The Willing Domesticity of Sylvia Plath: A Rebuttal of the "Feminist" Label

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ABSTRACT: The difficulty of living in a society for an individual who is in some way different from the norm or somewhat nonconformist is a subject thoroughly explored not only in modern literature but in literature throughout the ages. In this paper I consider the domestic thread remained in Plath's works. Despite the fact that many people knew her as a person who shunned her responsibilities as a housewife, I am going to prove the opposite of what is said. One of the roles Plath is searching for is encompassing all the aspects of her multifaceted life. To her, complete devotion is no betrayal of herself as a woman. It would make her whole as a person. Since she would be a wife, she wishes to be a vibrant, nature-connected woman whose setting clearly would make her a symbol of fertile womanhood. Despite her own emotional difficulties, the speaker presents herself as a responsible mother, a life nurturer and identified strongly with the domesticity of a woman. She loves her baby and desires to be a wife. To her, pregnancy plays the role of meaningfulness. Her suffering from pregnancy is in the affirmative side. It is a warning to her about the dangers of life in the modern society. At the end to Plath Husbandry, Children, House, Fame are more significant in her life than the other notions such as feminism and post- feminism.

Key Words: Nonconformist, Domestic Thread, Fertile Womanhood, Multifaceted Life, Pregnancy, Modern Society, Feminism

INTRODUCTION

The difficulties of living in a society for an individual who is in some way different from the norm or somewhat nonconformist is a subject thoroughly explored not only in modern literature but in literature throughout the ages. In this paper I consider the domestic thread remained in Plath's works. Despite the fact that many people knew her as a person who shunned her responsibilities as a housewife, I am going to prove the opposite of what is said. In order to justify my position, I will elaborate on the subject through a discussion of her criticism of the feminist establishment in American society, her willingness to find a mate to fulfill her needs, her escape from social frustration, and her relationship with her family members, her optimistic attitudes and her genuine motherly tone in a modern society. In order to justify my position, I will elaborate on the subject through a discussion of her criticism of the feminist establishment in American society, her willingness to find a mate to fulfill her needs, her escape from social frustration, and her relationship with her family members, her optimistic attitudes and her genuine motherly tone in a modern society.

Two things seem clear as we trace in Plath's poems as well as in her life: the eschatological paradise and redemption (to go back to her home). Endemic imagery and metaphor for searching the purity are found in different voices. To her, the quest for simplicity or lucidity is of great significance. This is the eschatological paradise. Her simpler nature poems hold out a kind of hope, resolution and promise. And this is the redemption.

One of the roles Plath is searching for is encompassing all the aspects of her multifaceted life. To her, complete devotion is no betrayal of herself as a woman. It would make her whole as a person. Since she would be a wife, she wishes to be a vibrant, nature-connected woman whose setting clearly would make her a symbol of fertile womanhood. We can find a hint of a strong feeling of her rejoicing life. So she refutes those frustrations which ruin her life. She is more hopeful about her future life. Jong (1975) declares that she writes in one of her 'Letters Home'; I shall be one of the few women poets in the world who is a fully rejoicing woman, not a bitter of frustrated or wrapped man-imitator, which ruins most of them in the end. I am a woman and glad of it and my songs will be of fertility and the earth.

Plath is searching for favorable sexual desires which are deserving of a housewife and that is why she likes to have a desirable control in her life. So 'Motherhood' to Sylvia Plath is considered into different notions such as housewife, feel of serenity, responsibility and security, have a potential powerful mate, pregnancy with
meaningful meaning, domesticity. She loves her life and doesn't like to demolish it. She urges to have an ideal life. Two things seem clear as we trace in Plath's poems as well as in her life: the eschatological paradise and redemption (to go back to her home). Endemic imagery and metaphor for searching the purity are found in different voices. To her, the quest for simplicity or lucidity is of great significance.

MOTHERHOOD VS FEMINIST

Plath has accepted some roles of a housewife. She is longing to find a person who can help her to function as a real mother. She would like to have a sense of security which is created by a being a real mother. Naturally Plath is going to play the role of a house wife. So she doesn't like to be exceptional .In her mind, she has a common sense about the real wife. Thus, she wishes to have a common life.

Plath has accepted some roles of a housewife. She is longing to find a person who can help her to function as a real mother. A sense of security which is created by a powerful mate enables her to write well. Plath (1975) writes in her Journal in in the 'Mirror'; "I am not cruel, only truthful; The eye of a little god". Plath (1975) says that I must find a story potential powerful mate who can counter my vibrant dynamic. I must admire him Respect and admiration must equate with the object of my love. So she likes to be comfortable in her life through having a husband.

Plath is not self-indulgent. She escapes from this trap with ease and puts the self-pitying mass of confessional poets to shame. This is really the woman's vision of redemptive love which is triumphant. As Leib (1973) remarks that she [Plath] may cry the annulment of her personality as in 'The Detective'; she may speak of the loss of love or the loss of innocence. Therefore, she is intending for something pure to be revived.

Motherhood has its artistic tradition in prose and may quickly be vulgarized in poetry. She has a feeling of superiority. Naturally Plath is going to play the role of a house wife. So she doesn't like to be exceptional .In her mind, she has a common sense about the real wife. Thus, she wishes to have a common life. Oates (1973) analyzes that she is relieved of the miraculous pain and mystery of child birth and wants only for herself and for her child 'the clear bright colors of the nursery/ the talking ducks, the happy lamps'. She meditates; "I do not will [My baby] to be exceptional, It is the exception that interests the devil.I wills him to be common".

There is an integration of the self and its experience, the self and its field of perception. Human consciousness to Plath is always a blessing in the natural world. To her, pregnancy plays the role of meaningfulness. Her suffering from pregnancy is in the affirmative side. It is a warning to her about the dangers of life in the modern society. She loves her life and doesn't like to demolish it. She urges to have an ideal life. As Romano (1974) declares that the poem 'Lady Lazarus' is not, in the end, autobiographical enough. It tells us something about how much she suffers from pregnancy because she is a responsible woman. And this is true of Plath's presentation of her wife which is the recurrent theme of her poetry.

For Plath 'Imperfection' is always associated with sterility and barrenness. Therefore, the distress that 'Imperfection' demands becomes a source of confusion for the poet. Thus, she is searching for perfection through her moral images and likes to be in the bosom of her family. McClathy, (1974)states that the poem 'The Munich Mannrequis' presents an ambiguous image of those bloodless idols to self, the relentless hunt for a still completion, a condition beyond 'the agony tendon' of morality, beyond the Shelleyanveils of life.

Despite her own emotional difficulties, the speaker presents herself as a responsible mother, a life nurturer and identified strongly with the domesticity of a woman. In New York 'Doreen', one of the female characters in Bell Jar with her devil may care attitude which symbolizes social and sexual sophistication. 'Betsy', an all American girl from 'Kansas', placidly accepts the stereotypes about women. She wants to break stereotypical boundaries and sexual double standards. Such society does not make it easy for her. But finally she has managed to solve her problems. Also she longs for her perfection that is her love for her life. She is afraid of getting married artificially because she has been looking for an ideal life. She is also being tortured for not becoming a responsible woman. Therefore, she is deeply involved in finding herself as a real mother. Such an idea is evidenced by the following excerpts from a diary entry in 'Letters Home' by Plath (1975):"I still do not know myself. Perhaps I never will...I am afraid of getting older. I am afraid of getting married.Spare me from cooking three meals a day- spare me from the relentless cage of routine and rote. I want to be free- free to know people and their backgrounds- free to move to different parts of the world......Never, never, never will I reach the perfection I long for with all my soul- my paintings, my poems, my stories...There will come at time when I must face myself at last.Even now I dread the big choices with loom up in my life.What do I want? I do not know. Oh, I love now, with all my fears and forebodings".

Plath seems to have been so preoccupied from the beginning with the brother/father and husband/lover relationships. Such a distinction has nothing to do with protecting 'real people' but only to distinguish poetry as crafts from autobiography. This distinction also led her to mingle her experiences with what she dreamt in order to be more serious about her future life. Newman(1970) criticizes the claim that this is not unimportant, for the irony and grief of Plath's poetry issues from the tension between her imagination and experience, the urge to
make them one again: Breath, that is the first thing. Something is breathing. My own breath? The breath of my mother? No; something else, something larger, father, more serious and wearier.

The breath is both the echo of her future voice that is the possibility of domesticity and her first sense of 'Otherness' in a variety of guises. Plath is enthusiastic about her family life. She is going to share with her children, her beliefs, her husband, her mother and her brother because she is going to have a good relationship with the family members. And this is the real meaning of a life to her mind. Plath (1977) narrates that she has held concerning the importance of aiming and directing her life toward an idealistic god in order to build a strong inner life; "When mother goes away from me, I miss her as much as can be. And when I go away from mother, she misses me, so does brother.

She is a very different woman in the last period of her life. She is using a historical background to explain herself. It is the historical vision within her that makes the flux of her compensation. Plath desires to bring her own life cycle to complete fruition in motherhood. So she reflects her deeper self through her prophetic voice and her past experiences. Newman (1970) remarks that in 'Daddy' and 'Bell Jars' it seems she would make a definite effort to move beyond the anguish of the self, towards the establishment of a new editorial even prophetic voice. It remains at the center of her works, one more powerful.

The natural symbol of life which expresses emotion can have a power to make a woman more than she is in and of herself. The moon, for example, as a natural phenomenon provides inspiration for her. This reveals a domestic life. We see that the moon is a suitable object for giving secured emotion to Plath because of its circular shape, the most perfect of all. And it signifies the cycle of the family which Plath means. Lavers (1970) says that such are the aspects which are repeatedly stressed in poems like as 'Medusa', 'Edge', 'The Moon and The Yew Tree', 'Childless Woman', 'The Rival', 'The Manne Quins', 'Paralytic', 'Edge', etc. and their relevance to an understanding of the poet herself is unquestionable, and is in fact stated in 'The Moon and The Yew Tree'; 'The moon is my mother.'

Plath appears to have suffered some great catastrophe in her life, and she miscarry a baby in 'Three Women'. She loves her baby and desires to be a wife. In 'Three Women' the Girl is unmarried, and the secretary has a bloodless relationship with her husband. But she has thought of her baby. Her intense desire is to be a beloved or a loving wife and perhaps even stronger. He also mentions that the wife herself never says anything at all about the father of her child- this male baby is her only 'Lover'. The loving wife's messages are elicited in her poem 'Little Fugue'; " I survive the while, Arranging my morning, these are my fingers; this, my baby.

Plath refutes feminist notions such as love of a man, rising children, creation of what she could create to leave her the dual stamps of womanhood, the stereotype and sex wit in indelible imprint on her world. Because she is going to make herself a symbol of fertile womanhood, Plath refutes the artificial women who function as a doll in the modern society. She longs to be a real woman. Her poems show the need to escape the frustrations a woman endures while doing her responsibilities amid the hive-like frenzy of demands from others. For example, Zivley (1975) in 'The Bee-Keeper's Daughter' and 'Wintering' remarks that Plath imagines such freedom and portrays the serenity of virginity. In 'Sting' she also enjoys two people's companionship as mere honey drudges.

Two things seem clear as we trace in Plath's poems as well as in her life: the eschatological paradise and redemption (to go back to her home). Endemic imagery and metaphor for searching the purity are found in different voices. To her, the quest for simplicity or lucidity is of great significance. This is the eschatological paradise. Her simpler nature poems hold out a kind of hope, resolution and promise. And this is the redemption. Certain mother-child poems have great transforming power. Scheerer (1976) comments that it is brought to a notation that Plath always sought purification, redemption in the dynamic, and the active and yet the purifying acts in her poems as in her life. To her, redemption is to go back to her family life. Therefore her victory is also located in her home body; In 'Child [in Winter Tree] the speaker comes closer to God in the clear beauty of her baby's eye. She also sees in that same eye the reflection of her happily cosmos.

Plath finds the balance between the responsibilities of single motherhood, the demands and desires of her art. She is a kindred spirit at work. She begins to write before her babies had awakened for the day. And still, the domestic thread remains through her desired balanced art. Lavers (1970) says that this seems to be the subject of 'The Night Dances' poem. The uniqueness of the living flesh is placed in her scale of values, a priori above the cold impersonal, mathematics of poems. Therefore, she is able to successfully articulate her precise control thought.

Ariel, Plath's major posthumously published book of Poems, begins and ends in extremist or in extrema (Mathematical item). This shows her subservience to her home life. For instance, in the 'Morning Song' the opening poem begins with the word 'Love. In 'Words' the concluding poem ends in the word 'life'. The titles of her poems, the two mathematical / prominent items are love and life. Oberg (1978) illustrates that Ted Hughes attempted to detail this sense in her; "The world of her poetry is one of emblematic visionary events, mathematical symmetries, clairvoyance, metamorphoses, and something resembling total biological and radical.
recall. We see that she is full of pure light, joy and happiness through mathematical symmetries. This serves as an assertion of her approval and even tenderness in her own life.

Plath is searching for favorable sexual desires which are deserving of a housewife and that is why she likes to have a desirable control in her life. ‘Daddy’ is a highly controlled narration of her father’s effect on her which then emerges with the influence of her husband. ‘Fever 103’ portrays a purifying event likewise. Plath uses an image of sexual purity as a desirable quality for a woman. She emphasizes the necessity of compromise. She is going to show the best life she needs. Martin (1987) cites that in ‘Lady Lazarus’ which is similar to ‘Daddy’, she is good at her profession due to her rightly sexual control; “she has reached a kind of reconciliation with herself. She is more hopeful about her future life. I am a writer. I am a genius of a writer, I have it in me. I am writing the best poems of my life, they will make my name”.

Plath’s sensibility is useful like the young woman in ‘the Tour’. Bedient (1979) narrates that it addresses the maiden aunt in all of us and bids us to look into our hearts. The whole strength lays in her reaction, in her cry that is the innocence of the soul; “why am I being hurt? Husband, Children, House, Fame”. She is to go after them as one pursues the fully desirable, the approved. The frequent superlatives in her letters- the quarters and half-dollars of ‘amazing’, ’marvelous’, ’happiest’; are part of the dues she pays to the American dream.

Plath is an undertaking painstaking woman. To her, getting married and being a famous poet, and becoming both a mother and a writer are the crux of her life. But her problem is especially the fact that she is not granted the luxury of a double life. Plath is a woman who appears to have suffered some great catastrophe that is not being able to find a pure man. Hawthorn (1983) criticizes that Plath suffers an internal death of her own without her pure man. This is what ‘The Bell Jar’ makes particularly clear; “It might be nice to be pure and then to marry a pure man, but what if he suddenly confessed he wasn’t pure after we were married, the way Buddy Willard had? I couldn’t stand the idea of a woman having to have a single pure life and a man being able to have a double life, one pure and one not”.

By accepting the need for love, she exposes herself to the pain and humiliation of a brutal persecution. Plath desires the traditional / homelike associations of love with tenderness, respect and beauty. Even though they are accompanied with chastisement, she loves the villagers with their primitive life, because they love their lives, and they are happy in their lives. Love is now associated with brutality, contempt and sadistic ugliness. Jones (1970) illustrates that although love does bring happiness through torture, it imposes her to think about womanhood in a paradoxical way; “Every woman adores a Fascist, The boot in the face, the brute heart of a brute like you.And the villagers never liked you. They are dancing and stamping on you”.

After her split with her husband, Plath does not vengefully shake off the trappings of domestic life. But she sinks into herself, to some extent, into a reasonable mother and writer. What she needs is both a mother and a writer. Her final poem ‘Letters Home’ shows that she has gone to feel more natural in the role of an artist, i.e. a creator. Bundten (1983) analyzes that she accomplishes her goals as a writer who has an actual womanly character. In contrast to her early apologies over a small- time career, she speaks with assurance; “I am a writer and that is all I want to do. I amaze myself. It is my work that does it, my sense of myself as a writer-Living apart from Ted is wonderful- I am no longer in his shadow, and it is heaven to be liked for myself alone, knowing what I want”.

Plath criticizes social conventions by virtue of an evasion of what is typical and representative of her life and art. She is the woman of her century who sees the problem, the situation and tries to be a woman poet. And she logically deals with the obstacles in the environment which leads her to incompleteness. The frustration she feels is like a stillborn baby who seems lifeless, limp and dead. She points out the faults of her society for she is going to find the typical life. This is why Plath wishes to be survived as a real woman. Apart from Ted Hughes, she loves her family life too.Therefore; she knows what she wanted to be. He also writes that the problem is the predominantly male lyric tradition, which puts the woman poet in a double bind. She denies her own experience, if she writes as a woman.

In ‘The Colossus’; Plath learns to portray her putative imaginative failure in a language which is so complex and redeems her voice to paradoxically relieve her anxiety momentarily. The complex language signifies her inner complex but nobody could understand it. Plath (1982) in her book notes that in ‘The Colossus’ like ‘Snake charmer’ inscribed female defeat, it also encodes the survival of female difference and the victory of her voice; It’s worse than a barnyard, Acres of weedy brow that must be scrabbled with pails of lybsol.

Plath is optimistic about her domestic life. Because she would like to spend a lifetime trying to create her new life, her intention is to write words that would bear love and would have life. ‘Do’ is the recurrent word and has a hypnotic effect on the readers as a word and as an action. Oberg (1978) declares that these senses of the word and phrase are commonly linked with the recital of the marriage vow. Marriage imagery is resplendent in Plath's poetry. “‘Do’ also is punned upon, especially in her poem, ‘Daddy’. The German, familiar ‘du’ or you’d, ‘du’, ‘you’- they even rhyme) of intimate address and love songs is recalled, almost as a reminder of the historical and personal perversions to which love and action can be subjected.
Plath has a willing to return to her former state of being a householder in her life. Through ideal images, she presents her womanhood voice. She is enthusiastic about returning to her real life. She is fond of her life. Therefore, she wants to be loved under sureness and security of the life. Plath (1977) writes that linked to modern poetry she looks to striking image for the authority of her voice. ‘Death & Co’ as one of the Ariel poems establishes itself from the opening line with a matter-of-fact sureness and security of life. This is the typical of her later work; two, of course there are two. It seems perfectly natural now; the one who never looks up, whose eye are lidded, And balled, like Blake, Who exhibits. The other does that, His hair long and applausive. Bastard, masturbating a glitter, He wants to be loved. Somebody’s alone for.

Plath’s approach to her willing domesticity is appreciable. First, she believes herself a wife. Second, she wills to have a warm and a happy life. To her mind, this will be fulfilled when she goes back to the warm bosom of her family. Stevenson (1989) remarks that praise at home and prizes at school are threads she has already adeptly woven into a ‘Web of Happiness’; She instinctively knew to be redeemed. Sylvia Plath was particularly proud about her lovely life in her assertion; I thought that I could not be hurt; I thought that I must surely be. Impervious to suffering-Immune to mental pain, or agony, My world was warm with April sun. The voice “Three Women” is a kind of Palth’s strategy which presents her achievements in her personal life. It reflects Plath’s self-consciousness of being a real mother in a dramatic situation. What she creates in this poem is believable and forceful. Therefore, she loves her life to recreate new things. She is ready to follow her own life.

The speaker is a wife. The setting as Plath directs is a maternity ward and round about. She feels relaxed by saying ‘I am ready’. This is a safety for her to continue her home life. Barnard, (1978) writes that the significant voice, as we come to know it, could express the mature calm of ‘I am ready’. When I walk out; I am a great event, I do not have to think, or even rehearse. What happens in me will happen without attention; the pleasant stands on the hill; He is arranging his brown feathers, I cannot help smiling at what it is I know; Leaves and petals attend me. I am ready.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, for Plath, the most important things are her poems, the love of father, the fruition of motherhood and the blooming womb. We can say that the symbolic net which Plath casts on the world of perception has above all a personal value. We must also consent to a partial identification with her if we are to enjoy her poems to the full and even to understand them. Ultimately, her works stand on stylistic merits alone.

We also result that Plath accomplishes her goals as a writer who has an actual womanly character. The ease of composition to which she has testified shows that the conscious processing of her maternal view is the felicitous inventions which perfectly render the finest intentions. So her writings speak of a woman who does want to be fully a wife and to bring her own life cycle to full complete fruition in motherhood.

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