



Exploring Death Through Life: A Deep Dive into Sylvia Plath's Thematic Mastery

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Abstract

This article sheds perceptive light on the complex theme of death in Sylvia Plath's poetry. She is considered one of the most significant literary voices of the twentieth century. The combination of Plath's intense personal suffering with her unique stylistic skill makes her an esteemed poet in literature. She not only views death as the inevitable end of life, but embarks on a deeper quest, engaging with death as a dialectic to life, offering a new perspective on the meaning of death in her poetic paradigm. To truly grasp Plath's poems, one must first enter the turbulent terrain of her personal life. Two cataclysmic events stand out: the untimely death of her father and her complicated breakup from her husband Ted Hughes. These traumatic life events not only provide context but become part of her poetic DNA. Through them, Plath unfolds a tapestry of emotions that conveys a deep sense of helplessness in the face of the idea of death as a possible path to redemption. This emotional complexity comes through clearly in her work as a whole. In "Daddy," for example, she channels a potent mix of aggression and fear, a pull that is clearly directed at the main characters in her life. Through the lens of her poetry, death is transformed from a mere ending into a never-ending saga that embodies eternal pain, loss, and an insatiable longing for what was once tangible. This article underscores the intertwined relationship between Plath's personal journey through the shadows of death and the manifestation of these experiences in her poems. Her profound reflections on death not only solidified her literary legacy, but also made a strong mark that resonated deeply with and influenced readers across time and space.

Keywords: Theme of Death, Dialectic Between Life and Death, Twentieth-Century Literature, Sense of Helplessness.

Kara, G. (2024). Exploring Death Through Life: A Deep Dive into Sylvia Plath's Thematic Mastery. *Journal of the Human and Social Science Researches*, 13(2), 929-943. <https://doi.org/10.15869/itobiad.1338118>

Date of Submission	05.08.2023
Date of Acceptance	12.06.2024
Date of Publication	30.06.2024
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Yaşam ve Ölüm Arasında Bir Gezinti: Sylvia Plath'ın Ölüm Teması Üzerine Bir İnceleme

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Öz

Bu makale, Sylvia Plath'ın şiirindeki karmaşık ölüm temasına derinlemesine bir bakış sunmayı hedeflemektedir. Sylvia Plath, yirminci yüzyılın en önemli edebi seslerinden biri olarak kabul edilmektedir. Sylvia Plath'ın yoğun kişisel acıları ve benzersiz üslup becerisinin birleşimi, onu edebiyatta saygın bir şair haline getirmiştir. Bu çalışmanın merkezinde, Sylvia Plath'ın ölüm hakkındaki karmaşık yorumu bulunmaktadır. Sylvia Plath, ölümü yalnızca yaşamın kaçınılmaz sonu olarak değil, aynı zamanda yaşamla ölüm arasında derin bir diyalektik ilişki olarak görmek ve ölümün anlamı üzerine kendi şiirsel paradigmasında yeni bir perspektif sunmaktadır. Sylvia Plath'ın şiirlerini gerçekten anlamak için öncelikle kişisel yaşamının çalkantılı yönlerine bakmak gerekmektedir. Onun hayatında iki büyük olay öne çıkar: Babasının beklenmedik ölümü ve kocası Ted Hughes ile sorunlu bir şekilde ayrılması. Bu travmatik yaşam olayları sadece içerik sağlamla kalmaz, aynı zamanda onun şiirsel DNA'sının bir parçası haline gelir. Sylvia Plath, bu olaylar aracılığıyla, ölüm fikrinin kurtuluşa bir yol olabileceği düşüncesi karşısında derin bir çaresizlik hissini ifade eden duygusal bir panorama sunmaktadır. Bu duygusal derinlik, onun genel çalışmasında açıkça hissedilmektedir. Örneğin "Daddy" adlı şiirde, hayatındaki ana karakterlere yönelik açıkça hissedilen bir çekimle birlikte saldırganlık ve korkunun güçlü bir kombinasyonunu yansıtmaktadır. Şiirlerinin merceğiyle bakıldığında, ölüm sadece bir son olmaktan çıkıp, ebedi acıyı, kaybı ve bir zamanlar elle tutulur olan şeye duyulan bitmeyen özlemi içeren sonsuz bir hikâyeye dönüşmektedir. Bu makale, Plath'ın ölümün gölgesindeki kişisel yolculuğu ile bu deneyimlerin şiirlerinde nasıl yansıtıldığı arasındaki iç içe geçmiş ilişkiyi vurgulamaktadır. Ölüm üzerine derin düşünceleri, sadece onun edebi mirasını pekiştirmekle kalmamış, aynı zamanda zaman ve mekan boyunca okuyucularda derin bir etki yaratan güçlü bir iz bırakmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ölüm Teması, Yaşam-Ölüm Diyalektiği, Yirminci Yüzyıl Edebiyatı, Çaresizlik Hissi

Kara, G. (2024). Yaşam ve Ölüm Arasında Bir Gezinti: Sylvia Plath'ın Ölüm Teması Üzerine Bir İnceleme. *İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 13(2), 929-943. <https://doi.org/10.15869/itobiad.1338118>

Geliş Tarihi	05.08.2023
Kabul Tarihi	12.06.2024
Yayın Tarihi	30.06.2024
*Bu CC BY-NC lisansı altında açık erişimli bir makaledir.	

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Introduction

The literary work of Sylvia Plath has been the subject of extensive scholarly consideration. Much of this academic discourse approaches her work through a feminist lens, examining the intricate layers of gender dynamics and personal agency. Her poems, rich in symbolism and emotion, often require deeper introspection, leading to more varied and diverse interpretations. Moreover, the recurring motif of death, so deeply rooted in her poetic works, reinforces the complexity of her verse and draws scholars and readers into an intense exploration of death. The purpose of this article is to explore the motif of death in Sylvia Plath's poems and, in particular, to highlight its significance from Plath's perspective. Certain poems are chosen to illustrate the poet's different perspectives on death. Two pivotal events strongly influenced her perception of death: the early death of her father, which left her vulnerable, and the betrayal of her husband Ted Hughes, which plunged her into deep sadness and despair. Additionally, the somber atmosphere of the era in which she lived, with the lingering effects of the World War II, further influenced Plath's view of death.

During her lifetime, only a select circle recognized Sylvia Plath's distinct poetic talent. The two published works she saw in print — "The Colossus" (1960) and "The Bell Jar" (1963)— were favorably received but not considered exceptional. In fact, numerous poems she submitted to various newspapers and magazines in the last months of her life were rejected. The recognition and acclaim she so desired came only after her death. Plath lived in London and struggled with depression while separated from her husband. In February 1963, at the tender age of thirty, she tragically took her own life. She left behind two young children and a collection of poems she had prepared for publication. When "Ariel" was published two years after her death, it solidified her status as a recognized name on the international literary stage. Upon its publication in 1965, "Ariel" was praised by critics as a literary marvel. Critics highlighted Plath's unique expression and the haunting atmosphere that permeates her poetic universe.

The poems in "Ariel" are a testament to Plath's unparalleled ability to convey deep emotional shock and introspection. Distinguished by their raw intensity, they serve as a mirror of her innermost thoughts, longings, and struggles. In addition, her meticulously written letters and diaries provide an unvarnished glimpse into her personal life and give readers a deeper understanding of the woman behind the famous works. These intimate writings, in conjunction with her poetry and prose, have been instrumental in shaping her image not only as a writer, but also as a transformative and influential force in the literary landscape of the twentieth century and beyond. Esteemed literary critic Marjorie Perloff characterizes Sylvia Plath's corpus as 'a body of work that is quite unparalleled in twentieth-century American poetry.' (1979, p.3) This remark encapsulates the unique character and enduring influence of Plath's creations, which transcend her lifetime and continue to echo within readers worldwide. As highlighted by Perloff, Plath's work continues to captivate readers today.

She made her first foray into the literary world with her compelling collection of poems, "The Colossus", followed densely by her semi-autobiographical novel, *The Bell Jar*, which has become a touchstone for discussions about mental health and the societal pressures women face. Plath's exceptional and lasting contribution to literature is deeply rooted in her complicated confrontation with death. This theme, which permeates her poetry consistently and poignantly, illuminates not only the fragility of the human condition but

also the emotional and philosophical complexities associated with death, making her a profound voice in the field of poetic introspection. Not merely satisfied with common representations of death, Plath approached the subject with a distinct and intimate perspective, reflecting her own internal struggles and understanding of life's ephemerality. For example in "Lady Lazarus" she writes:

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."

She masterfully interwove motifs of loss, death, and existential reality into her poetic expressions, creating an intricate mosaic of words that simultaneously captivate and challenge her readers, inviting them into a dance of profound reflection and visceral emotion. In her poems, Plath found a way to talk about things that are difficult to express, especially her personal experiences and thoughts about death. Her brave and honest approach to deep themes, like death, still touches readers today, making her work a lasting look at what it means to be human. Her unique focus on death is a big reason why Plath's poetry stands out and continues to be influential in 20th-century American literature. Her portrayal of life reveals the inherent suffering and anguish and underscores humanity's inability to give love freely, reinforcing the perceived meaninglessness of existence. Her discourse on the motif of death serves not only as an endpoint, but also as a journey toward a deeper understanding of human existence. Her distinctive blend of melancholy, passion, and fixation on death makes her a unique and irreplaceable figure in the literary landscape.

Her work is marked by a confessional style, thoughtful introspection, and deeply rooted themes of despair, depression, and domestic turmoil. Her turbulent relationship with British poet Ted Hughes added depth and complexity to her work. Along with her vivid and unvarnished exploration of personal dilemmas, these facets helped make her an icon of 20th-century poetry.

Life, Loss, and Legacy: Sylvia Plath's Deep Dive into Death in Poetry

Death is one of the great themes of literature, perhaps even more common than love. The myths of many ancient peoples revolved around death and the afterlife, from Egyptian guidebooks to Sumerian stories to Gilgamesh and Homer. (Ferber, 2007, p.54). The modern approach to death was often presented as a problem in literature. However, as a modernist writer, Sylvia Plath's approach to the concept of death and mourning differs from that of her contemporaries.

Sylvia Plath's "Collected Poems" includes pieces from all her significant compilations, arranged chronologically by their creation date, spanning from 1956 to 1963. Additionally, it features an appendix with fifty earlier works, termed as Plath's 'Juvenilia,' along with a roster of over 150 poems penned prior to 1956. Ted Hughes, the collection's editor, has contentiously marked this year as the inception of her mature literary phase. This categorization of her earlier works as 'Juvenilia' has led to criticisms against Hughes, suggesting that he downplays Plath's pre-1956 contributions, essentially tying her evolution as an artist to the period of his influence in her life. As Jacqueline Rose

articulates: “Hughes structures, punctuates, her writing definitively with himself.” (2001, p.45)

Her verse resonates with unconventional themes such as death, suicide, and the existential challenges of women, which she underscores with a somber and melancholy tone. True to her deeply felt emotions, Plath’s poetry masterfully balances fervor with a magnetic pull toward despair, desolation, and obscurity. This artistry is further enriched by the intimate intricacies of her own life story woven into her work. Through her carefully crafted lines, Plath skillfully constructs an organic poetic style that includes and reflects her personal scars, traumas, emotions, and the authentic resurgence of the female voice. As Bassnett states: “Sylvia Plath’s poetry has been variously termed confessional, symbolist even surrealist as critics have sought to find a suitable term to describe her highly original poetic voice.” (2005, p.43)

In her verses, Plath’s unspoken pain over life’s sufferings and her longing for redemption are poignantly expressed. Her poems reveal a deep sense of self-alienation, introspection, and self-destruction, interwoven with conflicting feelings toward parental figures. Her passionate rebellion against the bitter truths of life drives her not only to poetic expression, but also to a search for solace beyond the mental anguish these realities bring, culminating in a contemplation of death.

Sylvia Plath’s diction stands out from others because she uses a rich mix of vocabulary, laden with multifaceted words and extended metaphors, giving her work an unmistakably “haunted” essence (Carey, 1991, p. 12). Described as “a crossword challenge of sound and poetic structure” (Smith, 1972, p. 328), her poetic brilliance arguably reaches its peak in “Ariel” In this collection, Plath masterfully combines powerful language, startling imagery, and deep emotion in a way that invites the reader into the labyrinthine depths of her mind, leaving them both awestruck and fascinated.

Through her poetry, Plath managed to express the unspoken, transforming her personal experiences and thoughts on death into a language accessible to all. Her bravery in addressing such profound themes with stark truthfulness and comprehension continues to strike a chord with readers, rendering her work a perennial examination of the human experience. This distinctive exploration of death is a crucial factor in why Plath’s contributions continue to hold a unique and impactful place within the world of twentieth-century American poetry. The recurring themes of death in Sylvia Plath’s poetry are so palpable that Steinberg portrays her the epitome of “a “symbol of death and depression” (2004, p. 38). Her verses, steeped in themes of suicide and mortality, form the core of what can be called the “Plath myth,” or industry. These themes have become a focal point that is endlessly explored and revisited by scholars dedicated to understanding Plath’s work.

The poetry of Sylvia Plath, described by Joyce Carol Oates as “enormously radiant and enormously layered and complex and even contradictory”, is clearly characterized by its profound engagement with death. This focus can be traced to the emotional turmoil and isolation Plath experienced in the aftermath of World War II, a time when she was coming of age. Her poems form an intricate tapestry, a dialectic of life and death, with an increasingly clear inclination toward the latter. Plath’s fixation on death has its roots in her early years, particularly after the death of her father, Otto Emil Plath. This tragic loss shaped her worldview and emotional world. She associated all emotions toward her

father with death, and conversely, all reflections on death were inevitably linked to her father's death. Her inability to form a deep bond with her mother only exacerbated this sense of loss, emphasizing her father's absence and deepening her feelings of isolation and loneliness. This quotation from Susan Bassnett indeed provides insightful commentary on Sylvia Plath's posthumous rise to literary prominence:

The rise of Plath to this iconic status has been rapid. In the aftermath of her death, she was first seen as a relatively minor though gifted poet, overshadowed by the powerful poetry of her husband, Ted Hughes. Early responses to her poetry focussed on its darkness, on the imagery of blood and violence that appeared to prefigure her eventual suicide. (Bassnett, 2005, p.1)

Bassnett points out that Plath's poetry is noted for its intense and often graphic imagery, something that some critics and readers find disturbing, especially given the tragic circumstances of her suicide. However, it's essential to note that the "darkness" in her work is just one aspect of a multifaceted talent. Plath was also capable of creating stunningly beautiful, poignant, and deeply insightful poems that continue to resonate with readers worldwide.

Joyce Carol Oates' recognition of Sylvia Plath's poetry as a paradoxical and multifaceted masterpiece serves as a testament to Plath's genius. This is clearly evident in Plath's exploration of themes such as death, loss, and isolation. Despite the inherent contradictions between life and death, Plath successfully elucidates the complex link between them, thereby demonstrating her profound talent and depth as a poet.

Plath's personal experiences, including her stays in hospitals and morgues as well as her time in a psychiatric institution, greatly strengthened her consideration of death. In particular, her experience with electroconvulsive therapy during her hospitalization proves to be one of her most traumatic events. These experiences brought her into contact with the theme of death, which became omnipresent in her work. This intimate encounter with death not only influenced her view of life, but also provided her with a unique lens through which to explore and portray the complicated relationship between life and death in her poetry. In Plath's poems, the line between life and death is very thin. She portrays life as inherently insignificant, a condition that is often exacerbated by people's actions, rendering life meaningless. With this understanding, death paradoxically gains significance in her poems. Plath elevates death to a higher pedestal than life, suggesting that in the face of life's seeming meaninglessness, it is death that acquires a certain dignity and honor. This complicated dynamic between life and death and the inverted perception of their respective values gives her poetry a remarkable depth and power.

Echoes of Absence: Sylvia Plath's "Daddy" and the Complex Dance of Grief and Memory

"Daddy" is among Plath's most recognized poems and serves as evidence to some that her relationship with her father was central to her writing. Plath once revealed in a BBC interview in October 1962 that "Daddy" was "spoken by a girl with an Electra Complex. Her father died while she thought he was God" (Jo, 2008, p.38). Her father's influence on Plath's literary work was profound and extensive. His presence and memory reverberated deeply in her writings, shaping the themes, emotions, and motifs that frequently appeared in her work. The depth of their relationship and its complexity were

repeatedly addressed, underscoring the importance he had in her life and creative expression. Lajos Székely proposes that:

Psychoanalytic and psychiatric literature contains several descriptions of cases where anniversaries of painful and conflictual events in an individual's life possess crucial significances, as in the loss of an ambivalently beloved person. Individuals who seem to function well and to enjoy sound inner stability can suddenly suffer a mental breakdown on anniversaries: neurotic or psychotic symptoms are manifested. (1978, p.115)

Plath's complicated relationship with her father, who died when she was just eight years old, profoundly affected her work and emotional well-being. Given her deep attachment to him, it is plausible that anniversaries of his death or other important dates related to him may have had a heightened emotional impact on her. Although not directly documented, understanding this psychological concept can provide insight into the cyclical nature of Plath's emotional struggles reflected in her writings.

"Daddy" serves as an arena in which Plath traverses the labyrinthine terrain of her emotions toward her father and husband. The poem is renowned for its visceral vitality and stark imagery, wherein she employs potent metaphors and similes to navigate her tumultuous relationships. Plath's voice, balancing vulnerability with defiance, seems to echo her internal struggle between grappling with her profound sense of loss and abandonment, and asserting her independence and identity. 'Daddy,' bares the depth of Plath's inner turmoil, fury, and desolation, acting as poignant reminders of her personal battles. This poem present priceless glimpses into her life, her mindset, and the agony shrouding her evocative words. Plath's bold examination of these profound emotions in her poems, combined with her exceptional literary prowess, contribute to the enduring relevance of her body of work.

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.

In this depiction, the image of shoes captivates the attention effortlessly. Wagner-Martin points out, "Many of Plath's earlier poems that appear to be about Otto Plath, or about his death, might also be seen as investigations of power." (2011, p.17) Symbolically, the father assumes the role of a protective shield, safeguarding the individual from external adversities in life. In Plath's work, the absence of her deceased father signifies a loss of protection, and by extension, a loss of his power. His death leaves a void, not only physically but also symbolically, as he is no longer able to exert his paternal influence or offer safeguarding. This idea of powerlessness in death is a recurring theme in Plath's poetry, often intertwined with her personal experiences and intricate explorations of life, death, and the dynamics of familial relationships. Plath's poetry is a powerful exploration of her complicated feelings toward her deceased father—a combination of deep longing and intense grief. In her interpretation, death manifests as a lingering anguish, a grief experienced not by the deceased but by those who remain behind and must come to terms with their loss. This constant grief becomes a specter in her life, creating a never-ending link to the memory of her father. This sorrow, imprinted on the minds and hearts of the

bereaved, marks an eternal memory of the deceased. In her poignant verse, Plath vividly captures this unrelenting anguish by portraying death not as a departure but as a continuing presence, a constant reminder of what was and what might have been.

In Plath's universe, death is transformed into an incessant echo of suffering, an endless ache of longing and loss. And it is this uniquely Plathian understanding of death and grief that gives her poems such powerful resonance, endowing them with an emotional intensity that captivates readers around the world.

Daddy, I have had to kill you.
You died before I had time — —
Marble-heavy, a bag full of God,
Ghastly statue with one gray toe
Big as a Frisco seal

Sylvia Plath's poetic legacy is deeply interwoven with an unparalleled intensity around the theme of death. In her work, she navigates the stormy waters of reconciliation with her father's untimely death, while simultaneously grappling with the deep inner urge to erase the haunting memories of him. This complicated emotional interplay, oscillating between searing pain and deep longing, is not just a passing theme — it is an enduring heartbeat that resonates throughout her work, illuminating the depth of her emotional landscape and the sheer mastery of her craft.

The language of Plath's poems, rich in dark and haunting undertones, is laden with hidden meanings. Hughes points to her emblematic language, explaining, "I would have cut out 'Daddy' if I had been in time... I would have cut out others, if I thought they would ever be decoded" (1995, p. 168). He takes issue with critics who link her poems too closely to her biography, suggesting that her work goes beyond mere autobiographical reflections. Instead, Hughes believes that Plath uses her poetic talents not only to tell personal stories but also to refine her artistic expression. Delving into her poems reveals a whirlwind of conflicting emotions — a mix of affection and hostility, longing and dislike. The shadow of her father emerges in her poetry, a figure she both longs for and fears, painting a moving and deeply human picture of loss and memory. Plath's ability to articulate such inner feelings makes her poetry a timeless exploration of the depths of human emotion.

Life Within Leaves: Sylvia Plath's 'The Manor Garden' and the Intertwining of Life, Death, and Emotion

In *The Manor Garden*, Plath uses vivid imagery and the garden metaphor to create a complex interplay between the external natural world and the speaker's internal emotional world, forming an intricate tableau in which life and death, thoughts and feelings coexist. This delicate balance is a testament to Plath's skill as a poet and her ability to convey deep human emotions through her deft use of language and imagery. *The Manor Garden*, one of Sylvia Plath's most important works, begins with a vivid depiction of death that immediately sets the tone for the rest of the poem. While it is unclear to whom the speaker is addressing her words, it is safe to assume that the dawn's coming symbolizes the impending demise of the loved one(s).

The fountains are dry and the roses over.
Incense of death. Your day approaches.

The pears fatten like little buddhas.
A blue mist is dragging the lake.

While the identity of the addressee in Plath's "The Manor Garden" remains ambiguous, it is conceivable to interpret the dawn as emblematic of the inevitability of death. The garden, teeming with animals and plants, may initially appear to the reader as a space full of life and activity. However, Plath masterfully uses this imagery to introduce the concept of mortality, which then evolves into a deeper exploration of the interplay between the flora and fauna of the garden and the speaker's inner cognitive and emotional world.

This poetic environment becomes a complex metaphor for the coexistence of life and death. The vibrancy of the garden subtly contrasts with the sober notion of death and serves as a poignant reminder of the ephemeral beauty of life. At the same time, it reflects the speaker's inner landscape, reflecting his thoughts and feelings, his struggle with the harsh reality of mortality. Plath cleverly uses the metaphor of a garden in this poem, an ecosystem with an abundance of animals and plants. At first glance, the reader may perceive this environment as full of life and activity. However, Plath introduces and develops the concept of death throughout the poem. This death is not simply the end of biological life, but is transformed into an elaborate symbol of the complex interplay between the external world—the garden and its creatures and flora—and the internal world of the speaker's thoughts and feelings.

In this way, Plath nudges the reader from a superficial perception of the garden as a symbol of life to a deeper understanding in which the garden becomes a stage for the complicated drama of life, death, and emotional introspection. It is this ability to create a multifaceted narrative in a seemingly simple setting that solidifies Plath's place as one of the most influential poets of the twentieth century.

You move through the era of fishes,
The smug centuries of the pig-
Head, toe and finger
Come clear of the shadow. History

In these lines, Plath delves into an exploration of time. The mention of the "age of fish" is particularly noteworthy. In astrological terms, the two millennia following Christ's era is termed the Age of fish. In this epoch, individuals grappled profoundly with destiny and fate. Death, an unyielding reality presented by destiny, is juxtaposed with the seeming futility of life. Plath's treatment of time is also intriguing. Her contemplation on the nature of time evokes Emily Dickinson's words: "Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet / Feels shorter than the Day". Thus, suggesting that the perception of time in life may dramatically shift in the afterlife.

Nourishes these broken flutings,
These crowns of acanthus,
And the crow settles her garments.
You inherit white heather, a bee's wing,

In these verses, the dead father is subtly recruited through the evocative symbol of the bumblebees. This symbol is poignant because her father was an entomologist who specialized in the study of bumblebees. The mention of the bumblebees is not only an

allusion to his father's profession, but also a tender reminder of the shared moments that connect the worlds of nature, memory, and personal history.

Two suicides, the family wolves,
Hours of blankness. Some hard stars
Already yellow the heavens.
The spider on its own string

The sudden shift in the poem to the somber theme of death is startling. Plath addresses the subject of suicide, possibly as an allusion to her own contemplations of taking her own life. The sense of finality is palpable as the stars set and the sky turns an ominous yellow color. Yet in the midst of this turmoil, the spider remains unperturbed in its web. This image sums up the harsh reality of existence: while the individual succumbs to despair, the world goes on, seemingly oblivious to the individual's absence. It is a poignant reflection on the transience of life juxtaposed with the continuity of the universe.

Crosses the lake. The worms
Quit their usual habitations.
The small birds converge, converge
With their gifts to a difficult morning.

In these lines, death is initially portrayed in a somber and graphic manner, evoking images of decay and the inevitable fate of the body being consumed by worms. This bleak depiction, however, takes an unexpected turn when death becomes emblematic of 'REBIRTH'. The juxtaposition of decay and renewal offers a profound meditation on the cyclical nature of existence, suggesting that death might not be an end but rather a transition or transformation to a new form or state of being. This duality challenges traditional perceptions of death, inviting readers to contemplate the mysteries of life, death, and what lies beyond.

Duality of Existence: Interweaving Death, Motherhood, and Feminine Struggles in Sylvia Plath's 'Lady Lazarus'

"Lady Lazarus" is written in a confessional style that reflects the enigmatic life of the main character, which is a reflection of Plath herself. When a poet considers himself an integral part of the poem, such a personal and confessional style is inevitable. In Plath's work, however, this takes on an even more complicated dimension. In many poems, she introspectively examines her identity with deliberate control. Her artistic consciousness can recognize and evaluate her own intense emotions from a distanced perspective.

I do it so it feels like hell.
I do it so it feels real.
I guess you could say I've a call.

"Lady Lazarus" is commonly interpreted as Sylvia Plath's articulation of her death wish. She writes, "And like the cat, I have nine times to die." This line suggests that Plath has grappled with suicidal thoughts multiple times before. The recurring theme of death and rebirth represents the idea that death can lead to a new power. This duality of death is clearly evident in "Lady Lazarus" After each symbolic death, the protagonist reappears, seemingly unchanged but inwardly strengthened. She declares, "Dying is an act, like everything else. I do it exceptionally well"

She believes that strong emotions related to love are the underlying factors for suicidal tendencies. These emotions can be perceived as arousing from a divine or sacred calling. Her intense feelings for her father and her confrontation with his absence hurt her so much that Plath could not survive. Again, the love she has for her husband Hughes and the unjust infidelity inflicted on him by Hughes makes her long for death. It might be suggested that death offers a form of purification, truly a cathartic experience for Plath. "Lady Lazarus" epitomizes the purification that comes from the death she undergoes. The protagonist's goal is to achieve a renewed sense of purity.

While critics acknowledge the compelling language she uses, they often overlook the poem's rhythmic patterns, which significantly contribute to its powerful voice. The strength of the poem's voice primarily stems from its well-controlled rhythm. Like many of Plath's other works, "Lady Lazarus" heavily relies on strong rhythms and sounds. This poem not only mirrors Plath's personal experiences but also serves as a condensed reflection of her intricate life. Sometimes, readers see it as a prediction of her eventual suicide. According to Julia Kristeva: "suicide is not a camouflaged act of war but a reuniting with sorrow and, beyond it, with that impossible love, never attained, always elsewhere. Such are the promises of the void, of death" (1987, p.7) In her observations, Kristeva delves into the psychological underpinnings of suicide. She contends that rather than being a rebellion against life, suicide reveals a profound estrangement from it and an intense longing for death. This perspective sheds light on Sylvia Plath's own struggles and writings.

Plath's poems are linguistically and structurally rich and often have multiple layers of meaning in just a few lines. She draws on her knowledge of history, religion, psychology, and her own experiences to create powerful images in "Lady Lazarus" Susan Gubar explains:

"Lady Lazarus" offers up a chilling warning about the fetishization of suffering with which the figure of prosopopoeia flirts. Indeed, Plath's verse uncannily stages the bases for accusations of exploitation, larceny, masochism, and sensationalism that would increasingly accrue around Holocaust remembrance. In addition, her impersonation of the real victims invariably generates awareness of the spurious representation put in the place of the absence of evidence. (2001, p. 207)

In *Lady Lazarus*, the image of a deceased woman is prominently presented. Her two children's bodies are situated adjacent to her own, as if she has drawn them back within her form. The poem reaches its conclusion through a string of potent imagery, involving elements such as menstruation, blood, death, and the moon. She is depicted in a toga, with her feet left bare.

And there is a charge, a very large charge
For a word or a touch
Or a bit of blood.
A sort of walking miracle, my skin
Bright as a Nazi lampshade,
My right foot

The image of the bare foot serves as a symbol of a long journey culminating in a final destination. In this poem, as is often the case in his other works, a trio of themes: death, motherhood, and the suffering of women, take center stage. After all, the focus is on a

woman who has passed away. She is not only a mother of two children but also likely a woman who has been subjected to immense societal pressures within her community. The characterization of this woman as an achiever is particularly intriguing. From this, it's plausible to deduce that the poet may have been contemplating suicide.

Yearning for Renewal: Sylvia Plath's 'A Birthday Present' and the Intertwining of Despair and Hope

A Birthday Present was composed roughly six months prior to Plath's tragic death in December 1962. The poem is imbued with an overwhelming sense of grief and hopelessness, reflecting the renowned poet's psychological state at the time of its creation. In these verses, her yearning for death is so profound that it hints at a looming self-inflicted end. Life is portrayed as grotesque, while death symbolizes beauty. Every moment of life is a torment for her, making death appear as a coveted birthday gift. However, the desire for death in this context does not imply oblivion. Rather, it signifies a plea for reincarnation, a fresh existence.

Indeed, Sylvia Plath appears to contend that the sole salvation for emotionally sensitive women like herself lies in suicide, a path she tragically undertook. Her complex relationships with authority figures, such as her parents and spouse, were a continual wellspring of distress and torment, originating from the deep roots of a patriarchal society that denies women self-determination.

She finds herself grappling with dissatisfaction across numerous areas of her life, encompassing her familial ties, her marriage, and her friendships. Yet, it is through art that she discovers a sanctuary, a space where she can freely articulate her thoughts, emotions, and responses to these challenges. In her writing, Plath wrestles with her own existence, repeatedly turning to certain symbols and images to communicate her perspectives on society and personal relationships.

I do not want much of a present, anyway, this year.
After all I am alive only by accident.
I would have killed myself gladly that time any possible way.
Now there are these veils, shimmering like curtains,

Upon her arrival at the hospital, the woman is greeted by a "wintry" atmosphere, an austere whiteness that manifests itself in the walls and ceilings that resemble snow. Amidst this sterility, the vivid, exuberant tulips make their striking presence felt. As she lies quietly on her bed, the world becomes still and she is completely absorbed in the play of light on the walls, bed and her own hands. She is in a state of deep relaxation. Her life, once full of meaning, now feels inconsequential and she is detached from the cacophony and chaos that once reigned. In exchange for her services, she has given her name and clothes to the nurses, her personal history to the anesthesiologist, and her physical self to the surgeon. Her body, sandwiched between a pillow and a sheet, resembles an eyeball trapped between unyielding lids. Despite the regular intrusion of nurses into her room, she remains undisturbed, observing the flurry of white-clad people constantly performing some tasks with their hands.

She comments on the tenderness and kindness with which the nurses treat her, comparing it to the gentle care that water gives to the stones over which it flows. With their injections, they put her body into a state of sleep and numbness. Her illness and the

depersonalization that comes with it have freed her from the burden she carried before surgery: Her metaphorical black baggage, her roles as wife and mother, symbolized in a family portrait, have become irrelevant.

Conclusion

Although Sylvia Plath had relatively few publications in her short life, she occupies an indispensable place in the panorama of twentieth-century literature and culture. While her lifetime witnessed the creation of a select few significant works, her legacy has only broadened and deepened posthumously, ensuring her lasting influence on subsequent generations of readers and writers. Sylvia Plath is considered a groundbreaking poet, not only for her role as a pioneer of the genre of confessional poetry, but also for her extraordinary skill in shaping a unique poetic voice. Sylvia Plath explores a variety of dimensions in her extensive poetic repertoire, but shows a pronounced preoccupation with the theme of death. This motif plays a major role in her work and overshadows all other themes. Plath shares this thematic focus with Emily Dickinson, who wrote hundreds of poems centered around the concept of death. Although both poets lived in different eras and dealt with their own psychological problems, they created a vast body of work in which death emerges as a predominant theme.

Sylvia Plath's deep sense of loss over her grandmother's passing is palpably conveyed in her poetry. She portrays her grandmother as a figure of obstinate kindness, someone she yearns to remember perpetually. Yet, as time unfolds, the vividness of her grandmother's memory, much like the house she lived in, gradually blurs into obscurity.

Sylvia Plath, a poet whose life ended in suicide, demonstrates a profound fixation on death. This preoccupation permeates her entire body of work, where she recurrently invokes death in metaphoric expressions. According to Ted Hughes, this incessant meditation on mortality imbues her poetry with a unique and distinctive style. Plath employs motifs of death in both traditional and personal contexts, her inventive approach allowing her to draw upon a multitude of symbols to signify concepts diametrically opposed to each other. Notably, Plath sometimes anthropomorphizes death, interacting with it as if it were a known companion. Aside from her elegiac poems composed in memory of her father's death, she seldom paints death as a horrifying entity. This suggests that Plath harbored no fear of death; on the contrary, she seemed to harbor a persistent longing for it throughout her life.

Sylvia Plath, whose life was overshadowed by psychological turmoil, trauma, and eventual suicidal thoughts, is considered one of the most poignant, controversial, and celebrated literary figures of the 20th century. Her unparalleled creativity was posthumously recognized with the Pulitzer Prize. Working in a variety of genre – fiction, short stories, poetry, and journals – Plath developed a distinctive writing style in which she constantly “censors, transforms, and endlessly rewrites herself” (Rose, 2001, p. 104).

Plath's fascination with the concept of death is clearly reflected throughout her work. Her verse, in which the theme of death recurs, is filled with figurative depictions and imaginative illustrations that breathe life into the inescapable reality of death. As Ted Hughes, her life companion and another respected figure in the poetry world, noted, the incessant reflections on death give her poetry a distinctive and unmistakable style.

In her poetic explorations, Plath ingeniously employs the motifs of death, not only in traditional contexts that anyone could relate to, but also in deeply personal narratives that offer insight into her own psyche. Her unique approach allows her to use a range of symbolic elements to suggest concepts that stand in stark contrast to each other. A fascinating aspect of Plath's literary craft is her tendency to humanize death. She dialogs with death as if it were an intimate confidant, a familiar companion on her life's journey.

Aside from the poignant poems she wrote after her father's death, Plath rarely portrays death as a terrible being or fearsome adversary. Instead, her works reveal an unorthodox perspective on death that is free of horror or apprehension. The poet's abiding longing for death, expressed in her verse, shows that Plath was not afraid of mortality. Rather, she seemed to welcome it, indicating a longing for death that permeates her existence.

Sylvia Plath's life and her preoccupation with death, as reflected in her poems, essentially form a narrative that bears witness to her personal struggles and her profound engagement with the existential realities of life and death.

Değerlendirme	İki Dış Hakem / Çift Taraflı Körleme
Etik Beyan	Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde bilimsel ve etik ilkelere uyulduğu ve yararlanılan tüm çalışmaların kaynakçada belirtildiği beyan olunur.
Benzerlik Taraması	Yapıldı – İthenticate
Etik Bildirim	itobiad@itobiad.com
Çıkar Çatışması	Çıkar çatışması beyan edilmemiştir.
Finansman	Bu araştırmayı desteklemek için dış fon kullanılmamıştır.
Peer-Review	Double anonymized - Two External
Ethical Statement	It is declared that scientific and ethical principles have been followed while carrying out and writing this study and that all the sources used have been properly cited.
Plagiarism Checks	Yes - İthenticate
Conflicts of Interest	The author(s) has no conflict of interest to declare.
Complaints	itobiad@itobiad.com
Grant Support	The author(s) acknowledge that they received no external funding in support of this research.

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