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CONFESSIONAL NOTE IN THE POETRY OF SYLVIA PLATH

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Abstract: *The study of Sylvia Plath's poetry highlights her themes and techniques and reveals her growth and development as a poet. She expresses her inner world in her poetry. Plath is a major American poet who extends the frontiers of poetry with her forays into areas of human consciousness rarely explored by creative writers. Her talent got famous both in America and England. Plath's poetic strategies give evidence of a carefully crafted prosody. The pictures that Plath created through her poetry are terrifying. Her horror of mind could clearly be seen in her poetry. Her poetry has a unique characteristic, her poems create a cosmos a poetic universe replete with symbolic properties, a universe that encompasses similar landscapes seascapes and personae who are isolated and often battered and traumatized. Sylvia Plath was the writer for whom literature and personal life were single unit.*

Key words: *confession, tormented self, personal experience.*

Introduction

In Sylvia Plath's poetry there is a sense of menace that is due to her obsessions in her real life. Plath was a neurotic obsessive personality but her position in the world of art was not comparable. By reading her biography her texts could easily be understood. Sylvia Plath's life was full with suffering and deprivation and conflict undoubtedly provided the impulse, the motivation to dwell on and emphasize specific themes in her poetry. Plath used death and rebirth as major themes in her poetry. Death is a recurrent theme in Plath's poetry it is because of early death of her father. The father death left the daughter with powerful feeling of defeat, remorse, grief and resentment. The absence of father effected Plath's life a lot and it is clearly visible in her poetry. Plath passed the periods of depression and it resulted in continuous attempts of suicidal attempts at various intervals of life. She broke down with the unfulfilment of her dream of being a successful writer. She once took an overdose of sleeping pills to perish her miseries but fortunately she was saved. Her continuous

reference to death and rebirth through various images shows her wish to die and rise again in a better way. In her poetry she has used a lot of images to represent death. Plath thought that death is the best way to meet with her father, for whose love she lacked from her childhood she wanted to reunite with her dead father and death was the only mean to achieve this goal. So, death for Plath is just way out to rebirth that reunites her with her father. Plath was totally unsatisfied with her life, for her life was meaningless and the best way she gives meaning to her life is through dying and rebirth.

Objectives

1. To know the technique of confessionelism in the poetry of Sylvia Plath.
2. To analyze how social relation is depicted in poetic contest.

Confessionalism and Plath

Plath justifies her suicide attempts that they are response of her call: "I guess you could say I have a call". Perhaps this call could be her downright determination to end her life of suffering and depression, and to reborn into a better life. Judith Kroll links Plath's personal events to her treatment of the image of rebirth:

"To see autobiographical details only as such is to regard Plath's vision of suffering and death as morbid, but to appreciate the deeper significance of her poetry to to understand her fascination with death as connected with and transformed into a broader concerned with the themes of rebirth and transcendence."

After analyzing her poems it is obvious that she realizes for better resurrection it demand her death as a first step. It resulted in her continuous suicide attempts. She was preoccupied with the idea of death.

Plath always felt a victim in the male dominated society. Her poetry is a well example of her

feelings of victimization, and raised her voice against the brutalities of the men who were present in her life including her father and her husband.

The question of identity is another major theme that could be found in Plath's poetry. In her poems the personas discard their old unwanted identity and adopt a new, more fulfilling one. Sylvia Plath thinks in and organizes her in terms of polarities. The antithetical concepts of life and death are her twin themes that occur side by side.

Plath's poetry could not be treated as only autobiographical, subjective and self-centered. They show an awareness of the social and political climate of the time. She played a well role of mother, wife and daughter while being very much conscious that she was a brilliant, intelligent woman. She was profoundly affected by the conflicting ideologies of domesticity and achievement. The double standard of American society resulted in Sylvia Plath's envy and hatred of men. The fearful and contradictory nature of American culture of the 1950's influenced her poetry and at the same time aroused anxiety in Plath's own life.

In Plath's poems like 'Daddy' and 'Lady Lazarus' there are expressions of the woman's struggle for equality and power in a social order that is male dominated, exploited, looked upon as subjects and private possessions. In her poems there are images of women being imprisoned and tortured as well as those who strive for identity of their own. Plath in most of her poems discards the dominant patriarchal agenda of male dominant society. The writer shows her anger towards men in the poems like 'The Jailer', 'Daddy', and 'The Applicant' and 'the couriers'. Many critics have misunderstood and misinterpreted Plath's poetry. The charge of solipsism has been levelled against Plath's poetry by Joyce Carol Oates. "Solipsism" is defined as the theory that the "self is all that exists or can be known." This type of misunderstanding exists in the poems like "The Applicant". "Three Woman" and "Purdah", since they portray the agonizing entrapment of the different personas by the powerful social order of the times in which they live. Plath's use of Holocaust has also been questioned. Commenting on the Plath's use of Holocaust imagery in the poem "Daddy" Irving Howe opines that her comparisons are "utterly inappropriate". Plath's poetry dovetails both the private and public world. Due to this fusion she was able to produce texts that function as a mirror of the times in which she lived.

Sylvia Plath's poetry is confessional as she uses autobiographical material as a raw material. There are a lot of poems in which she showed revolt

against a fictitious father-daughter persona. Her poetry establishes an ambivalent attitude towards nationality. Plath's poetry promotes a cultural hybridization. In her poem 'Crossing the Water' it is never made clear which water is crossed. Plath's poetry has an environmental effect in which she lived. Her powerful poem 'Elm' foregrounds her position as environmentalist. Her poetry also depicts the repercussion of nuclear bombs which highlights her environmental concerns. The Hiroshima incident makes the poet to think so, it is obvious that the social elements reflect in Plath's poetry. Plath's later works are filled with images that are linked together by free association of ideas. These images create a powerful effect on the psyche of the reader. The world of Plath's poetry is a rich that holds the reader enthralled. There are moving pictures of Plath's poetic landscape in her poetry. Color symbolism is employed in an effective manner in Sylvia Plath's poetry. The black color in her poems is associated with her father and husband that is male power and authority. This could be the most remarkable aspect of Plath is that loud is also used in the poems like 'Daddy', 'Man in Black' and 'Crossing the Water' to represent death. This ambiguous use of mirrors shows her state of mind.

A remarkable aspect of Sylvia Plath's is to create beauty out of personal suffering and describe it vividly and with fascination and to employ very appropriate images for it. Many of the Plath's poems like 'Tulips', 'Cut', 'Fever' etc. deal with Plath's sickness and disease, suffering but what is remarkable about her poetic sensibility is that instead of being depressed and saddened by disease and sufferings Plath added vigor and energy to perceive things at a deeper level. The experience of sufferings and disease heightened her imaginative sensibilities. Suffering and disease in her poetry provides to the poet an almost visionary desire and mystical experience. Plath created poetry out of sensation.

Sylvia Plath considered writing a way of life, an expression of being alive, for her writing was an expression of her personality and it was also a preservation of her sanity. Her creativity is directly related to her personal experience. There is a close relationship between her life and art. Her writing is a reflection of her mind. In Plath's poetry there was a conflict between social acceptability and writing, between creativity and academic success. In her writing the frustrations of her life are clearly visible. She wrote only to escape from the frustrations of her life. Many of Plath's poems when read in collaboration with her biographical information, betray the emotional concerns experienced by her at the time of their composition. Her poems are influenced by the disturbing

experiences and intense pressures of her life, a troubled and uncertain marriage and a growing sense of financial and personal vulnerability in her roles as a mother and a wife. There is a bitterness, anger and hatred towards the male society.

Plath employed perfect techniques of expression in her poetry. She used verbal manipulation of external events and objects. She was aware of the power of words and she used them effectively in her poetry. Mastery over words and their use in her poetry is the successful step to gain control over experience. This sort of experience made her able to use simile, metaphor alliteration and the entire range of rhyme scheme in her poetry. In her poetry diction is ornate and the content is manipulated.

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Conclusion

Sylvia Plath's poetry we can say the poetry is sensation recollected in tranquility. She draws on sensation which are poignant in their effect and binds images around them. Such type of technique is found in 'Tulips', 'Cut', 'Fever', 'Ariel' and 'Years'. It is found that the range of sensation in her poetry is not confined merely to physical level. It embraces the physical and mental level. One more remarkable aspect of Sylvia Plath's poetic technique is her use of dramatic personae for objectifying her own personal feelings which have confessional urgency.