

How did Sylvia Plath use form to create meaning?

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Abstract

In this close reading of 'Private Ground', 'Daddy', 'The Thin People', and 'Mushrooms' by Sylvia Plath, a new analytical framework of her poetry is provided that not only challenges the traditional interpretations of the artist, it also entitles Sylvia Plath's work to an entirely new era of analysis. By discounting the propaganda, and only taking into account poetry, and pure motivation, it is clear that metaphors make Plath's writing applicable, and personal to any reader. It is also clear that Plath used several dimensions of personality to give each of her poems of poetic embodiment. These include a poem's setting, a poem's voice, and a poem's perspective. These factors go on to create 'poetic ego' and this ego, combined with metaphor turn Plath into a misunderstood revolutionist, loudly isolated until the end.

12th Grade Honors Humanities

Animas High School

4 April 2018

Introduction

‘What is wrong?’

This is often the first question that people get asked in emergency rooms, on frantic phone calls, and in doctor’s offices. Understanding patients is key in understanding treatment, a fact that holds true in both medicine, and literary analysis. However, there is one instance of literary work where writers are discounted in common analysis. Ironically enough, this misunderstood sect of English literature are the poetries of Sylvia Plath. They are often misunderstood and discredited as ‘mad woman’s musings’, owing to her manic depressive tendencies and her eventual suicide. In order to find a new analysis of Plathian poetries, it is time to take an ‘emergency room’ view of her poetry.

By not discounting personal experience when analyzing Plath’s poetry, and by looking at her in a nontraditional sense without judgement, it becomes clear that the personal aspects of Plath’s poetry not only create poetic meaning, but they even go so far as to reinvent the use of poetic device in revolutionary ways. Each of her poems embodies a setting, emotion, and voice. These factors go on to create ‘poetic ego’, and by recognizing the poetic ego in each of Plath’s poems, it is easy to see how each one of her works nearly writes itself. Deep analysis of Plathian poetries has also led to the conclusion that because her poetry was so personal, she had to contextualize and built poetic worlds through metaphor. These metaphors go on to invite readers into the deeply personal moments in Plathian poetries.

Context

In the 1950’s and 60s, poets began rejecting the traditional impersonal style in favor of a more autobiographical style wherein previously taboo topics like death, sex, and sadness

emerged as infinitely complex intricacies. These new dialogues brought a brand new genre into being - the house of the confessionalists. The confessional house of poetry is home to such poets as Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, and Robert Lowell. These poets spent their academic lives contextualizing and interpreting their own personal experiences into works of quiet revolution. The time of the confessionalists is also hallmarked by reactions to World War Two. The Jewish narrative of persecution during the holocaust was not known until 1961 in fact. During this time, pictures of concentration camps, holocaust survivors, and the toll of World War Two on the entire European continent finally made their way to the United States. For many, these pictures were a justification of a war that the United States was reluctant to join in the first place. For others, these pictures were unbelievable. The bodies and twisted configurations of arms and legs and black piles of human ash inspired Plath to write her most revered works, including 1961's 'Daddy'.

Sylvia Plath was a brilliant, and troubled poet. Her father, Otto Plath, a Polish anthropologist died when she was seven, and after winning a scholarship to Smith College in 1950, she made her first suicide attempt in 1953, and was able to finish her degree in 1955. Plath had an incredibly unique relationship to her own creativity. Her creative genius was fully dependent upon her own self destruction, as if she could only understand her voice by torturing herself. Plath spent much of her adult life fighting her addiction to self destruction. She met her husband Ted Hughes on a scholarship at Cambridge University. In 1956 they married, and in 1957 Plath returned to the East Coast to study alongside fellow confessionalist, Robert Lowell. She also met fellow student, Anne Sexton before publishing her first collection of poetry, *The Colossus*. Plath gave birth to a child in 1962, but at that point, her marriage with Hughes was

falling apart, and Hughes soon left Plath for another woman . Her divorce lead to the publication of *The Bell Jar* in 1963, outlining a woman's sudden journey to the doorstep of insanity. Plath committed suicide later in 1963 and her final collection, *Ariel* was debuted posthumously in 1965, though much of her other work was also published posthumously in several collections of classic poetry.

Countless journals and academics discount Plathian poetics as whiny, or inherently self destructive - and many owe this to Plath's manic depression. Many literary critics argue that her work was nothing but an artistic complaint. However, by discounting her dark reliance on self deprecation, critics lose all meaning behind Plath's poetry. Each individual factor in Plath's life is invaluable in the analysis of her writing. In fact, her disorder gave life to a lot of her most famous works, and without recognizing the context upon which being bipolar allows a poem to be placed in, the points and claims that Plath made via her writing become lost in broken translation when critics refuse to validate writer's points of view.

Plath's poems are unique because they speak with the body of a human voice via poetic ego. Poetic ego is the central idea of each of Plath's poems, it is the poem's personality, and through the documentation of a poem's setting, voice, and perspective the poetic ego can be characterized. A parallel can be drawn between Plath's use of poetic ego and the use of natural relationships in natural poetics. The poetics of naturalists filter meaning through natural visual observations and synecdoches between meaning and natural processes. The poetics of Sylvia Plath filter meaning through poetic ego, which can be represented by a human voice, or human experience to create a distinctive point of view, or purpose to the poem.

All poets use the specific relationships present in the natural world to project meaning onto indigestible concepts through the use of metaphor, however, it is the use of metaphor as a sensory invitation through which readers can experience language that characterizes Sylvia Plath's writing. By using her poetic language to capture the complex and personal relationships that she had with her world, Plath invites her readers into personal experience. These complicated natural processes that Plath used to contextualize the world, and the invitation to Plath's perspective via generalized metaphor creates a unique 'world building' character to her writing.

Analysis

Scott Knickerbocker, a professor of English at the University of Idaho is correct in his argument that -

Plath's unfortunate categorization as part of the "confessional" school of poets, whose work, in reaction against the impersonality and irony of the high modernists, instead seems to draw directly on the poet's "real" life, particularly his or her inner, emotionally tormented life. Such a view of Plath is still ubiquitous despite her own dismissive description of confessional poetry: "As if poetry were some kind of therapeutic public purge or excretion" (qtd in Knickerbocker 2000, 355).

Knickerbocker's interjection here beautifully outlines the common 'madwoman' theory about Plath in the field of literary analysis. Many critics claim that she is a delicate creature, too precariously forged to be placed in the real world, forced into ultimate self awareness by her career by always staring self destruction in the eye. This consuming view of Sylvia Plath

discounts her as an artist. It is exactly this disregard for who Plath truly was that has allowed for such deep misunderstandings of her writing.

Scott Knickerbocker is brilliant in his realization that Plath is hugely misinterpreted as a writer, yet his analysis still lacks conviction. In his paper “Bodied Forth in Words”: Sylvia Plath’s Ecopoetics” Knickerbocker goes on to claim that Plath “Uses nature poetry to externalize her inner life.” (2005, 265). This is where Knickerbocker is wrong. Plath uses poetry to contextualize her inner life, and the relationships present in nature are often a means of connecting her audience to her personal life via context. As in Knickerbocker’s misguided analysis of Plath’s poem ‘Private Ground’:

Eleven weeks, and I know your estate so well

I need hardly go out at all.

A superhighway seals me off.

Trading their poisons, the north and south bound cars

Flatten the doped snakes to ribbon. (Plath 13-17).

Knickerbocker argues that the flat and linear image of the highway violently forces nature into its own image as the snakes are flattened. Not only does humanity (in the form of cars and the superhighway), ‘poison’ the environment (including the drivers themselves), it also “seals” the speaker off from the woods and natural beauty of her friend’s property (5).

According to this analysis, Plath’s simple love of nature along with her concern for industrialization and the destructive consequences of modern, technologized life are obvious reasons to categorize Plath as an ecological poet (5). This is wrong, ‘Private Ground’ is not a

projection of concern for modern technology and the gradual destruction of the environment, the purpose of 'Private Ground' is purely experiential *for the reader*.

In fact, the key to understanding the setting of 'Private Ground' is the last sentence of the third stanza. As "the north and south bound cars/ Flatten the doped snakes to ribbon" (1992, 130) Plath writes a metaphor for the 'superhighway' into her readers' brains. Her use of slithery, snakey imagery, combined with the metaphor for the superhighway creates a specific view of it from the reader's mind. It is important to note that her linear and oversimplified metaphor is describing a sensation that requires all four senses. Her imagery in the last line of the third stanza of 'Private Ground' gives the reader's mind very specific simple information, however, because we exist in complicity, there is a forced, automatic full perception with specific imaginative constraints that allow the reader to feel the exact flavor of isolation that Plath felt when visiting the subject of 'Private Ground': her friend's isolated country home. This effect is accomplished through metaphor. This revolutionary use of worldbuilding is key in Plath's poetry because it allows the reader to experience 'Private Ground' *as Plath did*. Experiential poetics are possible through the usage of the contextualization of metaphors.

It is not enough to understand a poem, or a Plathian message using just metaphor to contextualize setting, the passage of time, and the world. This is where poetic ego comes into play.

All morning, with smoking breath, the handyman
Has been draining the goldfish ponds.
They collapse like lungs, the escaped water
Threading back, filament by filament, to the pure

Platonic table where it lives. The baby carp

Litter the mud like orangepeel (Plath 7-12).

It is obvious here that as the “handyman (with smoking breath) /has been draining the goldfish ponds” (7-8) that the seasons are changing. This poetic ego is one that is old. ‘Private Ground’ is the embodiment of Plath’s life-long experience of the changing seasons. Poetic ego is a coined term for the application of this analytical framework. It consists of three things. This ego’s setting is at the end of fall, or at the conjuncture of equinoxes. This poem’s voice are the natural processes that occur with the changing seasons, living fishpools “collapse like lungs, the escaped water/ threading back, filament by filament, to the pure/ platonic table where it lives” (Plath 9-11). The voice here representing all of the changes in water that we take for granted, and when the earth tilts us away from the sun, all the water is forced to live in frozen embodiment without a single protesting drop to promise raging rivers. The voice speaks again as “The baby carp/ litter the mud like orangepeel” (11-12) and represents death by the passage of the seasons. The final piece of this poem’s ego is perspective. And this poem’s perspective is also its message, reinforced by the other attributes of poetic ego, and metaphor. This poem holds the point of view that humans, in perfect balance with the sun reinforce the changing of the seasons. Even in her use of metaphor, Plath draws a parallel between flattening “the doped snakes to ribbon” (17) and the “handyman draining the goldfish ponds” (7-8) because in both instances, people are the enforcers of impending death. Snakes hibernate underground during winter, just as we desperately flatten our snakey superhighways in preparation for a long season buried under snow.

This analysis, and its unique framework provide a clear view of ‘Private Ground’s message. This poem is meant to provide the reader a small, isolated sanctuary from which to view the conjuncture of human action, and natural process. This is done via metaphors that contextualize a feeling by forcing us to sit with Plath while she watches fish die at both the hand of nature, and the hand of human. This is also done via a complicated embodiment of the poetic ego. This ego only speaks at the end of fall, at the intersection of the changing seasons, and by the human hand that rakes leaves, drains pools, and cuts wood.

Isabelle Travis, a professor at the University of Reading analyzed Plathian holocaust material in her paper, “‘I Have Always Been Scared of *You*’: Sylvia Plath, perpetrator trauma and threatening victims” and claims that evil does not exist in isolation, when it occurs, one person must commit an act which is experienced by another person. This suggests two distinct categories of person in relation to evil: perpetrator and victim... however, the boundaries between victim and perpetrator are frequently blurred in Plathian poetics (277). By bending and twisting poetic ego, the ability to blur the boundaries between victim and perpetrator in writing becomes possible. Sylvia Plath wrote each of her poems from her own point of view, yet not all of her poems are written from the first person. One of Plath’s most famous works, ‘Daddy,’ is written from an unknown perspective, and is an example of the use of poetic evil to probe into the subtle gradients between constructed good and evil. In ‘Daddy’ the poetic ego’s father had ties to the Nazi party, and the ego’s mother had Jewish heritage. This is not Plath’s personal experience at surface level but it is, in fact, representative of the complex relationship that herself and society had with evil and the perpetration and victimization of it after the holocaust, and it is represented through poetic ego. ‘Daddy’ brings up a unique ethical dilemma through its

projection of a personal voice onto an unknown speaker. Plath's consistent analysis of human perpetration of evil leads to the natural conclusion that 'evil' must be seen not as something that naturally exists but as an arbitrary construction. This contrived binary, which simplifies empirical complexity to two antagonistic forces and reduces every shade of grey between, has been an essential feature of all human societies (279), "Daddy" is a quiet protest of this societal construct.

After World War Two, the planet was at odds with itself. Plath certainly felt this call to uneasiness after the dramatic stratification happening in Europe, and "Daddy" was her answer to this ethical dilemma. "Daddy" was written from a perspective that "internalizes the inheritance of victimhood, but addressed to the externalization of her heritage of perpetration" (Travis 278). Plath draws on the uncertainty of this binary opposition between perpetrator and victim. In "Daddy" what should be an impenetrable separation between victim and victimizer becomes blurred, just as the legacy of the human race's relationship with victim and victimizer changed after the holocaust. The metaphor that characterizes this shift in human nature is found in the second to last stanza of "Daddy":

If I've killed one man, I've killed two---
the vampire who said he was you
and drank my blood for a year,
seven years, if you want to know.

Daddy, you can lie back now. (Plath 75-80, 1960)

While the speaker is trying to absolve herself from the taint of her father's Nazi connections by representing him as a monster, Plath uses the figure of the Nazi as an emblem of monstrosity

in its own right. The Nazi is a modern-day icon of the monstrous extremes of human barbarity: the distancing of the perpetrator from 'normal' human provides a reassurance that such behavior is not within the range of 'natural' actions. The use of the vampire myth is telling because vampires make their victims what they themselves are (283).

Vampires have a complicated mythical relationship with perpetration and victimization, as they take both roles. "If I've killed one man, I've killed two/ the vampire who said he was you" (Plath 75-76) by using vampires to contextualize Nazis through metaphor, Plath makes the point that the human race is markedly different after the holocaust, because one vampire is indistinguishable from another. We are victims of our own perpetration.

Her use of voice that is not her own is still confessionalist in style however, because it is in fact the voice that both yearns to reject the atrocities of the holocaust in favor of the relative ease of victimhood, and must accept its own responsibilities because this voice too, is a perpetrator of unspeakable evil.

You do not do, you do not do
Any more, black shoe
In which I have lived like a foot
For thirty years, poor and white,
Barely daring to breathe or Achoo (1-5).

In the very first verse of 'Daddy' the ego betrays itself to its Nazi upbringings. Hitler found a political foothold in Germany's great depression and rode it to domination (Rise of Adolf Hitler). This ego cannot help but revolt in Nazi ideology because it is broken, defeated by itself and its

own poverty. And yet, as 'Daddy' progresses, the ego tries to rid itself of the shame of the inevitability of Hitler's rise.

I never could talk to you.

The tongue stuck in my jaw.

It stuck in a barb wire snare.

Ich, ich, ich, ich,

I could hardly speak.

I thought every German was you.

And the language obscene (Plath 24-30)

This ego is nearly a mirror. It is a mirror for Germans, it is a mirror for society. It is a mirror because it has killed literally millions of people, and it is the mirror that has fought itself to death over victimhood. This ego is not in the traditional, first person because it is too big. This ego is Plath's and this experience is ours. This poetic ego in 'Daddy' is both personal to Plath, and applicable to all via contextualizing metaphors.

Five years before writing 'Daddy' Plath began writing using holocaust material in 'The Thin People'. 'The Thin People' describes victims in a way of which the speaker is only dimly aware. Concentration camp detainees are described without being precisely referenced. It also shows that the events are kept at an imaginative distance from the speaker, as if they are seen from the intermediary of the movie screen and from a distant past.

Ego can be used in unprecedented ways but however, because no analysis of Plathian writing through the lens of poetic ego has been done, refined egotistical writing that

demonstrates the creation of meaning through ego is not analyzed or used. Another variation of poetic ego is accredited to an infamous denier of the holocaust in Plath's 'The Thin People'. This poem is a real time process through which Plath digests the holocaust through poetry. Many of the images coming from post-war Europe were hard to look at, and for some, hard to believe. Plath validates this position in 'The Thin People' demonstrating that holocaust deniers can in fact be seen as good people, if only they deny the holocaust because their faith in the human race is morally higher than the stained immoral demonstrations by the human race that was the holocaust. Many holocaust deniers could not believe the holocaust happened because they could not rationalize this level of destructive human behavior through their optimistic lens of human nature. This idea is not directly reflected in Plath's 'The Thin People', but, by using an altered poetic ego, she brings up relevant ethical discussions and sentiments about humanity, and human nature in general. This revelation could not be done with the traditional first person 'I' or a first person poetic ego, and this level of poetic power via personality is only possible through the Plathian reimagination of what writing from the self can become.

In 'The Thin People', Plath uses a unique poetic ego in order to create a synecdoche for Displaced Persons in post-war Europe. Surprisingly, many of the liberated Jews and other concentration camp survivors were forced into badly planned, disease ridden refugee camps. Allies viewed Jewish survivors with suspicion in a war ravaged Germany, and to precisely mirror the stigma of holocaust survivors, Plath focuses on their physical appearance first, because in spite of post war plenteousness, the thin people:

would not round

out their stalky limbs again through peace

plumped the bellies of the mice
under the leanest table. (Plath 13-14)

And in this focus on physical appearance, Plath forces the speaker to see the thin people's affirmation of their suffering by forcing others to acknowledge it. By making her voice eat this unwanted knowledge, Plath makes the point that the Holocaust has been represented as an apocalyptic split; humanity can never return to its former 'innocence'. We are a post-Auschwitz homo sapiens because the evidence, the photographs of the sea of bones and gold fillings, of children's shoes and hands leaving a black claw mark on oven walls, have altered our sense of our ability to commit evil. Hearing whisperings out of hell again we would know how to interpret the code, the skin of our hopes has grown thinner (Travis 286).

Plath's speaker expresses socially 'unacceptable' feelings towards survivors of what would later become known as the Holocaust. Rather than pity or sympathy, she considers the thin people with hostility, or as a threat. The danger they pose appears aimed at the speaker's consciousness and perceptions of the world. They come "Into our bad dreams, their menace/ Not guns, not abuses, / but a thin silence" (Plath 15-17). This forced documentation of atrocity via poetry and poetic ego is revolutionary in its use, because it uses an indirect magnified embodiment of Plath's experiences as a voice. In post war Europe, the Allied forces would often make civilians living near concentration camps visit them, and in 'The Thin People', it is the reader being forced to visit the atrocity on their doorstep via poetic ego.

They are always with us, the thin people
Meager of dimension as the gray people

On a movie-screen. They

Are unreal, we say:

It was only in a movie, it was only

In a war making evil headlines when we

Were small that they famished and

Grew so lean and would not round

Out their stalky limbs again though peace

Plumped the bellies of the mice

Under the meanest table (Plath 1-11).

The metaphor here, is almost like watching a child's first encounter with a concentration camp. Watching a terrible black and white war movie, and seeing a person, or more, the ghost of a person living, walking, and existing in color, in dimension is traumatizing. This metaphor and this ego do not exist in harmony, because as the thin people walk from the ego's screen, and imagination, the ego must sit, paralyzed in fear. 'The Thin People' is a documentation of terror written and directed by the tormented relationship of poetic ego, and metaphor.

Plath played with intangible concepts like a kitten plays with a ball of yarn, becoming so entangled that kitten and yarn become one. Complex abstractions like man's relationship and role in his natural world, and the intricate workings of good and evil are not widely applicable, or

even understandable outside of deep context. By using her own voice, her own experiences, and her own perspective, and by applying them to readers with metaphors that allude to human nature, Sylvia Plath creates meaning in her poetry.

The creation of meaning via poetic ego and metaphor is demonstrated beautifully, and simply in 'Mushrooms'. The first thing to note about 'Mushrooms', is that its voice presents itself as a 'We', this 'we' is, unsurprisingly, Plath's. 'We' in 'Mushrooms' represents an individual collective of death. The metaphor that contextualizes this poem is in fact, the entire poem. Mushrooms, have lives that are inseparable from death. Mushrooms depend on death, and decomposition to maintain their ironic existence.

Our toes, our noses
take hold on the loam,
acquire the air. (Plath 4-6, 1960)

Because Mushrooms are both physically alive, and analytically dead, in this poem, mushrooms represent life, specifically human life, and because human life is such a vast, subtle process, 'Mushrooms' provides a very simple setting, that in the reader's mind becomes intricate via metaphor. The reader and the 'we' in 'Mushrooms' automatically exist on the same deathly, analytical plane with Plath's poetic ego as the sole speaker.

This poem makes the point that life and death are inseparable by using an ego that is the personification of the relationship between human life and human death. This poem's ego includes the setting of human life, or more specifically, the manifestation of death over human life, as death so, 'perfectly voiceless,/ widen the crannies,/ shoulder through holes. We diet on water,/ on crumbs of shadow,'. This poem's perspective is that that death is merely a natural

process from wherein life transitions. This poem's voice, is the voice of mushrooms. Over the course of life, we take, the resources of the natural world sustain us, but in death, our sustenance upon material becomes material itself orchestrated by organisms like mushrooms. This unique relationship can only be mirrored via the unique relationship that decomposers have with life.

We are shelves, we are
tables, we are meek,
we are edible, (Plath 25-27, 1960)

Here, Plath uses the metaphor of mushrooms to represent human life to make the point that life is simply the constant renewal of death. Our edibility is key for species (like mushrooms) to live. In our global ecosystem, death has the inclination to destroy life,

Nudgers and shovers
in spite of ourselves.

our kind multiplies: (29-30)

as demonstrated by this ego, "In spite of ourselves, / our kind multiplies" but, because death and life are inseparable from this point of view, death also has the tendency to produce life. No matter how many mushrooms sprout to decompose, their presence will always constitute life. Life and death are both the same construct, and a contradiction. As in 'Daddy' the two relationships between cause and effect are blurred. Mushrooms are both the body that takes action, and the body that is affected by action. As the characterization of death becomes apparent throughout the passage, one important poetic device that Plath uses to prime the brain is imagery, and by using associative connotation, Plath sets up her metaphor for contextual success.

Overnight, very

whitely, discreetly,

very quietly (Plath 1-3, 1960)

Her deathly, and sudden, 'overnight', 'white', and 'discreet' introduction to her voice induces a deathly connotation. While her third stanza:

Nobody sees us,

stops us, betrays us;

the small grains make room (Plath 7-10, 1960)

Claims that her voice (mushrooms) are unseen in the human narrative. From a young age, society teaches us that death is a concept that is alien to life, coldness and stillness have no place in the living realm, yet as "the small grains make room" (Plath 10), each of our own deaths become more and more imminent.

There are a lot of claims in the academic world that many of Plath's poems foreshadow her suicide, yet this poem seems to make foreshadowing irrelevant. Suicide cannot be death if death is simply the next step in a grand process of life, unseeable to the human eye. Yet countless academics discount 'Mushrooms' as a quiet revolution written secretly for an oppressed group - most likely women. And while being a woman poet in the 1950's and 1960's was challenging, especially for a confessionalist, Plath instead saw a single, shared human experience.

'Mushrooms' is about the misinformed collective of the living. We are oppressed by ourselves and our own perceptions of death. Entire belief systems are based around the ideas of 'heaven' and 'hell', but 'Mushrooms' gives death a much more organic, earthy connotation to death:

We are shelves, we are

tables, we are meek,

we are edible, (Plath 25-27, 1960)

There is no denying that death is possibly the most raw, and innocent process that humans undergo. By capturing such a complicated relationship via the reflection of the intricacy that exists between mushrooms and their world, and the collective ignored subtle intricacy that exists between human life and death via poetic ego and the contextualization of experience through metaphor, Plath creates a revolutionary deathly dialogue.

Conclusion

We are afraid of insanity. The differences between a person that is sane, and a person that is insane terrify us. The idea that we can so easily slip into a defined state of ‘insanity’ allows us to rationalize countless human behaviors. It is exactly this fear of the insane that has created such a vast gap in analysis of Plath’s poetry. More specifically, insanity was often the public image of Sylvia Plath, and her willingness to present herself as a prophets of the insane was bold. Her own insanity is quite possibly the greatest source of her genius, and her greatest downfall, as it has allowed countless literary critics to take Plath as a scared little girl traumatized by the world where instead, each one of Plath’s poems is a laced invitation.

With each poem, and each piece of writing, Plath invites her readers to intensely specific experiences. Sometimes even taking entire paragraphs to capture just a millisecond of sensual information. Meticulous documentation of personal experience, magnified and projected through metaphor, combined with the daunting exploration of the possibilities of personal voice, and personal embodiment to create poetic ego create meaning in Plath’s poetry. These are her defining traits as a writer. One would tend to think, that because Plath’s writing is defined as writing from personal experience, that the personal narrative of each artistic piece would be

predictable, yet Plath constantly experimented what it meant to speak from her own voice.

Plath's specific manufactured voices stemming from personal embodiment are the only effective invitations to invite readers onto a personal, analytical level. These invitations into sensual and personal experiences both creates meaning in her poetry in its own right, but it allows each reader to find their own meaning from specific personal experiences, with Plath as their guide.

Sylvia Plath has sadly had to undergo a dramatization of her personal life, mental illness, and tragically famous suicide, and this has led to an abundance of biographically driven criticism. Her openness to insanity has given many the excuse to consume her artistic genius as a tabloid, or gossip, her poems have begun to line up as vivid diary entries, lurid illustrations, and exhibits for the defense or prosecution if she or her former husband, her mother and father, or anyone else, happens to be on trial. Ironically, this heavy emphasis on Plath's personal life has gone without the simultaneous examination of her writing with her personal life as a factor. Sylvia Plath is not just entitled to a place in the Confessional house of poetry, rather she should be seen as a revolutionist, who learned how to take poetic voice, combined with poetic setting, and poetic perspective to create poetic ego. She learned how to make any voice, no matter how personal, applicable to any willing reader via contextualization, and by brilliantly priming their readers into realizing meaning.

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