

THE FEMINIST ELEMENT'S IN LADY LAZARUS BY SYLVIA PLATH

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of
Master
Of Arts Degree in English

By
ARCHANA .B
39970001



DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES

SATHYABAMA
INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)

Accredited with Grade "A" by NAAC
JEPPIAAR NAGAR, RAJIV GANDHI SALAI, CHENNAI - 600 119

APRIL 2021



SATHYABAMA
INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)

Accredited with Grade “A” by NAAC

JEPPIAAR NAGAR, RAJIV GANDHI SALAI, CHENNAI - 600 119

www.sathyabama.ac.in

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

BONAFIDE CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this Project Report is the bonafide work of **Archana.B (39970001)** who have done the Project work. She has carried out the project entitled **“The Feminist Element’s in Lady Lazarus by Sylvia Plath”** under my supervision from June 2020 to April 2021.

SENTHIL KUMAR.S M.A

(Asst. Professor,

Dept. of English, SATHYABAMA)

Internal Guide

Submitted for Viva voce Examination held on 16-04-2021

[Dr. LIZY]

Internal Examiner

[Dr. SOWMIYA L M, Ph.D.]

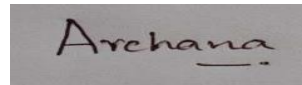
External Examiner

DECLARATION

I **Archana .B** hereby declare that the Project Report entitled “**The Feminist Element’s in Lady Lazarus by Sylvia Plath**” done by me under the guidance of **SENTHIL KUMAR.S M.A** is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Bachelor of Arts degree in **Sathyabama Institute of Science and Technology**.

DATE: 05-04-2021

PLACE: Chennai

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in dark ink. The signature appears to be 'Archana' with a horizontal line underneath it.

SIGNATURE OF THE CANDIDATE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am pleased to acknowledge my sincere thanks to the Board of Management of **SATHYABAMA** for their kind encouragement in doing this project and for completing it successfully. I am grateful to them.

I convey my thanks to the Department of English for providing me necessary support and details at the right time during the progressive reviews.

I would like to express my sincere and deep sense of gratitude to my Project Guide **SENTHIL KUMAR.S M.A (Asst. Professor, Dept. of English, SATHYABAMA)** for his valuable guidance, suggestions and constant encouragement paved the way for the successful completion of my project work.

I wish to express my thanks to all Teaching and Non-teaching staff members of the Department of English who were helpful in many ways for the completion of the project.

CONTENT

CHAPTER	TITLE	PAGE
I	INTRODUCTION	2
II	FEMINIST'S ELEMENTS IN LADY LAZARUS	20
III	CONCLUSION	47

CHAPTER I

ABOUT AMERICAN LITERATURE

American literature, the body of written works produced in the English language in the United States. Like other national literatures, American literature was shaped by the history of the country that produced it. For almost a century and a half, America was merely a group of colonies scattered along the eastern seaboard of the North American continent—colonies from which a few hardy souls tentatively ventured westward. After a successful rebellion against the motherland, America became the United States, a nation. By the end of the 19th century this nation extended southward to the Gulf of Mexico, northward to the 49th parallel, and westward to the Pacific. By the end of the 19th century, too, it had taken its place among the powers of the world—its fortunes so interrelated with those of other nations that inevitably it became involved in two world wars and, following these conflicts, with the problems of Europe and East Asia. Meanwhile, the rise of science and industry, as well as changes in ways of thinking and feeling, wrought many modifications in people's lives. All these factors in the development of the United States molded the literature of the country.

This article traces the history of American poetry, drama, fiction, and social and literary criticism from the early 17th century through the turn of the 21st century. For a description of the oral and written literatures of the indigenous peoples of the Americas, see Native American literature. Though the contributions of African Americans to American literature are discussed in this article, see African American literature for in-depth treatment. For information about literary traditions related to, and at times overlapping with, American literature in English, see English literature and Canadian literature: Canadian literature in English

PERIODS OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

The history of American literature stretches across more than 400 years. It can be divided into five major periods, each of which has unique characteristics, notable authors, and representative works.

THE COLONIAL AND NATIONAL PERIOD (17th century to 1830)

The first European settlers of North America wrote about their experiences starting in the 1600s. This was the earliest American literature: practical, straightforward, often derivative of literature in Great Britain, and focused on the future.

In its earliest days, during the 1600s, American literature consisted mostly of practical nonfiction written by British settlers who populated the colonies that would become the United States.

THE ROMANTIC PERIOD (1830 to 1870)

Romanticism is a way of thinking that values the individual over the group, the subjective over the objective and a person's emotional experience over reason. It also values the wildness of nature over human-made order. Romanticism as a worldview took hold in Western Europe in the late 18th century, and American writers embraced it in the early 19th century. In New England, several different groups of writers and thinkers emerged after 1830, each exploring the experiences of individuals in different segments of American society. During the 1850s, as the United States headed toward civil war, more and more stories by and about enslaved and free African Americans were written.

Realism and Naturalism (1870 to 1910)

The human cost of the Civil War in the United States was immense: more than million soldiers fought in the war, and perhaps as many as 851,000 people died in 1861–65. Walt Whitman claimed that “a great literature will...arise out of the era of those four years,” and what emerged in the following decades was a literature that presented a detailed and unembellished vision of the world as it truly was. This was the essence of realism. Naturalism was an intensified form of realism. After the grim realities of a devastating war, they became writers’ primary mode of expression. Naturalism, like realism, was a literary movement that drew inspiration from French authors of the 19th century who sought to document, through fiction, the reality that they saw around them, particularly among the middle and working classes living in cities.

The Modernist Period (1910 to 1945)

Advances in science and technology in Western countries rapidly intensified at the start of the 20th century and brought about a sense of unprecedented progress. The devastation of World War I and the Great Depression also caused widespread suffering in Europe and the United States. These contradictory impulses can be found swirling within modernism, a movement in the arts defined first and foremost as a radical break from the past. But this break was often an act of destruction, and it caused a loss of faith in traditional structures and beliefs. Despite, or perhaps because of, these contradictory impulses, the modernist period proved to be one of the richest and most productive in American literature.

The Contemporary Period (1945 to present)

The United States, which emerged from World War II confident and economically strong, entered the Cold War in the late 1940s. This conflict with the Soviet Union shaped global politics for more than four decades, and the proxy wars and threat of nuclear annihilation that came to define it were just some of the influences shaping American literature during the second half of the 20th century. The 1950s and '60s brought significant cultural shifts within the United States driven by the civil rights movement and the women's movement. Prior to the last decades of the 20th century, American literature was largely the story of dead white men who had created Art and of living white men doing the same. By the turn of the 21st century, American literature had become a much more complex and inclusive story grounded on a wide-ranging body of past writings produced in the United States by people of different backgrounds and open to more Americans in the present day.

INTRODUCTION OF 20TH CENTURY

The 20th century was like no time period before it. Einstein, Darwin, Freud, and Marx were just some of the thinkers who profoundly changed the Western Culture. These changes took distinct shape in the literature of the 20th century. Modernism, a movement that was a radical break from 19th century Victorianism, led to postmodernism, which emphasized self-consciousness and pop art. While 20th-century literature is a diverse field covering a variety of genres, there are common characteristics that changed literature forever.

20th Century

The 20th century opened with great hope but also with some apprehension, for the new century marked the final approach to a new millennium. For many, humankind was entering upon an unprecedented era. H.G. Wells's utopian studies, the aptly titled *Anticipations of the Reaction of Mechanical and Scientific Progress*

upon Human Life and Thought (1901) and A Modern Utopia (1905), both captured and qualified this optimistic mood and gave expression to a common conviction that science and technology would transform the world in the century ahead. To achieve such transformation, outmoded institutions and ideals had to be replaced by ones more suited to the growth and liberation of the human spirit. The death of Queen Victoria in 1901 and the accession of Edward VII seemed to confirm that a franker, less inhibited era had begun.

Many writers of the Edwardian period, drawing widely upon the realistic and naturalistic conventions of the 19th century (upon Ibsen in drama and Balzac, Turgenev, Flaubert, Zola, Eliot, and Dickens in fiction) and in tune with the anti-Aestheticism unleashed by the trial of the archetypal Aesthete, Oscar Wilde, saw their task in the new century to be an unashamedly didactic one. In a series of wittily iconoclastic plays, of which *Man and Superman* (performed 1905, published 1903) and *Major Barbara* (performed 1905, published 1907) are the most substantial, George Bernard Shaw turned the Edwardian theatre into an arena for debate upon the principal concerns of the day: the question of political organization, the morality of armaments and war, the function of class and of the professions, the validity of the family and of marriage, and the issue of female emancipation. Nor was he alone in this, even if he was alone in the brilliance of his comedy. John Galsworthy made use of the theatre in *Strife* (1909) to explore the conflict between capital and labour, and in *Justice* (1910) he lent his support to reform of the penal system, while Harley Granville-Barker, whose revolutionary approach to stage direction did much to change theatrical production in the period, dissected in *The Voysey Inheritance* (performed 1905, published 1909) and *Waste* (performed 1907, published 1909) the hypocrisies and deceit of upper-class and professional life.

Many Edwardian novelists were similarly eager to explore the shortcomings of English social life. Wells—in *Love and Mr. Lewis ham* (1900); *Kipps* (1905); *Ann Veronica* (1909), his pro-suffragist novel; and *The History of Mr. Polly* (1910)—captured the frustrations of lower- and middle-class existence, even though he relieved his accounts with many comic touches.

20th Century English Poetry Development

The 20th century English poetry emerged in the early years of the 20th century through various schools, styles, and influences:

1st Phase

The first phase of the movement, the school of imagism, the style of French symbolist poetry, influence of Dostoevsky and the dominance of war poetry, these were all different manifestations of modernism in English poetry (1909-16) A.D.

2nd Phase

During the flowering of Modernist poetry between 1917 and 1929, the 2nd phase of the movement, all these initial manifestations of modernism combined to find a full nature expression in the poetry of T.S. Eliot, Edith Sitwell and later Yeats most notable of which is, Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Sitwell's *Gold Coast Customs* and Yeats's *Michael Robartes and the Dances*

3rd Phase

The 3rd and the final phase of Modernist is largely the decade of the 30s which is marked by the Marxist (Non-Marxist) poets such as Auden, Louis MacNeice, C. Day-Lewis and Stephen Spender.

20th century poetry

The most striking thing in twentieth-century English literature is the revolution in poetic taste and practice. Various movements and changes had a greater influence upon modern poetry. Though poets are often influenced by each other and sometimes, share a common outlook, their style and the ways of writing differ from each other. So modern poetry is essentially a private art form and it contains very much a story of individual poets.

Poetry today can be written on almost any subject. The modern poets find inspirations from railway trains, tramcars, telephones and things of commonplace interest. Modern poets have not accepted the theory of great subjects for poetic composition.

The whole universe is the modern poet's composition. He writes on themes of real-life e.g. *The Songs Train* by John Davidson, *Goods Train of Night* by Ashley, *Machine Guns* by Richard Aldington, and *Listeners* by Walter

REALISM

The poetry of the 20th century is marked with a note of realism. Realism in modern poetry was the product of a reaction against the pseudo-romanticism of the last century over and above the influence of science.

The modern poet sees life and paints it as it is with all its wait and ugliness. He tears the veil which the romanticists had hung between life and art. Robert Frost, Edmund Blunden, and Gibson are the poets of realism in modern poetry.

LOVE

Love forms the subject of many modern lyrics Robert Bridges has produced fine sonnets of love in *The Growth of Love*. E.g. *I Will Not Let Thee Go*. W.B. Yeats' *When You are Old* etc.

Pessimism

There is a note of pessimism and disillusionment in modern poetry. The modern poet has realized the pettiness of human life and the tragedy and suffering of the poor have made him gloomy and sad.

Poetry as the expression of the feeling has become autumnal in tone. T. Hardy, Huxley and T.S. Eliot are the poets of Pessimism and disillusionment in modern poetry.

Romantic Elements

In spite of the dominance of realism, in modern poetry, the spirit of romance continues to rule the minds of certain poets like Yeats, E. Thomas, Masefield etc. The works of these poets have the fact that the spirit of romance is as old as the life itself.

Walter De La Mare's poetry is full of true romantic spirit bordering on supernaturalism. With him, the ghosts and fairies of the old world have come into their own in the 20th century.

Nature

Nature attracts the modern poet no less than the poets of the earlier ages. But for the modern poet, nature is not a mystic. He does not find any spiritual meaning in nature. He feels jolly at the sight of nature's loveliness.

He gives a clear picture of birds, clouds, landscapes, sea and countryside in his poetry. Masefield, Robert Bridges, Edmund Blunden etc are the great poets of nature in modern poetry.

Humanitarian and Democratic Note

Modern poetry is marked with a note of humanitarianism and democratic feeling. The modern poet, more than Wordsworth (*read A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal*), is interested in the life of labourers, workers etc.

He sees, in the daily struggles of these people the same potentialities that the older poets found in those of high rank. Masfield, Gibson, Goldsworthy are mainly interested in the common man and his sufferings.

RELIGION AND MYSTICISM

The modern age is the age of science, but even in this scientific age, we have poems written on the subject of religion and mysticism. W.B. Yeats, Francis Thompson, Robert Graves etc are the great poets who have kept alive the flame of religion and mysticism in their poetry.

DICTION AND STYLE

Modern poets have a preference for simple and direct expression. Modern poets have chosen to be free in the use of the meter. They have followed freedom from the trammels of verse. Verse rhythm is replaced by sense rhythm. There is free movement in 20th-century English poetry.

SYLVIA PLATH BIOGRAPHY

Sylvia Plath's importance in American history is derived from the literary excellence of her writing, and her works show the plight of mid-twentieth century women. Plath's significance comes from her role as a poet and the ways in which her writing opened the door for exploration of a feminist-martyr to patriarchal society, as well as the

treatment of psychiatric patients. As a post-World War Two confessional poet, or a poet who wrote based on a personal attachment to her work, Plath's life can be explored through her poetry and stories. By aligning the works of Sylvia Plath alongside the events in her life, one is better able to understand the poet's importance to American history.

Before the age of eight, Plath led a socially normal life. Born October of 1932, she grew up in a strongly academic family environment in Winthrop, Massachusetts. Winthrop and the surrounding areas appeared specifically in Plath's poem, "Point Shirley," which represents the town with bleakness. Her father, Otto Plath, was a professor of Biology and her mother, Aurelia Plath, was a short-hand teacher.

Plath had her first poem published in *The Boston Herald* in 1940 when she was only eight, and this would be the beginning of her career as a poet. Also in November of that year, Plath's father died from surgical complications related to his late-diagnosed diabetes. The poet's paternal struggles appear in many of her poems such as "The Colossus," "The Beekeeper's Daughter," and "Daddy," where Plath writes, saying, "I have always been scared of you." Plath did not attend the funeral, and the poet only visited Otto Plath's grave once nineteen years after his death.

Sylvia's mother, Aurelia Plath, accepted a job at Boston University. They moved inland to Wellesley, Massachusetts. During this period, America entered into World War II. The war would have long standing effects on Sylvia's writing. Plath makes mention of World War II in her later poems, for example, in "The Thin People," Plath describes scenes from war propaganda of the time, saying that "the thin people" were "only" from "a movie, Only in a war making evil headlines when we / Were small."

Plath played witness to much of the political and media output of the time, particularly the increase of war films that took place in the early nineteen-forties. During this time, Sylvia also entered high school. Plath had works published in her school newspaper and even in magazines such as *Seventeen* and *Christian Science Monitor* in 1950, and she began to establish her role as a poet. Plath graduated from high school as valedictorian, and the poet began attending Smith College in Massachusetts on a partial scholarship in fall.

Smith College in the 50's was a place where "they were educating women so there would be educated children." Plath attended in the earlier half of the decade, from 1950 to 1955. During this time period, the students of Smith were stuck at an

awkward juncture between women having re-entered the labor force and the end of the war when men returned to fill the workforce. Many women opted into working a short period after school, then marrying, settling back into the pre-war role of housewife.

This time in Plath's life was marked with indecision as the poet was swept up with the changing society, questioning her abilities to work and marry, writing, "would marriage sap my creative energy or would I achieve a fuller expression in arts as well as in the creation of children?" Sylvia Plath was described as "different" from the typical Smith girl of the time. Describing her own feelings in comparison to her peers, Plath said she did not plan to fill a "role," or would not change for marriage, but would "go on living as an intelligent, mature human being," mockingly pointing out the wrongful practice of woman's "vicarious experience" lifestyle in marriage.

In the summer of 1953, Sylvia Plath accepted a guest editorship in New York, working for *Mademoiselle Magazine*, a prize she won with her short story, "Sunday at the Minton's." Plath would later write her only published novel, *The Bell Jar*, based on that June of 1953. The book starts with the line, "It was a queer, sultry summer, the summer they electrocuted the Rosenberg's, and I didn't know what I was doing in New York." The Rosenberg trials and executions had an impact on Plath, as she wrote in her journal that everyone around her seemed complacent, and that their lack of reactions was appalling, continuing, "nobody very much thinks about how big a human life is." *The Bell Jar* plays witness to many of the injustices the young female character, Ethel, experiences, and her inability to accept the prescribed role of the time of becoming a submitting housewife.

Upon returning home after New York, Sylvia Plath was informed that she had not been accepted into a Harvard summer course to which she had applied. Later, when Aurelia Plath noticed Sylvia's legs had healing cuts, and questioned her daughter, Plath admitted, "I wanted to see if I had the guts." Plath was immediately sent to a psychiatrist, and was exposed to electroshock therapy for the first of many times. In *The Bell Jar*, Plath's feeling on the treatments comes early in the novel, as she writes, "The idea of being electrocuted makes me sick,"⁸ as the poet reflected on her own experiences vicariously. In the novel, Plath writes, "I thought my bones would break and the sap fly out of me like a split plant" when the main character, Ethel, is exposed to her first shock treatment.⁹

Electroshock therapy in the 1950's was more archaic and new. In Plath's time, doctors didn't monitor heart rates, used higher voltages and were excessive in prescribing it for numerous maladies, including depression. Even today, doctors are still unsure of why or how electroshock therapy works. It has become an infrequent practice.

After months of shock treatments, on August 24th, 1953, Sylvia Plath made her first suicide attempt. The event is eerily portrayed in *The Bell Jar*: "I took the glass of water and the bottle of pills and went down into the cellar"¹⁰ and "I unscrewed the bottle of pills and started taking them swiftly, between gulps of water, one by one by one."¹¹ In a Letter Plath wrote to a friend, Eddie Cohen, after the incident, she writes, "I underwent a rather brief and traumatic experience of badly given shock treatments [...] Pretty soon, the only doubt in my mind was the precise time and method of committing suicide." Plath justifies her first suicide attempt with thoughts that she would be locked in a mental hospital for the rest of her life, suffering badly performed shock treatments, and all at the large expense of her family.

Plath was hospitalized at Mclean hospital for about six months, where she continued to undergo electroshock therapy. Sylvia returned to Smith for the Spring semester, eventually graduating *summa cum laude* in 1955. Plath received a Fulbright Scholarship to study in England the next year at Cambridge University. Within her first year in England, Plath met her future husband, Ted Hughes, at a party. The night is infamously remembered-the two drunk-and Hughes tried to kiss Plath. Plath eventually bit Hughes's cheek so hard that "blood was running down his face." Plath almost immediately writes a poem titled "Pursuit," in which she predicts, "One day I'll have my death."

By June of 1956 the two poets, Plath and Hughes, were married. Plath returned to Cambridge while Hughes began teaching. The poets moved to the United States in the summer of 1957. They settled in a Boston home, where Plath had a short-lived job teaching at Smith. After one semester, they decided to give up teaching and both focus on their writing. Plath took a job at a Massachusetts State hospital, where she helped to record dreams of patients, which eventually led to a book of short stories, *Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams*. When Plath became pregnant with their first child, Frieda, Hughes decided that he would rather have the child born in England, and so in 1960 the poets moved into a London flat. In October, Plath's first book of poetry, *The Colossus*, was published in England to few reviews, though overall

success, and Plath also turned in her first draft of *The Bell Jar*. In February of 1961, Plath had a miscarriage with her second pregnancy, and wrote a slew of poems, one in particular called "Barren Woman." The family soon moved to Devon, and Plath became pregnant in the summer of 1961 with her second child, Nicholas. Over time Plath became increasingly aware of Hughes's infidelity. In May of 1962, Plath's *The Colossus* was finally published in America to sparse reviews. Plath had begun writing a sequel to *The Bell Jar*, but when she discovered for sure in July of 1962 that Hughes was cheating on her with Assia Wevill, Plath burned the draft of the book along with hundreds of pages of other works in progress.

Hughes left Sylvia Plath for Wevill in 1962. With two children, an estranged husband, and a new flat in London during the worst winter in a century, 1962-1963, Plath became extremely depressed. All of her later work as a poet, Specifically *Ariel*, can be linked through her confessional style with the last few months of her life. The most prevalent theme in the late works of the poet is death, and Plath's most active period of writing began in the last year of her life. Plath's success was decided by the work produced in her last months of life. Some of the more notable works of this period are "Daddy," "Lady Lazarus," and "Ariel." In October alone, Plath produced more than 25 poems. "Lady Lazarus" stands hauntingly in the poet's posthumously published collection, *Ariel*, stating, "Dying/ Is an art, like everything else. I do it exceptionally well."

On February 11, 1963, Sylvia Plath killed herself when she put her head into a gas oven. After closing off her children's rooms and leaving a note for the man on the floor below her that said to call her doctor, the poet committed suicide. The last full poem Plath wrote, *Edge*, can be considered the poet's suicide note. It flows with a sense of being finished. With the use of phrases such as "We have come so far, it is over," and words like "dead," "Stiffens," and "empty,"¹⁸ the entire poem feels like it had been written by a dead poet. Sadly, Sylvia Plath is more often recognized for her suicide than for her work.

Sylvia Plath's work as a poet and expansion on the style of confessional poetry led her to become a major part of American literature. The ways Plath highlighted the injustices of sex-based roles and psychiatric care make her important to all of American history. Through Sylvia Plath's role as a confessional poet, her mostly autobiographical novel, and especially her journals and letters, Sylvia Plath

unknowingly created a new style of recording social and cultural history through personal experience and metaphor as a great poet of American history.

IMPORTANT WORKS

- Mad Girl's Love Song in 1953
- Pursuit 1956
- You're 1959 to 1960
- The Hanging Man 1960
- Colossus 1960
- The Bell Jar 1961
- Morning Song 1961
- Tulips 1961
- The Rival 1961
- Moon and the yew Tree 1961
- Elm 1962
- Little Fugue 1962
- Berck - Plage 1962
- Poppies 1962
- A Birthday Present 1962
- Fever 103 1962
- The Bee Meeting; The Arrival of the Bee Box; Stings; Wintering 1962
- The Applicant 1962
- Daddy 1962
- Medusa 1962
- Cut 1962
- Poppies in October ;Ariel 1962
- Lady Lazarus ;Nick and The Candlestick 1962
- The Couriers 1962
- The Night Dances; Gulliver 1962
- Letter in November 1962
- Death &Co 1962

- Sheep in Fog; The Munich Mannequins; and Totem 1963
- Paralytic 1963
- Kindness and Words 1963
- Balloons; Contusion; and Edge 1963

The Literary Period in Which Plath Wrote Her

Plath published her first poem as a child and continued writing throughout her short lifetime. One of her most famous poems, a poem about her father entitled "Daddy," was published in 1962. Plath committed suicide shortly after she separated from her husband, and her writings often reflect her troubled state of mind. Plath's poems were written during the modernist period.

The Modernist Period in Literature

The modernist era started early in the 20th century and continued through the mid-1960s. Modernist techniques followed less formal, unconventional writing styles and focused on individualism, self-expression, emotionalism and self-identity. Plath's poems clearly express the emotional turmoil and internal struggles she faced, including severe depression and mental anguish over her father's death. She embraced the modernist period and wrote with honesty and transparency, revealing her inner thoughts and emotions without holding back.

TIME PERIOD - Sylvia Plath

- Driven women, but madness because domineering father, unfaithful husband, and demands of motherhood.
- Poets that influenced her - D. H. Lawrence, Emily Dickinson, and later by Robert Lowell and Anne Sexton.
- Used history to explain herself

- Nazi concentration camps = imprisoned there
- Wrote post WWII, 1950s-70s
- Singular verse poems about despair, violent emotion and obsession with death.
- Mental anguish and her troubled marriage to fellow poet Ted Hughes, unresolved problems with parents and own vision with self
- Brutal poet- taps a source of power that transforms her voice into
- intense voice that speaks about female in 20th century, family ,nature, Holocaust, and death.
- “Marilyn Monroe” of Literature
- Poet - complex, driven, torn, self- centered ,overly ambitious, angry
- Confessional poetry
- Highly personal
- Found its energy in revealing autobiographical details about their lives and feeling
- Radical in its openness
- Studied with Anne Sexton, and admired Adrienne Rich and other poets who are referred to as the confessional poetry movement
- She didn't label herself a confessional poet; she was drawn to the personal tone of the works of this group.
- She didn't just recite about her experience; she created new ways to portray various issues.

AWARDS

- Glascock Prize 1955
- She Won Pulitzer Prize For Poetry 1982 The Collected Poems
- Sylvia had Won a Saxton Grant \$ 2,000 that enabled her to work on The Bell Jar
- First Place in the Boston Globe for a new story.
- She was chosen to be guest editor of Mademoiselle's College Board contest.

Major Themes in the Poetry of Sylvia Plath | Her Vision

Sylvia Plath uses gloomy and dejected themes for her poetry. Most of the time Sylvia Plath prefers to write poetry on themes of death and destruction. Violence can also be found in her poetry but it is not apparent. Sylvia Plath is not influenced by her husband so far as themes of physical violence and bloodshed in her poetry are concerned. Seldom, readers find any physical violence in her poetry but mental violence is always there. Violent wars between heart and mind are abundant in her poems. She has conveyed many psychological messages to her readers through her poetic work. Thus, a deep study not only of her work but also of her life is required to understand themes in the poetry of Sylvia Plath.

Until now, we have understood that:

- death
- destruction
- mental violence
- and disillusionment

Are common themes in the poetry of Sylvia Plath . In addition, she also talks about:

- feminism
- problems of women
- double standards of the society
- attitude of male sex towards females
- And insecurity of women.

She also writes about modern individualistic problems such as:

- lack of communication
- loneliness
- isolation
- emotional pain

Death is one of the major themes in the poetry of Sylvia Plath. She has felt it closely when she attempted suicide. She knows that death is a universal truth

accepted by everyone; therefore, she conceptualizes it. She has the ability to express it in the shape of words. About her experiences of death, a critic writes:-
“Plath saw death as a real path by which she can solve her conflicts and satisfy her wishes and needs... unbearable situation, unsolved troubles and never satisfied ambition [which could not be handled by Sylvia] so dying is an art to get rid of all of that.”

Poetry of Sylvia Plath, such as poems like “The Bee Meeting” and “Lady Lazarus” also deal with the themes of fear and death. While critically analyzing the poem “The Bee Meeting”, Margaret Dickie writes:-

“...rector, the midwife, the sexton — those public agents of marriage, birth, death, the world in which she must now define her identity...the speaker identifies at this point not with the flying bee, but with the empty box, an emblem of survival and a possible coffin.”

Plath, in her whole life remained unprotected. Her mother was with her to care for her but she did not feel secure enough. It seems that her psychological breakdown is the reason behind her insecurity. Nevertheless, insecurity is also one of the major themes, used by Sylvia Plath in her poetry.

There are some other themes which have been conceptualized by Sylvia Plath in her poetry but the above said themes have frequently been used by her. She may not have an enormous collection of themes yet she has the ability to present beautifully what she possesses.

CHAPTER 2

Summary

"Lady Lazarus" is a poem commonly understood to be about suicide. It is narrated by a woman, and mostly addressed to an unspecified person.

The narrator begins by saying she has "done it again." Every ten years, she manages to commit this unnamed act. She considers herself a walking miracle with bright skin, her right foot a "paperweight," and her face as fine and featureless as a "Jew linen". She addresses an unspecified enemy, asking him to peel the napkin from her face, and inquiring whether he is terrified by the features he sees there. She assures him that her "sour breath" will vanish in a day.

She is certain that her flesh will soon be restored to her face after having been sacrificed to the grave, and that she will then be a smiling, 30 year-old woman. She will ultimately be able to die nine times, like a cat, and has just completed her third death. She will die once each decade. After each death, a "peanut-crunching crowd" shoves in to see her body unwrapped. She addresses the crowd directly, showing them she remains skin and bone, unchanged from who she was before.

The first death occurred when she was ten, accidentally. The second death was intentional - she did not mean to return from it. Instead, she was as "shut as a seashell" until she was called back by people who then picked the worms off her corpse. She does not specifically identify how either death occurred.

She believes that "Dying / is an art, like everything else," and that she does it very well. Each time, "it feels real," and is easy for her. What is difficult is the dramatic comeback, the return to the same place and body, occurring as it does in broad daylight before a crowd's cry of "A miracle!" She believes people should pay to view her scars, hear her heart, or receive a word, touch, blood, hair or clothes from her.

In the final stanzas, she addresses the listener as "Herr Dockter" and "Herr Enemy," sneering that she is his crowning achievement, a "pure gold baby." She does not underestimate his concern, but is bothered by how he picks through her ashes. She insists there is nothing there but soap, a wedding ring, and a gold filling. She warns "Herr God, Herr Lucifer" to beware of her because she is going to rise out of the ash and "eat men like air."

Sylvia Plath is best known for her confessional poems. She was born in Boston situated in Massachusetts. Readers will be surprised to know that she committed suicide at the age of thirty. She was born in 1932 and she died in 1963. She had tried to commit suicide so many times but somehow she was saved by people living around her. It seems that this world was not enough for her or she was a perfect mismatch for this world. Her life is full of stress and this poem Lady Lazarus can really be considered as a confessional poem. The very beginning of the poem is strange as the speaker -Lady Lazarus confesses that she has “**done it again**”. It is however not clear what has been done by her. In the first stanza the poetess says that-

“I have done it again.

One year in every ten

I manage it-“

The above lines reveal that she is not happy in her life and that is why she tries to commit suicide once in every ten years. This time also she has committed or tried to put her life at stake. She manages to do experiments with death but every time she is saved by people living around her. In next lines she says that-

“A sort of walking miracle, my skin

Bright as a Nazi lampshade,

My right foot

A paperweight,

My face a featureless, fine

Jew linen”

In the above mentioned lines the poetess says that whatever she tries to manage is miraculous and her skin turns bright because she is saved every time she attempts suicide. Thus, she is like Lazarus who was also resurrected by God. It is interesting to note that her body parts like skin, right foot; face is compared to Nazi Lampshade, paperweight and Jew linen because she considers herself like a material kept in a exhibition hall. People are interested in looking at her like this. She is unfit in society and people notice this strangeness. Nazi Lampshade also connects this poem to Germany where lampshades were made from the skin of human beings. It is written in the pages of history that Nazis used to make lampshades from human skin. In this poem the poetess has tried to connect herself that this life is futile and this approach of committing suicide can be seen in respect to the existentialism theory. Let us not

go deep inside this theory. Scholars and critics have also tried to connect these lines to theories like feminism where women are looked like an object kept inside the exhibition hall. In the next few lines the poetess says that-

“Peel off the napkin
O my enemy.
Do I terrify?
The nose, the eye pits, the full set of teeth?
The sour breath
Will vanish in a day”

In the above lines the poetess says that perhaps the society is her enemy and she asks the society to look at her face by uncovering the mask or the napkin which is kept at her face only to hide her identity. She is asking a question: is her identity a threat to society? Again, it should be read and understood with feminine perspective where women often struggle for identity. The poetess says that nobody is permanent and her life will “**vanish in a day**”. Here, it is clear that she is talking about death. We know that she was suffering from mental illness because of her personal sufferings. In the next few lines the poetess says that-

“Soon, soon the flesh
The grave cave ate will be
At home on me
And I am a smiling woman.
I am only thirty.
And like the cat I have nine times to die.”

The above lines can be explained easily that we can notice a sense of ambiguity here. She says that after death her skin will be eaten by worms present in the grave and her body will be decomposed. At the same time she also says that she is just thirty so she is young and she can die nine times like a cat. Actually it is believed that a cat can die nine times and it is also used as a proverb. So there is certainly a sense of ambiguity where at one hand she is talking about death whereas at the other hand she says that she is just thirty. In the next few lines the poetess says that-

“This is Number Three.
What a trash
To annihilate each decade”

The poetess says in above lines that it was her third attempt of committing suicide and it also proved to be a trash. She is so obsessed with death that she wants to annihilate her life and she tries for it once in every ten years. In next few lines the poetess says that-

“What a million filaments.

The peanut-crunching crowd

Shoves in to see

Them unwrap me hand and foot——

The big strip tease.

Gentlemen, ladies

These are my hands

My knees.

I may be skin and bone,

Nevertheless, I am the same, identical woman.

The first time it happened I was ten.

It was an accident.

Sylvia Plath says in above lines that she has now been fragmented into filaments and people are coming to see her strangeness. The crowd has been reflected as peanut crunching crowd because these people are common men who are attracted to strangeness. They have come here to watch the body of the speaker who has tried to commit suicide. Her clothes are being removed and people are watching her hand and foot. She says that her hands, skin, bone and knees are as normal as an identical woman who might be watching her in form of the crowd. The first when she attempted this art of committing suicide she was just ten. She considers attempting suicide as like a form of art she is a good artist because she can fetch the attention of the crowd. In the next few lines the poetess says that-

“The second time I meant

To last it out and not come back at all.

I rocked shut

As a seashell.

They had to call and call

And pick the worms off me like sticky pearls.

In the above lines the poetess says that at the first time when she attempted suicide, it was like an accident. The second time she was determined that she is not going to

come back or dive back to life. She was determined like a seashell which is very hard. She is corroding and worms are eating up her body but the society is calling her and trying to save her. She is searching for life in death whereas the society is trying to kill her by saving her. She does not want to handle the pressure of the society. In the next few lines the poetess says that-

“Dying

Is an art, like everything else.

I do it exceptionally well.

I do it so it feels like hell.

I do it so it feels real.

I guess you could say I’ve a call.”

It has been discussed earlier that she considers death as a form of art. Committing suicide is not less than any form of art and she performs it “**exceptionally well**”. When she does it seems to her like she is enjoying her freedom in hell and it seems real to her. This world is a virtual world according to the poetess and she is still searching meaning in meaninglessness. She says that she has a call to believe in her own sphere of realism. In next few lines she says that-

“It’s easy enough to do it in a cell.

It’s easy enough to do it and stay put.

It’s the theatrical

Comeback in broad day

To the same place, the same face, the same brute

Amused shout:

‘A miracle!’

That knocks me out.

There is a charge

For the eyeing of my scars, there is a charge

For the hearing of my heart——

It really goes”

The poetess says that committing suicide or attempting suicide in a cell or in a closed space is like performing some pious art and it is very easy for her. Every time she is saved by society and looks like a theatrical comeback to her. It is like a theatre or drama where she is bound to come at the same place watching the same faces and living in the same society like an animal. She further says that she is like an

animal kept at any exhibition centre and people are coming to see her that she is the same woman who always attempts suicide. People perceive her as like a strange creature and they need to pay some charge in order to watch her strangeness. They cannot take sadistic pleasure free of cost. They need to pay in order to watch the scars in her eyes or hear her story. In the next few lines the poetess says that-

“And there is a charge, a very large charge
For a word or a touch
Or a bit of blood
Or a piece of my hair or my clothes.
So, so, Herr Doktor.
So, Herr Enemy.”
I am your opus,
I am your valuable,
The pure gold baby
That melts to a shriek.
I turn and burn.
Do not think I underestimate your great concern.”

She keeps on saying that people need to pay the charge in order to see her and take pleasure out of her pain. To talk to her or watch her blood, hair or clothes even her doctor needs to pay the charge. The reference to the doctor takes us to Nazis brutally handling the Jews. Doctors used to kill people by locking them in gas chambers and Jews were killed by brutal forces applied by the doctors. So here there can be such references. Further she says that she is like opus or music trying to amuse every passerby who is interested in watching her pain and extracting pleasure out of it. She is like a gold baby whose melting point is her painful shriek which gives enjoyment to the society. She also says that she cannot underestimate the great concern of the society. The great concern of the society is to save her from death whereas she considers death as her life. In next lines she says that-

“Ash, ash—
You poke and stir.
Flesh, bone, there is nothing there——
A cake of soap,
A wedding ring,
A gold filling.

Herr God, Herr Lucifer

Beware

Beware.

Out of the ash

I rise with my red hair

And I eat men like air."

In these lines she says that after burning nothing is left but Ash. People come and stir the ash and can find only bone which can be utilized for making soap in the laboratory. A wedding ring can be found which she might have worn. There can be a reference to Doctors during the time of Nazis. Jews were locked inside the gas chambers and burnt alive. These Doctors were like God as well as Lucifer, the devil. One must be alert to find some solace in the lap of death. She further says that she wishes to rise from the ash with red hair which symbolizes that she wants to take revenge from society and eat or kill men who always tried to suppress her.

Lady Lazarus by Sylvia Plath

Sylvia Plath wrote "Lady Lazarus" in 1962, during a creative burst of energy in the months before her death by suicide in 1963. The poem which remains one of Plath's most enduring works. "Lady Lazarus," is both the title of the poem, and its speaker—much like the biblical Lazarus, the man Jesus resurrected from the dead in the Gospel of John, the speaker is also resurrected by external forces, and more than once. This resurrection, however, is unwanted—the speaker reveals she *wants* to die in order to escape the profound suffering caused by living in an oppressive, male-dominated society. Instead, the speaker is forced to come back to life, each revival a carnival-like performance for a "peanut-crunching crowd." However, the speaker warns her enemies—the men who bring her back to life—eventually she will return and "eat men like air," demonstrating a complicated dynamic of empowerment and hopelessness. Using metaphors of death and resurrection, Plath provides a dark

insight into the suicidal mind, as well as a critique of society's twisted fascination with suffering, and of the horror of being a woman in a patriarchal world.

ANALYSIS

"Lady Lazarus" is a complicated, dark, and brutal poem originally published in the collection *Ariel*. Plath composed the poem during her most productive and fecund creative period. It is considered one of Plath's best poems, and has been subject to a plethora of literary criticism since its publication. It is commonly interpreted as an expression of Plath's suicidal attempts and impulses. Its tone veers between menacing and scathing, and it has drawn attention for its use of Holocaust imagery, similar to "Daddy." The title is an allusion to the Biblical character, Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead.

The standard interpretation of the poem suggests that it is about multiple suicide attempts. The details can certainly be understood in this framework. When the speaker says she "has done it again," she means she has attempted suicide for the third time, after one accidental attempt and one deliberate attempt in the past. Each attempt occurred in a different decade, and she is now 30 years old. Now that she has been pulled back to life from this most recent attempt, her "sour breath / Will vanish in a day," and her flesh will return to her bones. However, this recovery is presented as a failure, whereas the suicide attempts are presented as accomplishments - "Dying is an art" that she performs "exceptionally well." She seems to believe she will reach perfection through escaping her body.

By describing dying as an art, she includes a spectator to both her deaths and resurrections. Because death is a performance, it necessarily requires others. In large part, she kills herself to punish them for driving her to it. The eager "peanut-crunching crowd" is invited but criticized for its voyeuristic impulse. The crowd could certainly be understood to include the reader himself, since he reads the poem to explore her dark impulses. She assumes that her voyeurs are significantly invested - they would pay the "large charge" to see her scars and heart.

However, she imbues this impulse with a harsh criticism by comparing the crowd to the complacent Germans who stood aside while the Jews were thrown into concentration camps. Further, the crowd ultimately proves less an encouragement

than a burden when they also attend the resurrection. She despises this second part of the process, and resents the presence of others at that time. Whether this creates a vicious circle, in which that resentment is partially responsible for the subsequent attempt, is implied but not explicitly stated. Critic Robert Bagg explores the speaker's contradictory feelings towards the crowd by writing that Plath "is not bound by any metaphysical belief in the self's limitations. Instead of resisting the self's antagonists she derives a tremendous thrill from throwing her imagination into the act of self-obliteration." She can destroy her body, but her imaginative self remains a performer, always aware of the effect she has on others.

The poem can also be understood through a feminist lens, as a demonstration of the female artist's struggle for autonomy in a patriarchal society. Lynda K. Bundtzen writes that "the female creation of a male-artist god is asserting independent creative powers." From this perspective, "Lady Lazarus" is not merely a confessional poem detailing depressive feelings, but is also a statement on how the powerful male figure usurps Plath's creative powers but is defeated by her rebirth. Though Lady Lazarus knows that "Herr Doktor" will claim possession of her body and remains after forcing her suicide, she equally believes she will rise and "eat men like air." Her creative powers can be stifled momentarily, but will always return stronger.

The poem can also be understood in a larger context, as a comment on the relationship between poet and audience in a society that, as Pamela Anna's claims, has separated creativity and consumption. The crowd views Lady Lazarus/the poet/Plath as an object, and therefore does not recognize her as a human being. Plath reflects this through her multiple references to body parts separated from the whole. From this interpretation, Lady Lazarus's suicide then becomes "an assertion of wholeness, an act of self-definition, and a last desperate act of contempt toward the peanut-crunching crowd." The only way she can keep herself intact is to destroy herself, and she does this rather than be turned into commodities. Though "Herr Docktor" will peruse her remains for commodities, she will not have been defeated because of her final act.

As has often been the case in Plath's poems, the Holocaust imagery has drawn much attention from critics and readers. It is quite profuse in this poem. Lady Lazarus addresses a man as "Herr Dokter," "Herr Enemy," "Herr God," and "Herr Lucifer." She describes her face as a "Nazi lampshade" and as "Jew linen". As previously described, one effect of these allusions is to implicate the reader, make

him or her complicit in passive voyeurism by comparing him or her to the Germans who ignored the Holocaust. However, they also serve to establish the horrific atmosphere than be understood as patriarchy, as a society of consumers, or as simply cruel humans. No matter how one interprets the crowd in the poem, they complicate the poem's meaning so that it is a sophisticated exploration of the responsibility we have for each other's unhappiness, rather than simply a dire, depressive suicide note

“LADY LAZARUS” THEMES

Throughout Lady Lazarus the speaker uses extended metaphors of death and resurrection to express her own personal suffering. The speaker compares herself to L

Lazarus (a biblical reference to a man Jesus raised from the dead), telling the reader that she has died multiple times, and is, in fact, dead when the poem begins. However, through external forces, the speaker is brought back to life time and time again.

For Lazarus, his resurrection was a joyous event, and one might assume that all such resurrections would be happy. But the speaker of the poem subverts that expectation—she wants to die. And so the efforts of those who want to save her—whether loved ones, or doctors, or whoever else—feel to the speaker like selfish, controlling acts committed against her wishes.

Obviously, the speaker is not actually dead, but uses this metaphor to demonstrate how unbearable life is and, in turn, explain (and perhaps justify) her suicide attempts. Thus, the reader can interpret the poem as the musings of a suicidal mind, with death being alternately presented as freedom, escape from suffering, and the achievement of a sort of peace.

Throughout the poem, the speaker often contrasts life and death by using imagery that subverts the expectations. Note how the speaker describes life through disturbing images, such as comparing her skin to a Nazi lampshade, or describing

her resurrection as ...flesh / the grave cave ate will be / at home on me. This imagery is surprisingly applied to the living body after it is

Resurrected. The speaker describes her experience of living as a kind of torture, almost as a kind of death—when she is brought back to life, her skin is like the dead skin of someone killed in the Holocaust, and it is the skin of a dead woman forced back onto her living self. Thus, the speaker demonstrates how living, for her, is what death feels like for most people.

In contrast, the speaker describes death as a kind of calmness. For instance, when the speaker describes her second suicide attempt, the imagery evokes the peacefulness of the sea: the speaker tells the reader she rocked shut, alluding to the rhythmic, calming waves of the ocean, while the worms or maggots that invade a decaying corpse are depicted as pearls. The speaker also transforms into a seashell, shedding her skin to become a creature with a hard, outer shell, implying that for her death offers blissful solitude and protection.

For the speaker, skin, which falls away in death, is a symbol that the speaker is still alive. When she is resurrected against her will, the “flesh the grave cave ate” reappears on her. The speaker's disdain for her skin seems to stem in part from the fact that the skin both displays and is the receptacle of the pain and suffering of life. The speaker at one point mentions another seeing. My scars, capturing both how skin is scarred by trauma, but also how skin displays that trauma for the world to see. In this way, the speaker's skin subjects her to what she believes is an intolerable invasion of privacy. Death offers protection from that invasion.

When the speaker begins the poem, she reveals that she is currently dead—it can be assumed that she has tried to kill herself. She tells the reader she will be reborn as the woman she was. However, by the end of the poem, the speaker has transformed into a phoenix: “Out of the ash / I rise with my red hair / and I eat men like air.” Although this is seemingly a moment of empowerment for the speaker, this turn also conveys the hopelessness the speaker feels about her situation. The phoenix, a mythological creature, is known for its regenerative abilities. Thus, like the speaker, the phoenix dies and is reborn. However, because the speaker has transformed into a phoenix at the end of the poem, this could signify that the speaker

is stuck in a cycle of dying and being reborn that she can neither escape nor control. In this way, the speaker expresses the intolerability of her life—though, logically, the reader understands that the speaker is not truly immortal, the speaker demonstrates that her life is so insufferable that it feels as though her life will continue indefinitely, through the exhausting patterns of suicide and being saved and brought back to a life she does not want. This pattern, in turn, also explains why death is so desirable for the speaker: because she feels as though she cannot die, and must suffer forever, death is the only solution to end her suffering.

Lady Lazarus, is told from the perspective of a woman in a male-dominated society, and the speaker directly blames her suffering on the men whom she sees as oppressing her. The poem strongly suggests that the men mentioned are the ones—whether loved ones or doctors—who keep bringing the speaker back to life, suggesting how little autonomy women can ever hope to have in a patriarchal world. The poem metaphors of death and resurrection, then, come to illustrate how society seeks to dominate women's lives and bodies. The implication is that one of the reasons that the speaker wants to die is because, ironically, it's the only way to exercise some semblance of control over her own life—which then makes the fact that she can't die all the more agonizing.

Most often, the speaker's oppression takes the form of objectification; society treats the speaker like an object whose purpose is to please others, rather than a complete human being. The speaker even goes so far as to compare herself to a Jewish person in Nazi-occupied Germany. She calls her skin a "Nazi lampshade," her face a "Jew linen." The former is a reference to an urban legend that Nazis made lampshades from the skin of Jewish people murdered in the Holocaust, while this linen refers to the cloth used to wrap the biblical Lazarus in his tomb. Notice also that these are both domestic items—and as such are associated with typical conceptions of femininity. Although invoking the Holocaust is definitely macabre and controversial, this comparison is meant to indicate the extent of the oppression the speaker feels, the degree to which the speaker has come to feel she is seen as a thing rather than as a person.

Later, while addressing her enemies, the speaker declares: “I am your valuable / The pure gold baby.” This metaphor not only reduces the speaker to someone else’s “valuable” item, like gold, but also infantilizes her by making this valuable object a “baby.” The fact that the speaker’s body is so often seemingly put on display for others further suggests how women’s bodies are never really their own, but instead used for the benefit/entertainment of other people. The speaker describes her suffering as being a spectacle for the peanut crunching crowd, which is at once a condemnation of the macabre interest people take in others pain and more specifically a commentary on how women pain is particularly commodified ; note the sexualized language likening the unraveling of the cloth covering her corpse to a strip tease Altogether, it’s clear the speaker doesn’t feel like she really has much say regarding her own life—and, in her mind, the culprit is the patriarchy.

Throughout the poem, the female speaker expresses particular tension towards several men. The speaker frequently uses apostrophe, directly addressing various figures: God, Lucifer, Doktor (German for “doctor”), and a more general Enemy. She calls them all “Herr,” which is German for “sir,” indicating that they are all men (and it also worth noting that Plath’s father was of German descent). These men all represent the different kinds of male authority figures in the speaker’s life—religious figures, doctors or psychologists, her father—who all work to control her. But the fact that the men referenced span from the prototypically good (God) all the way to the prototypical evil (Lucifer) suggests that these men can also be seen as more generally representing all men, or the entire male-dominated society in which she lives. Ironically, the speaker’s wish to die might then be interpreted as a desire to escape this world and its oppression—that is, perhaps, to the speaker; death represents a sort of freedom or reclamation of control over her own life and body.

And yet, when she attempts to commit suicide, the speaker keeps being brought back to life! As such, the speaker warns that, when she returns from death, she will “eat men like air.” The speaker intends to destroy the men who have forced her to stay alive, and thus will finally be able to die as she wants. The speaker must consume men—and perhaps with them, their power over her—in order to finally do what She wants to. Despite the tangible and almost frightening rage found in this revenge fantasy that ends the poem, though, it never quite pushes past being just a

revenge fantasy, and thus seems ultimately not to promise an actual revolution but instead a condemnation of the impossibility of women's liberation in a patriarchal world.

SUFFERING AND PERFORMANCE

The speaker sardonically declares that "dying is an art, like everything else," and repeatedly presents her suffering as a performance for an audience that is eager to watch the show. To put it bluntly: the poem is deeply critical of society's twisted fascination with others' suffering.

The speaker describes her death and resurrection as being "theatrical," and describes how "the peanut- crunching crowd"—you'd probably say "popcorn munching today—push and shove in order to get a glimpse of Lady Lazarus, wrapped like a mummy in death, being resurrected. "The big strip tease," the speaker ironically calls this show, suggesting that people view pain and suffering in much the same way they do sexual gratification: it's all just fodder for their amusement.

The speaker even charges the audience for access to her: "There is a charge // For the eyeing of my scars" and "For the hearing of my heart" and even larger charges "for a word or a touch / Or a bit of blood / Or a piece of my hair or my clothes." Not only are people able to watch the speaker suffer, but they are also able to actively participate in her suffering. People's fascination with others' pain, and lack of empathy, seemingly know no bounds. At the same time, the speaker herself does seem to find some sense of empowerment from this spectacle, complicating the notion of it as purely exploitative or degrading. The speaker clearly feels oppressed by a society that objectifies her, and, in a way, decides to use that objectification to her advantage by charging for access to her pain.

The speaker, in the lines immediately following, addresses her enemies: "So, so Herr Doktor. / So, Herr Enemy. // I am your opus, / I am your valuable." The use of the word "opus" here implies that the speaker's "work" or "art" of death and resurrection is not her work, per se, but rather is the artistic work of her enemies. This makes

sense: all the speaker wants to do is die. The spectacle is created when she is continually forced to recover, to be resurrected, such that society can then look at and gossip about why she wanted to kill herself. The speaker suggests that the performance is being forced on her, that she is being forced to star in it.

Of course, this isn't a real show—the speaker is using an extended metaphor to relate how much society craves sensationalism and gossip, and to condemn those who use other people's pain for macabre entertainment.

The performance could also be seen as a metaphor that represents the complicated dynamic between the artist and their art. The speaker describes the repetitiveness of the performance as exhausting, telling the reader that it is easy enough to die by herself, but it is the theatrical comeback to the same place, the same face, the same brute Amused shout that truly knocks her out. Although the Speaker performance is both authentic to her experience, and a way in which she can derive a sense of empowerment from her suffering, she is also wearied by having to repeat her suffering over and over. This could reflect the struggle many artists have when they represent their suffering in their work, and come to believe that, perhaps, the performance of suffering is what makes their work popular or valuable to others, not what they have to say about it.

DEATH AND SUICIDE

Throughout "Lady Lazarus," the speaker uses extended metaphors of death and resurrection to express her own personal suffering. The speaker compares herself to Lazarus (a biblical reference to a man Jesus raised from the dead), telling the reader that she has died multiple times, and is, in fact, dead when the poem begins. However, through external forces, the speaker is brought back to life time and time again. For Lazarus, his resurrection was a joyous event, and one might assume that all such resurrections would be happy. But the speaker of the poem subverts that expectation—she *wants* to die. And so the efforts of those who want to save her—whether loved ones, or doctors, or whoever else—feel to the speaker like selfish, controlling acts committed against her wishes.

Obviously, the speaker is not *actually* dead, but uses this metaphor to demonstrate how unbearable life is and, in turn, explain (and perhaps justify) her suicide attempts. Thus, the reader can interpret the poem as the musings of a suicidal mind, with death being alternately presented as freedom, escape from suffering, and the achievement of a sort of peace.

Throughout the poem, the speaker often contrasts life and death by using imagery that subverts the reader's expectations. Note how the speaker describes life through disturbing images, such as comparing her skin to a "Nazi lampshade," or describing her resurrection as "...flesh / the grave cave ate will be / at home on me." This imagery is surprisingly applied to the speaker's living body after it is resurrected. The speaker describes her experience of living as a kind of torture, almost as a kind of death—when she is brought back to life, her skin is like the dead skin of someone killed in the Holocaust, it is the skin of a dead woman forced back onto her living self. Thus, the speaker demonstrates how living, for her, is what death feels like for most people.

In contrast, the speaker describes death as a kind of calmness. For instance, when the speaker describes her second suicide attempt, the imagery evokes the peacefulness of the sea: the speaker tells the reader she "rocked shut," alluding to the rhythmic, calming waves of the ocean, while the "worms" or maggots that invade a decaying corpse are depicted as "pearls." The speaker also transforms into a "seashell," shedding her skin to become a creature with a hard, outer shell, implying that her death offers blissful solitude and protection.

For the speaker, skin, which falls away in death, is a symbol that the speaker is still alive. When she is resurrected against her will, the "flesh the grave cave ate" reappears on her. The speaker's disdain for her skin seems to stem in part from the fact that the skin both displays and is the receptacle of the pain and suffering of life. The speaker at one point mentions others "eyeing . my scars," capturing both how skin is scarred by trauma, but also how skin *displays* that trauma for the world to see. In this way, the speaker's skin subjects her to what she believes is an intolerable invasion of privacy. Death offers protection from that invasion.

When the speaker begins the poem, she reveals that she is currently dead—it can be assumed that she has tried to kill herself. She tells the reader she will be reborn as the woman she was. However, by the end of the poem, the speaker has transformed into a phoenix: "Out of the ash / I rise with my red hair / And I eat men

like air.” Although this is seemingly a moment of empowerment for the speaker, this turn also conveys the hopelessness the speaker feels about her situation. The phoenix, a mythological creature, is known for its regenerative abilities. Thus, like the speaker, the phoenix dies and is reborn. However, because the speaker has transformed *into* a phoenix at the end of the poem, this could signify that the speaker is stuck in a cycle of dying and being reborn that she can neither escape nor control. In this way, the speaker expresses the intolerability of her life—though, logically, the reader understands that the speaker is not *truly* immortal, the speaker demonstrates that her life is so insufferable that it *feels* as though her life will continue indefinitely, through the exhausting patterns of suicide and being saved and brought back to a life she does not want. This pattern, in turn, also explains why death is so desirable for the speaker: because she feels as though she cannot die, and must suffer forever, death is the only solution to end her suffering.

GENDER AND OPPRESSION

"Lady Lazarus," is told from the perspective of a woman in a male-dominated society, and the speaker directly blames her suffering on the men whom she sees as oppressing her. The poem strongly suggests that the men mentioned are the ones—whether loved ones or doctors—who keep bringing the speaker back to life, suggesting how little autonomy women can ever hope to have in a patriarchal world. The poem's metaphors of death and resurrection, then, come to illustrate how society seeks to dominate women's lives and bodies. The implication is that one of the reasons that the speaker wants to die is because, ironically, it's the only way to exercise some semblance of control over her own life—which then makes the fact that she *can't* die all the more agonizing.

Most often, the speaker's oppression takes the form of objectification; society treats the speaker like an object whose purpose is to please others, rather than a complete human being. The speaker even goes so far as to compare herself to a Jewish person in Nazi-occupied Germany. She calls her skin a "Nazi lampshade," her face a "Jew linen." The former is a reference to an urban legend that Nazis made lampshades from the skin of Jewish people murdered in the Holocaust, while this linen refers to the cloth used to wrap the biblical Lazarus in his tomb. Notice also that

these are both domestic items—and as such are associated with typical conceptions of femininity. Although invoking the Holocaust is definitely macabre and controversial, this comparison is meant to indicate the extent of the oppression the speaker feels the degree to which the speaker has come to feel she is seen as a thing rather than as a person.

Later, while addressing her "enemies," the speaker declares: "I am your valuable / the pure gold baby." This metaphor not only reduces the speaker to someone else's "valuable" item, like gold, but also infantilizes her by making this valuable object a "baby." The fact that the speaker's body is so often seemingly put on display for others further suggests how women's bodies are never really their own, but instead used for the benefit/entertainment of other people. The speaker describes her suffering as being a spectacle for the "peanut crunching crowd," which is at once a condemnation of the macabre interest people take in others' pain and more specifically a commentary on how women's pain is particularly commodified; note the sexualized language likening the unraveling of the cloth covering her corpse to a "strip tease." Altogether, it's clear the speaker doesn't feel like she really has much say regarding her own life—and, in her mind, the culprit is the patriarchy.

Throughout the poem, the female speaker expresses particular tension towards several men. The speaker frequently uses apostrophe, directly addressing various figures: God, Lucifer, Doktor (German for "doctor"), and a more general Enemy. She calls them all "Herr," which is German for "sir," indicating that they are all men (and it's also worth noting that Plath's father was of German descent). These men all represent the different kinds of male authority figures in the speaker's life—religious figures, doctors or psychologists, her father—who all work to control her. But the fact that the men referenced span from the prototypically good (God) all the way to the prototypical evil (Lucifer) suggests that these men can also be seen as more generally representing *all* men, or the entire male-dominated society in which she lives. Ironically, the speaker's wish to die might then be interpreted as a desire to escape this world and its oppression—that is, perhaps, to the speaker; death represents a sort of freedom or reclamation of control over her own life and body.

And yet, when she attempts to commit suicide, the speaker keeps being brought back to life! As such, the speaker warns that, when she returns from death, she will "eat men like air." The speaker intends to destroy the men who have forced her to stay alive, and thus will finally be able to die as she wants. The speaker must

consume men—and perhaps with them, their power over her—in order to finally do what she wants. Despite the tangible and almost frightening rage found in this revenge fantasy that ends the poem, though, it never quite pushes past being just a revenge fantasy, and thus seems ultimately not to promise an actual revolution but instead a condemnation of the impossibility of women’s liberation in a patriarchal world.

THEORY

FEMINISM

Feminism, the belief in social, economic, and political equality of the sexes. Although largely originating in the West, feminism is manifested worldwide and is represented by various institutions committed to activity on behalf of women’s rights and interests.

Throughout most of Western history, women were confined to the domestic sphere, while public life was reserved for men. In medieval Europe, women were denied the right to own property, to study, or to participate in public life. At the end of the 19th century in France, they were still compelled to cover their heads in public, and, in parts of Germany, a husband still had the right to sell his wife. Even as late as the early 20th century, women could neither vote nor hold elective office in Europe and in most of the United States (where several territories and states granted women’s suffrage long before the federal government did so). Women were prevented from conducting business without a male representative, be it father, brother, husband, legal agent, or even son. Married women could not exercise control over their own children without the permission of their husbands. Moreover, women had little or no access to education and were barred from most professions. In some parts of the world, such restrictions on women continue today. The word feminism comes from French word *feminism* and according to the Cambridge online dictionary feminism is “the belief that women should be allowed the same rights, power, and opportunities as men and be treated in the same way, or the set of activities intended to achieve this state.”³ The term ‘feminism’ itself is used to describe a cultural, political or economic movement aiming for equal rights for both women and men. Nonetheless,

the terms 'feminism' and 'feminist' did not gain widespread meaning use until the 1970s when they started to be used in the public parlance more frequently. The feminist movement involves sociological and political theories concerning with gender difference issues. The movement has been here for many decades, and British women have started to fight against the oppression during mid 1850s when the first feminists started to advocate their thoughts about inequality and when the first suffragette movement emerged, since then women have started working on accomplishing their goals to have the same rights and to have the same position in society as men have. The feminist framework also indicates how problems are defined and the kinds of questions to be asked. For example, according to definition in Theoretical Perspectives on Gender and Development written by Jane L. Par part et al inequality results from "the need to establish unequal incentives to motivate the most talented people to do the most important jobs efficiently in society,"⁴ other definition from the same book also says that the inequality results from "the practice of providing differential rewards to keep a less powerful working class fragmented by gender and race."

TYPES OF FEMINISM -

- Liberal Feminism
- Radical Feminism
- Socialist Feminism
- Cultural Feminism
- Eco -Feminism

Feminist history can be divided into three waves. The first wave, occurring in the 19th and early 20th century, was mainly concerned with women's right to vote. The second wave, at its height in the 1960s and 1970s, refers to the women's liberation movement for equal legal and social rights. The third wave, beginning in the 1990s, refers to a continuation of, and a reaction to, second-wave feminism.

First- Wave Feminism

First-wave feminism promoted equal contract and property rights for women, opposing ownership of married women by their husbands. By the late 19th century, feminist activism was primarily focused on the right to vote. American first-wave feminism ended with passage of the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution in 1919, granting women voting rights.

Second-Wave Feminism

Second-wave feminism of the 1960s-1980s focused on issues of equality and discrimination. The second-wave slogan, “The Personal is Political,” identified women’s cultural and political inequalities as inextricably linked and encouraged women to understand how their personal lives reflected sexist power structures. Betty Friedan was a key player in second-wave feminism. In 1963, her book *The Feminine Mystique* criticized the idea that women could find fulfillment only through childrearing and homemaking. According to Friedan’s *New York Times* obituary, her book “ignited the contemporary women’s movement in 1963 and as a result permanently transformed the social fabric of the United States and countries around the world” and “is widely regarded as one of the most influential nonfiction books of the 20th century.” Friedan hypothesizes that women are victims of false beliefs requiring them to find identity in their lives through husbands and children. This causes women to lose their own identities in that of their family.

Third- Wave Feminism

Third-wave feminism began in the early 1990s, responding to perceived failures of the second wave and to the backlash against second-wave initiatives. This ideology seeks to challenge the definitions of femininity that grew out of the ideas of the second-wave, arguing that the second-wave over-emphasized experiences of upper middle-class white women. The third-wave sees women’s lives as

intersectional, demonstrating how race, ethnicity, class, religion, gender, and nationality are all significant factors when discussing feminism. It examines issues related to women's lives on an international basis.

CULTURAL FEMINISM

Cultural feminism is a variety of feminism which emphasizes essential differences between men and women, based on biological differences in reproductive capacity. Cultural feminism attributes to those differences distinctive and superior virtues in women. What women share, in this perspective, provides a basis for "sisterhood," or unity, solidarity and shared identity. Thus, cultural feminism also encourages building a shared women's culture.

The phrase "essential differences" refers to the belief that gender differences are part of the *essence* of females or males, that the differences are not chosen but are part of the nature of woman or man. Cultural feminists differ as to whether these differences are based on biology or enculturation. Those who believe differences are not genetic or biological, but are cultural; conclude that women's "essential" qualities are so ingrained by culture that they are persistent.

Cultural feminists also tend to value qualities identified with women as superior or and preferable to qualities identified with men, whether the qualities are products of nature or culture.

The emphasis, in the words of critic Sheila Rowbotham, is on "living a liberated life."

Some cultural feminists as *individuals* are active in social and political change. Many of the early cultural feminists were first radical feminists, and some continue to use that name though moving beyond the model of transforming society. A kind of separatism or vanguard orientation, building alternative communities and institutions, grew in reaction to the 1960s movements for social change, with some concluding that social change was not possible.

Cultural feminism has been linked with a growing consciousness of lesbian identity, borrowing from lesbian feminism ideas including the valuing of female connectedness, women-centered relationships, and a woman-centered culture.

The term "cultural feminism" dates back at least to the use of it in 1975 by Brooke Williams of Red stockings, who used it to denounce it and distinguish it from its roots in radical feminism. Other feminists denounced cultural feminism as betraying feminist central ideas. Alice Echols describes this as the "depoliticization" of radical feminism.

The work of Mary Daly, especially her *Gyn /Ecology* (1979), has been identified as a movement from radical feminism into cultural feminism.

SYLVIA PLATH FEMINIST

"And by the way, everything in life is writable about if you have the outgoing guts to do it, and the imagination to improvise. The worst enemy to creativity is self-doubt."

Credited with advancing the confessional poetry genre, Plath has continued to inspire many feminists through her poetry. After a failed marriage, Plath lived and worked as a single mother and yet continued to write poems. Coming from a generation where women existed for, and because of the men in their lives, Plath found her own voice and continued to write until her untimely death

Sylvia Plath the lady Lazarus comes under the second wave of feminism. Plath never consider herself a feminist, yet her prose and poetry. Deal with issues which becomes relevant to the second wave of feminism. So in this lady Lazarus society tries to oppress and humiliate women and Plath confessional poems reflects the themes the objectification and dehumanization of women, their oppression and a conflict between work and family life. However, their feeling of dissatisfaction and frustration resulted in the emergence of the second wave of feminism. The radical feminists attempted to free women from the image of the perfect housewife.

FEMINIST ELEMENTS IN LADY LAZRUS

Obviously Sylvia Plath is one of most influential in modern feminist discourses.

Poem like “Lady Lazarus”

is often celebrated as iconic for Plath-advocated feminism. Unlike other modern feminist frontiers’ sincere approach to patriarchy, Plath’s feminism evolves from her protagonists’ deep-rooted hatred for their male counterparts. Indeed this hysterical hatred and antagonism of Plath’s narrator in the poem, “Lady Lazarus” seems to put the sincerity and responsibility of Plath’s feminist authority into question. A female self like man-eater Lazarus is, in the first place, self-destructive and, certainly, not desirable. Yet the confessional mode and the techniques of a female’s self-conjuration ultimately signify Plath’s modernist trends, in modern feminist discourse, to portray a woman’s self-perception of her position in a male dominated society. Obviously, the narrator in the poem “Lady Lazarus” need not be misunderstood as the representative of Plath-advocated feminism. Indeed, ‘Lady Lazarus’ is to be deemed as Plath’s effort to voice the modern woman’s nascent self through self-confession.

Plath’s ‘Lady Lazarus’ is to be considered as a woman’s effort to voice herself in modern society. The narrator in the poem voices herself through a sort of self-confession. In the poem, the confession authority appears to be in a dual mode. The reincarnated lady speaks out her mind before the oppressive authorities: a. the Nazi doctors and b. the gathering multitude around. Obviously Plath’s readers are provoked to align themselves with the gathering multitude in the poem. The confessing self- portrayal of Lady Lazarus, as a martyr of patriarchy -if not frightening the gathering crowd by letting them take a glimpse at the furious and revengeful heart of an oppressed lady- certainly arouses pity and fear at the lady’s situation. Meanwhile, Lazarus’s modern female self begins to exist shredding its non-existence of ages.

Both Plath’s poem’s confessional mode and its narrator’s hysterical self-revelation ironically endow the non-existent feminine self with existence; it gives voice to a woman’s silence of ages. For Foucault, confession is essentially a feature, of

modern man, which is meant for producing the truth about the confessor's self, as he says, "the truthful confession was inscribed at the heart of the procedures of individualization by power [and has become] one of the West's most highly valued techniques for producing truth" . In fact, Plath's confessional narrator rather divulges the

"truth, lodged in our most secret nature, 'demands' only to surface" .

Plath's narrators' common antagonism against men as a community of oppressors compels a reader, though misguidedly, to think of the peculiarity of their behavior and attitude toward men. Such frenzied peculiar violence of one of Plath's narrator is evident in the following lines from the poem, "Lady Lazarus": "Out of the ash / I rise with my red hair / And I eat men like air" (Plath, "Lady Lazarus").

Margaret Dickie comments on this peculiarity in the following lines: "Plath's late poems are full of speakers whose rigid identities and violent methods not only parody their torment but also permit them to control it. The peculiar nature of the speaker in "Lady Lazarus" defies ordinary notions of the suicide." Indeed it is as peculiar as that of frenzied women who have been deprived of thinking rationally of men, and essentially she tends to be characterized as an antagonist against men, not against patriarchy.

This evokes a feeling of disturbing tension. The constantly shifting tone and style appear as the monologue of Lady Lazarus. She speaks spontaneously from her pain, bitterness and anguish. In which the dominant effects are derived from colloquial, conversational language. The plain, simple style is given greater power, when keywords and phrases are obsessively repeated. Eileen. M. Arid states in 'Sylvia Plath: Her Life and Work,' When analyzing the style of Lady Lazarus; "She takes very personal, painful material and controls and forms it with the utmost rigour into a highly wrought poem, which is partly effective because of the polar opposition between the terrible gaiety of its form and the fiercely uncompromising seriousness of its subject." (Sylvia Plath; Her Life and Work. Aird, 1973)

The next part of the poem is a continuance of her self-disgust. The 'million filaments', could be a representation of the many pieces of her life being on show, 'the peanut crunching crowd' has dissected these fragmented pieces over a long time. The other people in this audience of business men and media are the doctors, Plath's father and husband. She uses the American slang word 'shove' to portray the crowd as eager and aggressive.

LADY LAZARUS- TITLE JUSTIFICATION

Lazarus The title of the poem (Plath, "Ariel" 8) alludes to the biblical character of Lazarus from the New Testament who was raised by Jesus from the dead. The narrator describes her two previous suicide attempts, of which one was just an accident at the age of ten, and has just committed her third suicide. She as well as Lazarus (or maybe Phoenix) raises from the dead which may be interpreted that no matter how hard patriarchal society tries to oppress and humiliate women, they will raise and eventually take revenge on men as can be seen in the very last stanza: Out of the ash I rise with my red hair And I eat men like air. Moreover, Plath uses imagery of the Holocaust in order to emphasize dehumanization of women when compared to Jewish prisoners in concentration camps: A sort of walking miracle, my skin Bright as a Nazi lampshade My right foot A paperweight, My face featureless, fine A Jew linen. Such comparison may seem very strong but it reflects Plath's desperate feelings at that period of time when she was left alone with two children. In the letter to her mother from October 21, 1962 she wrote: Don't talk to me about the world needing cheerful stuff! What the person out of Belsen – physical or psychological – wants is nobody saying the birdies still go tweet-tweet, but the full knowledge that somebody else has been there and knows the worst, just what it is like. It is much more help for me, for example, that people are divorced and go through hell, than to hear about happy marriages. Let the Ladies' Home Journal blither about those. (Plath, "Letters Home"). The dehumanization of the woman can be further seen in the lines where the narrator is exhibited naked as a Jewish prisoner. She contrasts her scarred and damaged body with that of the woman of the 1950s who was supposed to present an immaculate appearance. The narrator wants the man to pay for those things he takes for granted, she wants him to pay "for a word or a touch / or a bit of blood / or a piece of my hair or my clothes" . She feels that the woman already pays a high price for being imprisoned at home, the narrator sees herself as the prisoner of her household whose only aim is to survive every single day. The man, on the other hand, is free or can always take a different route, he does not have to sacrifice anything. By addressing men "Herr Doktor" "Herr Enemy" and even "Herr God" or "Herr Lucifer" , the narrator clearly expresses her

hostile feelings towards men since they exercise absolute power over women. The narrator's third suicide attempt is compared to the extermination procedure in the gas chambers. Once again women are treated as "Untermensch". However, when the narrator turns into ash she warns men "do not think I underestimate your great concern" . It foreshadows her resurrection and her revenge on men.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSION

Sylvia Plath the lady Lazarus comes under the second wave of feminism. Plath never considers himself a feminist, yet her prose and poetry deal with issues which become relevant to the second wave of feminism. So in the lady Lazarus society tries to oppress and humiliate women and Plath's confessional poem reflects the themes of the objectification and dehumanization of women, heir oppression and a conflict between work and family life. However, their feeling of dissatisfaction and frustration resulted in the emergence of the second wave of feminism. The radical feminists attempted to free women from the image of the perfect housewife.

“Lady Lazarus” in male- dominated society, the narrator wanted to escape from a recentrie atmosphere. By committing suicide, she revived with her own power and got immortality like a phoenix. So here she struggles with everything from family to mental stability. She attempts suicide because she could not bear the suffering she experienced. She saw death as the answer to her troubled life even though it became elusive. Obviously Sylvia Plath is one of most influential in modern feminist discourses. Poem like “Lady Lazarus” is often celebrated as iconic for Plath-advocated feminism. Unlike other modern feminist frontiers’ sincere approach to patriarchy, Plath’s feminism evolves from her protagonists’ deep-rooted hatred for their male counterparts. Indeed this hysterical hatred and antagonism of Plath’s narrator in the poem, “Lady Lazarus” seems to put the sincerity and responsibility of Plath’s feminist authority into question. A female self like man-eater Lazarus is, in the first place, self-destructive and, certainly, not desirable. Yet the confessional mode and the techniques of a female’s self-conjuration ultimately signify Plath’s modernist trends, in modern feminist discourse, to portray a woman’s self-perception of her position in a male dominated society. Obviously, the narrator in the poem “Lady Lazarus” need not be misunderstood as the representative of Plath-advocated feminism. Indeed, ‘Lady Lazarus’ is to be deemed as Plath’s effort to voice the modern woman’s nascent self through self-confession.

Plath's 'Lady Lazarus' is to be considered as a woman's effort to voice herself in modern society. The narrator in the poem voices herself through a sort of self-confession. In the poem, the confession authority appears to be in a dual mode. The reincarnated lady speaks out her mind before the oppressive authorities: a. the Nazi doctors and b. the gathering multitude around. Obviously Plath's readers are provoked to align themselves with the gathering multitude in the poem. The confessing self-portrayal, of Lady Lazarus, as a martyr of patriarchy -if not frighten the gathering crowd by letting them take a glimpse at the furious and revengeful heart of an oppressed lady- certainly arouse the pity and fear at the lady's situation. Meanwhile, Lazarus's modern female self begins to exist shredding its non-existence of ages.

Indeed both Plath's poem's confessional mode and its narrator's hysterical self-revelation ironically endow the non-existent feminine self with existence; it gives voice to a woman's silence of ages. For Foucault, confession is essentially a feature, of modern man, which is meant for producing the truth about the confessor's self, as he says, "the truthful confession was inscribed at the heart of the procedures of individualization by power [and has become] one of the West's most highly valued techniques for producing truth" (Foucault 58). In fact, Plath's confessional narrator rather divulges the "truth, lodged in our most secret nature, 'demands' only to surface" (Foucault 60).

Plath's narrators' common antagonism against men as a community of oppressors compels a reader, though misguidedly, to think of the peculiarity of their behavior and attitude toward men. Such frenzied peculiar violence of one of Plath's narrator is evident in the following lines from the poem, "Lady Lazarus": "Out of the ash / I rise with my red hair / And I eat men like air" (Plath, "Lady Lazarus"). Margaret Dickie comments on this peculiarity in the following lines: "Plath's late poems are full of speakers whose rigid identities and violent methods not only parody their torment but also permit them to control it. The peculiar nature of the speaker in "Lady Lazarus" defies ordinary notions of the suicide." (324) Indeed it is as peculiar as that of frenzied women who have been deprived of thinking rationally of men, and

essentially she tends to be characterized as an antagonist against men, not against patriarchy.

Lady Lazarus is one of the unforgettable poems by one of the great poets, Sylvia Plath., in each and every line and she shares her painful experience with us. From the beginning to the end, the poet says 'death' she addressed 'death' as a person. She calls him to take her. Throughout the poem. She writes about her suicide attempts. She perfectly did it. But it did not work.

Reader can understand what she wants to say, and how much she suffered. The poet didn't mention anyone, specifically but, by reading the poem, the reader can know she suffered, because of all, friends, family, people around her. Plath's pain is a lot. She also portrayed her feelings in the title also.

"Lazarus" is a biblical character in which Jesus gives rebirth to him . but in this poem she alternatively used that character. From this poem, people may understand how much women faced struggles to survive. Even in the period of modernism ,there was no change in treating women as a slave . In that time women were under the control of the men. They are treated as a "baby production" machines. In fact women are the opposite of other women. In home elder women dominated their daughter, Nieces, nephews etc.

In that modernism period, women slowly rose, like writing, reading, ect. Before that period, women had nothing to have. She doesn't have any claims. If she has something after her marriage it automatically comes under the governance by her husband before marriage, maintained by her father. Women strictly don't get education. If she was allowed to read they should be allowed to read only bible. Simply said, women have no rights to do anything.

So, Plath also reads the same painful life, so she is waiting for death and she calls it.

PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY IN SYLVIA PLATH'S POEM

Some of Sylvia Plath's poems portray women in the American patriarchal culture who undergo a condition of being repressed and rebel against male domination. In these poems the woman characters suffer from bondage and imprisonment and they have to accept the conditions uncomplainingly. In general, however, the woman speakers of the poems have dreams of being free, independent, self-determined individuals; and all of them embody their dreams through death. In the poem *Daddy*, the woman has succeeded in killing the men that dominate her life; while after dying, the woman in *Lady Lazarus* transfigures into a killing agent and eats the man who has treated her as a thing. In *Fever 103°* and in *Ariel* the women have transformed themselves into untouchable and unseen matters so that they become superior over men; and the woman in *Death & Co.* in her powerlessness and surrender to death still has a hope for a new self rebirth. Plath portrayed the whole poem, beautifully. Poetess comparisons and her use of the poetry is good.

REFERENCES

PRIMARY SOURCE:

1. poetryfoundation.org/collections/151109/an-introduction-to-confessional-poetry
2. Plath, Sylvia. "Lady Lazarus." Ariel. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1963.
3. Plath, Sylvia "Lady Lazarus"; In Ariel (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 7.
4. Anne Runkel (Author), 2008, Sylvia Plath's „Lady Lazarus“. Cultural and social context, Munich, GRIN Verlag, <https://www.grin.com/document/126751>

SECONDARY SOURCE:

1. <https://englishsummary.com/20th-century-poetry-themes/#gsc.tab=0>
2. <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/146073/poetry-and-feminism>
3. <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/49000/lady-lazarus>
4. <https://owlcation.com/humanities/Sylvia-Plath-Her-Life-and-Importance-to-American-Literature-and-History#:~:text=Through%20Sylvia%20Plath's%20role%20as,great%20poet%20of%20American%20history.>
5. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Sylvia-Plath>
6. <https://www.britannica.com/art/American-literature>
7. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336018988_CONCEPT_OF_FEMINISM_IN_THE_SELECT_POEMS_OF_SYLVIA_PLATH#:~:text=This%20paper%20aims%20at%20the,select%20poems%20of%20Sylvia%20Plath.&text=She%20never%20considered%20herself%20a,family%20and%20search%20for%20identity
8. Plath, Sylvia. Ariel. Faber and Faber, 2015.

9. Dicker, Rory. A History of U.S. Feminisms. 2nd ed., Seal Press, 2016
10. <https://www.journalijar.com/article/29301/concept-of-feminism-in-the-select-poems-of-sylvia-plath/>
11. http://www.gender.cawater-info.net/knowledge_base/rubricator/feminism_e.htm
12. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/feminism>
13. summarystory.com/lady-lazarus/a-critical-analysis-of-sylvia-plaths-feminism-as-revealed-in-the-poem-lady-lazarus/#:~:text=Poem%20like%20“Lady%20Lazarus”%20is,iconic%20for%20Plath-advocated%20feminism.&text=Indeed%2C%20‘Lady%20Lazarus’%20is,her%20self%20in%20modern%20society.
14. <https://www.gradesaver.com/sylvia-plath-poems/study-guide/summary-lady-lazarus/#:~:text=It%20is%20commonly%20interpreted%20as,Jesus%20raised%20from%20the%20dead>.
15. <https://owlcation.com/humanities/Analysis-of-Poem-Lady-Lazarus-by-Sylvia-Plath>
16. <https://update.lib.berkeley.edu/2018/10/27/sylvia-plath-reading-a-confessional-poet-feminist-writer-and-influential-figure/>
17. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/sylvia-plath-death-anniversary_b_2672685
18. <https://journals.sfu.ca/thirdspace/index.php/journal/article/view/gordon/141>
19. Caine, Barbara. “Feminist Biography and Feminist History.” *Women’s History Review* 3/2 (1994): 247-261.
20. <https://owlcation.com/humanities/Sylvia-Plath-Her-Life-and-Importance-to-American-Literature-and-History>

