition of self-destruction. Suicide is not an issue of solitude, but one of discursivity. The speaker is not immersed in nothingness but throbs with life in front of the listeners. She violates and usurps language and scene. This aesthetic composition is in line with the performative identity theory according to which identity is produced and created through performance and display and not an expression of an inert internal entity (Butler, 1997:85). Plath does not provide a ready-made self that is presented by the speaker. Her identity construction is done in a dynamical manner. The body gets an exhibitionist quality. Language turns into playing authority. Death is a good communicative act as opposed to a solitary psychological collapse.

This performative logic builds up in the poem in the repetitive ritualistic ceremony. Suicide is not an eventual event, but a repetition event, which is cyclical. The first line says: Dying / Is an art, like any other. I am really good at it, and I have turned self-destruction into skill and discipline and fine technique (Plath, 1965:23). Destruction

is an everyday practice, rather than a freak accident. This pattern finds its reflection in the Freudian introduction to repetition compulsion, where repetition is the preferred action to take rather than the aversion one (Holowchak et al., 2015:219). But Plath makes psychological repetition beautiful, and turns art. Suicide becomes a play of drama, not a psychological disorder. Reiteration turns into an artificial shape. The result of this cycle is the glorious resurrection motif: "Out of the ash / I rise with my red hair / And I eat men like air" (Plath, 1965:48). In this respect, destruction brings about new power. The work of returning destruction brings about domination and control. Death is rebirth of life. It is made to become theatrical new birth and not the final dissolution, which is suicide. The myth of not losing identity but recreating it through performance is created by the phoenix-like visual forms. The beginning of power is destruction. The voice comes out of the death ashes. The start of language speaking is silence.

Modern literary and psychological writing supports such an interpretation by underlining the fact that Plath took her own life as a form of artistic acting, not as an invitation to die (Lester, 2023:340). The trauma theory also considers these structures as performative reconstruction rather than passive remembrance, in which suffering is already embodied, arranged, and symbolically mediated via narrative (Urmila, 2021:2). In Lady Lazarus, suicide is talked about and not preached. It is not a dead loss, but living and breathing language. It turns into a poetic approach that structures voice, rhythm, self and sense. Plath does not turn suicide into a final place. She writes it as recuperative reconstructive symbolism. The speaking of language becomes death. Destruction turns to theater performance. Trauma is turned into living theater.

6. Death, Identity, and the Dissolution of Self

In the poem "Edge," Plath writes: "The woman is perfected./ Her dead/ Body wears the smile of accomplishment"(Plath, 1965:72). The passage creates death as complete final perfection. Grammatical composition is reduced to the minimum. Language is firm and tightly regulated. Identity breaks to dissolve into the formal earth. The mythologizing of death in the line "The vision of a Greek necessity/ Flows in the scrolls of her toga" transforms the mortal into a classical artistic symbol. The

tone becomes a systematized structure. The woman transforms into a written textbook.

This shocking beauty of destruction aligns with the contemporary erudite proposition that defines Plath's late runes within the aesthetics of perfection, seeing in the process of extermination system and form rather than arbitrary chaos (Lester, 2023:342). The analogous psychoanalytic foundation also establishes that emblematic representations of death in depressive literature generally represent a desire to gain control, not inescapably simply absolute despair (Cooper, 2003:299). In "Edge," tone- destruction doesn't mean chaotic emotional collapse. It's a chastened aesthetic completion. Exposure is precisely composed in the lyric.

7. Conclusion

Death and suicide are not only transitory symbols in the poetry of Plath. Form, rhythm, metaphor and voice have all been involved in creating annihilation as a medium of meaning. Suicide turns into theatrical performance, poetic discourse and aesthetic structure. The identity decays and fades away in lyrical words. This interpretive model is in opposition to reductive biographical interpretations that can only make sense of Plath using her tragic death. It, instead, contends in favor of an intensive symbolic meaning, poetry, which is a transfiguration of experienced pain into sophisticated aesthetic structures. Death is an organized phenomenon. Suicide turns into creative rhetoric. There is a great paradox in poems that destroy brings meaning. Demolition generates voice. The silence is changed into verbal communication. This crucial paradox is what has made Plath remain powerful in the study of literature today.

The poems of Sylvia Plath do not make death a singular example of an isolated phenomenon but rather a focus of imagination, which shapes voice, image, and meaning. Through her writing and personal suffering, the intimate pain of the individual cells is lifted to the level of the figurative, emotion is disintegrated through the dense metaphors and strict imagery. Plath does not show feelings as they are but rather re-creates them in elegant poetic form. Death has now becomes a fixed symbolic form and not a direct literal obsession. With her poems, the suicidal desire is refined language, rather than the self-confession, and suicidal annihilation is a poetic form, not a biographical one. The modern criticism dwells on Plath

romanticizing death by turning psychological pain into symbolic systems of meaning rather than pure expression of chaos (Lester, 2023:340; Doche, 2023:985).

Death and trauma are used as leading organizing principles in the works by Plath. They are not repeated in aimlessly despairing ways, but in various symbolic ways. There are some poems that view that death brings freedom. In other forms, it is terror, domination, cleansing or conversion. Such multiplicity of meaning shows that Plath does not provide a single definite meaning of death. She constructs several and various images of it in imagery, tone, metaphor and voice. Death is shown to the readers in its terrorizing frightening versions and in its beautiful appeal versions, both devastating and reconstructing. This duality is created by literary criticism and is the core of poetic identity of Plath, in which annihilation is an object of meaning, not complete silence (Lester, 2023:343).

She also uses language as an alternative to face-to-face emotional communication in her poems. Writing is a platform of organizing, systematizing, and laboring with the suffering. It is made clear through psychology that depressive discourse conventionally tends to turn internal pain into symbolic rather than explicit expression (Masoomi et al., 2023:3). It is precisely this that is the trend of the poetry of Plath. Death is altered into a linguistic system that makes sense. Suffering speaks good poetry. The poem is turned into a ship of psychological struggle.

The history of depression, the process of electroshock therapy, and the repeated suicide attempts are all the aspects of the Plath life that contribute to the context but do not quite explain the poem. Modern literary psychology has repudiated the reductive interpretations that transform poetic darkness into the biological despair of biography. Rather, research concentrates on change, and not reflexion: life has turned into raw material, and poetry has become an artistic form (Cooper, 2003:300). She never made her piece out of raw pain. It was due to the change into aesthetic form. The technique of death used by Plath relies on the artistic craftsmanship. The imagery determines sense perception. Latent fear is arranged into a metaphor. Emotional space is arranged by tone. It is only in high language that annihilation is beautified. These lyrical devices lead the reader to the symbolic death rather than literal death. Death becomes readable. The trauma becomes understandable. The poem does not descend to the state of despair. It makes some deep meaning out of it. The wish to die is not the only object of Plath in this respect. It is a profound cognition of the idea of death as an idea, power and figurative

existence in the mind. Death is not made to shine blindly in her poems. It interrogates it deeply. Reshapes it boldly. Shifts it into a poetical language. Plath makes death a sophisticated poetical system by means of imagery, metaphor and building such that the reader is able to cope with annihilation as a type of deep meaning, but not an ultimate nothingness.

In the poetry written by Sylvia Plath, death and suicide are built more like a fine poetry form rather than person-centered deed. The destruction is turned into a language by the use of stanza, image, rhythm and performance. Suicide is a sublime discourse. The self is broken up into the shape of art.

Plath is not just an author of death. She cuts death in words with the chisel. The subversion of self in her poetry becomes vastly symbolic meaning and forms speaking texts on the edges of being and non-being. The reader does not engage in the crude biography, but subtle artistic expression. Not utter silence, but voice repeating. Her work remains the subject of modern literary criticism due to the fact that it does not allow one to ignore annihilation as a fundamental meaning but rather as an absolute lack of it.

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بين الوجود والعدم: تمثلات الانتحار وأثرمة الذات في شعر سيلفيا بلاث

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الكلمات المفتاحية: سيلفيا بلاث، الموت، الانتحار

الملخص:

تتناول هذه الدراسة ظاهرتي الموت والانتحار في الأعمال الشعرية لسيلفيا بلاث بوصفهما نظامين رمزيين ولسانيين، لا مجرد انعكاس لوقائع سيرية أو تجليات لأعراض نفسية. ويرتكز منظور التحليل على قصائد مجموعة «أربيل» (1965)، ولا سيما قصائد «السيدة لازاروس»، و*«الأب»، و«أربيل»، و«الحافة»*. مبيّناً كيف تصوغ بلاث العذاب الإنساني في بناءات شعرية قصوى من خلال الصور الشعرية، والإيقاع، والبنية النحوية، والصوت الشعري. يظهر الموت في شعرها بوصفه لغةً وأداءً وألّةً رمزيةً منظّمة، لا مجرد اختفاءً جسدي بسيط. أمّا الانتحار فيُقدّم كخطاب شعري مُهدّب في مقابل الاعتراف الذاتي المباشر، حيث تُفكّك الهوية وتُعاد صياغتها في شكل شعر، بدلاً من حصرها في خطاب سيرية تقليدي، تعتمد الدراسة منهج التحليل النصّي الدقيق، مدعوماً بنظريات علم النفس المعاصرة وتحليل الخطاب، لتبيان أنّ بلاث تنخرط في نشاط دلالي لصناعة المعنى عبر فعل الإبادة. فشعرها يعيد كتابة اليأس في بُنى رمزية يتحوّل فيها الرضح الصدمي إلى مجازاتٍ بليغة، ويغدو الفناء شكلاً صارماً من أشكال الجماليات. ولا تقتصر هذه الرؤية على تأويلات سيرية اختزالية، بل يمكن النظر إلى الإبداع الشعري لبلاث بوصفه إطاراً شعرياً موحداً يعمل فيه الموت مبدأً بنيوياً جمالياً، لا موتاً شخصياً فحسب. وتخلص نتائج البحث إلى أنّ شعر بلاث ينجح في تحويل البؤس الشخصي إلى خطاب رمزي إنساني شامل، مانحاً القراء فرصة مواجهة الموت بوصفه مصدراً لمعنى عظيم، لا صمتاً نهائياً.