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A STRUGGLE FOR AN IDENTITY: DOUBLENESS IN THE LIFE AND WORK OF SYLVIA PLATH.

By

Ana Maria Martin Castillejos

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

A STRUGGLE FOR AN IDENTITY:
DOUBLENESS IN THE LIFE AND WORK OF
SYLVIA PLATH.

By

Ana Maria Martin Castillejos

This thesis explores the internal and external factors that contributed to Sylvia Plath's mental split. It also shows how her upbringing, education and marriage and the fact of living in the 50's produced a life of turmoil that is reflected in her writings.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I particularly thank my adviser, professor Leonora Smith, for her help and continuous encouragement. As a foreign student in Michigan State University, I have found it particularly difficult to write this thesis as it is much longer than the papers I had written so far during my graduate study in the United States. Besides, to write in a language that is not your native one is always a challenge and one always wonders if the readers can understand what you are trying to explain.

I would also like to express my gratitude to some of my friends who patiently read the manuscript and gave me interesting insights that I generally included in my thesis. These generous readers are the following: Shashi Pathak, Monika Fleischmann, Paul Conway, Cathy Swender and Divya Alok Sundaram. I also thank Adrian Gaskins for his emotional support and sincere friendship; as my best American friend he helped me very much to know his country.

Finally, I am very grateful as well to my friend Frank Bramkamp whose help was indispensable in making this thesis a reality.

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INTRODUCTION

[Summer 1953] Letter to an Over-grown, Over-protected, Scared, Spoiled Baby:

This is the immediate time for a decision: whether or not to go to Harvard Summer School. . .

. . .

I AM NOT GOING TO HARVARD SUMMER SCHOOL.
I will learn shorthand, typing, and write and read and write and read, and talk to myself about attitudes, see the Aldriches and neighbors, and be nice and friendly and outgoing, and forget my damn ego-centered self in trying to learn and understand about what makes life rich and what is most important.

You are an inconsistent and very frightened hypocrite: you wanted time to think, to find out about yourself, your ability to write, and now that you have it: practically 3 months of godawful time, you are paralyzed, shocked, thrown into a nausea, a stasis. You are plunged so deep in your own very little whirlpool of negativism . . . Your mind is incapable of thinking. . . . THINK CONSTRUCTIVELY. . . You are frozen mentally--scared to get going, eager to crawl back to the womb. . . (The Journals 82-86)

Friday, June 20. [1958] . . . I go suspended in the void, the vacuum, the exhaust of the year's teaching machine, which speeds off clicking and purring. I must, again for the first time. . . and for the longest time, tightly and creatively structure my days -fill myself with reading and writing projects- keep a clean and well-run house. . . (The Journals 241)

. . . I envision myself as writing in the morning and reading widely and being a writing-wife. I am simply not a career woman, and the sacrifice of energy and lifeblood I'm making for this job is all out of proportion to the good I'm doing in it. My ideal of being a good teacher, writing a book on the side, and being an entertaining homemaker, cook and wife is rapidly evaporating. I want to write first, and being kept apart from writing, from giving myself a chance to really devote myself to developing this "spectacular promise" that the literary editors write me about when they reject my stories, is really very hard. (Letters Home 329)

On August 25, 1953 a student at Smith College in Boston, was found in the /cellar of her house in semicomatose condition. She had taken forty sleeping pills. Driven to McLean Hospital she underwent shock treatment which made her improve dramatically. Years later and at her request, she held private sessions with her McLean psychiatrist "to help alleviate some of her emotional pain", as Paul Alexander describes in his book, Rough Magic (224). Nevertheless, the treatment did not help the patient to overcome completely her characteristic bouts of depression. About ten years after her first suicide attempt, on the morning of February 11, 1963, Sylvia Plath was found dead with her head in the oven of her apartment in 23 Fitzroy Road, London.

Much criticism has been written about Sylvia Plath's complex personality. Nevertheless, most critics usually focus on a few specific aspects to try to explain the poet's mental split. In this paper I will try to bring together different ideas that I have developed from my readings on the subject. I will also try to emphasize that Plath's condition as a woman is crucial to understand her work as a writer: the problems she faced in order to "steal" some time to write, the way she projected in her writings the disadvantages of being a woman in the 50's and the manner she expressed her complex feelings towards men. All these factors are intricately linked to her identity as a woman. The internal and external factors in the poet's life that will be discussed below are essential for a thorough understanding of Plath's complex character and writings, her persistent depression and her subsequent death. These are the following: her problematic family background, her education at Smith College, a very traditional institution at the moment, her academic experience at Cambridge and life in England, her marriage to the writer Ted Hughes and her life in the 50's.

After presenting what are the most important circumstances that gradually weakened the writer's ability to cope with her problems and life, I will explore how Plath's schizophrenic tendencies are very much accentuated in her last book of poems, Ariel, where Plath practically announces her ultimate death. In fact, the persistent presence of

certain elements (mirrors, shadows, reflections) in the poet's imagery, and her obsessive desire to fuse with other selves outside her own (her husband, her children, her horse, Ariel, etc.) reflect Plath's complex identity and show her desire to attain stability and gain support from the outside world.

All these elements combined contributed to shape Plath's complex identity. We will also see how the writer's efforts to built her own identity were not totally unconscious. Her extensive readings on doubleness and her thesis on the "double" in Dostoevsky early on in her academic life show her deep interest on the subject. As a result, she was familiar with many writings on that topic and all these readings focused on the unconscious had, without any doubt, a significant effect on the way the writer both saw herself and expressed her thoughts.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

Plath's parents, Otto Plath and Aurelia Schober first met at the Boston University College of Practical Arts and Letters where Otto was teaching an advanced course in German and Aurelia was his student-admirer. Otto had emigrated to the States at the age of 16 from a Prussian town in the Polish Corridor. Admitted to Harvard, he earned a doctorate in zoology and entomology. On the other hand, Aurelia was a second-generation Austrian whose father had emigrated to the States from Vienna. Otto was 43 and Aurelia 22 when they got married on January 4, 1932.

Very soon and at her husband's request, Aurelia gave up teaching at Melrose High School in Massachusetts to become a full-time housewife. Shortly afterwards she also became a mother. In fact, Sylvia was born scarcely ten months after, on October 27, 1932, followed by Warren on April 27, 1935. The Plaths had only two children. For the sake of peace in marriage, Aurelia was forced to accept a secondary, wifely role.

Therefore, she became his assistant, his secretary-typist, forgetting her own professional aspirations. In fact, because Otto was not particularly good at writing, Aurelia did the job and, once she had finished it, Otto checked the text for factual accuracy. For example, when Otto Plath wrote his article "Insect Societies", Aurelia, even while having to take care of Sylvia, took notes from the background material that her husband selected (about seventy books), wrote a rough draft with them and after Otto wrote a second draft, she edited and polished the manuscript. Despite Aurelia's exhausting job the honors for the article were for her husband (Alexander 22). This makes us remember again Plath's lines in "The Applicant": "A living doll, everywhere you look/ It can sew, it can cook,/ It can talk, talk, talk.// It works, there is nothing wrong with it." (33-36). Sylvia Plath expressed her fear of repeating the role of female servant in The Bell Jar, her only novel: "One morning listening to Dodo Conway's baby carriage would drive me crazy. And I made a point of never living in the same house with my mother for more than a week." (The Bell Jar 97).

To make things even more difficult for Aurelia, Otto Plath died of "diabetes mellitus" on November 1940, only nine years after their marriage. Lack of money obliged Aurelia to look for a job. She ended up teaching Medical Secretarial Procedures, contributing, in that way, to increase the number of women who, like her, earned their living by "serving men". Therefore, her role in the workplace replicated her work at home.

By means of her alter ego from The Bell Jar, Esther Greenwood, Plath' phrases her rebellion against her mother and also against society's traditional expectations towards women. Esther/Sylvia says:\"The trouble was, I hated the idea of serving men in any way. I wanted to dictate my own thrilling letters" (61). Evidently, Esther does not want to serve men. She wants to be her own woman, but this idea makes her feel inadequate. She is not comfortable with her own thoughts as she realizes that they are not conventional) but, at the same time, she does not want to be like her mother or like her fiancee's mother:

educated women who dropped out of college to marry their professors, settle down in a quiet town and take good care of their families. Here Plath expresses the impossibility of picturing herself taking on a submissive and dependent role in life.

The same idea is illustrated in The Bell Jar by means of the character of Dodo Conway, a Catholic who studied at Barnard and then married an architect. Dodo is expecting her seventh child. Naturally, she has dropped any possible job just to take care of her numerous offspring. Esther Greenwood/Sylvia Plath hates the idea of becoming another Dodo.

Just as Aurelia's submission to her husband would be very influential for her daughter, her parents' demands for perfection of their children would also prove significant for the writer. As a young child, before her father's early death, Sylvia and her brother Warren were encouraged by their mother "to perform" in front of their father, showing him their progress in school and life. Probably, like most kids, they would anxiously expect their father's final words of approval:

> . . . after she and Otto had eaten their own, separate supper downstairs, Aurelia allowed Sylvia and Warren to come downstairs and spend thirty minutes with their father. These occasions, the only time during the day that the entire family assembled, had a theatrical quality. With Otto as their audience, the children became performers. . . . When the children completed their brief revue, Otto hugged each affectionately--otherwise, he seldom touched his children--and Aurelia quickly put them to bed. (My emphasis) (Alexander 28)

Thus, the children's "progress" was affectionately rewarded by their otherwise cold and distant father.

From a young age, Sylvia Plath needed to be different, to stand out and improve herself. In fact, her great will to write would be fueled by her mother's ambition and it would eventually lead Sylvia to move away from the conventional values of the

time, including Aurelia's. Plath wrote passionately: "I want, I think, to be omniscient . . . I think I would like to call myself 'The girl who wanted to be God.' " (qtd. in Stevenson 16). Plath's need for perfection would eventually make her reject her (she thought) "mediocre" identity trying to imitate much more "brilliant" writers (Robert Lowell, Theodore Roethke, Ted Hughes). Her inclination to lean excessively on the people she loved or admired (almost all of them male), at whom she looked at herself like in a "magic mirror". Therefore, when these loved people deserted her, as her father had, due to death, unfaithfulness, etc., Plath's entire world became a crisis and with it, her whole conception of her own identity.

Freudian theories are helpful to explain Plath's circumstances and life as Freud emphasized the importance of the father figure during childhood in an individual's life. If we try to analyze Plath's life in Freudian terms we see that the writer's childhood was stolen very early by her father's death. As a result, Plath, hated her father because he died and made the whole family unhappy; Linda Wagner-Martin tells us how the poet even declared her rebellion against God for letting her father die. Plath also resented her father because, after his death, Aurelia Plath had to work very hard and was unable to spend much time with her children. After Otto Plath's death, the poet lacked a male role. Though her mother took on the financial role of a male, and though she was ambitious for Sylvia's future, she did not serve as the kind of model which would give Sylvia ways of dealing effectively with the realities of her own life.

When her father passed away Sylvia, the eldest child in the family, seemed to take on some of the attributes of the father figure in the family. This is one way of thinking about her identity crisis: she looked at life from a woman's body but with a man's mentality.

Plath also resented her mother because she never publicly grieved for her husband and because she never allowed her children to see their father dead. This notion

of protecting children from unpleasantries was characteristic of 1950's' America and, as we will later see, this discontinuity between the difficult and complex reality and the more pleasant but fraudulent surface became a persistent theme in Plath's life and work. The Plath children were not allowed to become fully conscious of the fact of their father's real death and of the reality of being orphans. Plath writes in The Bell Jar:

> My mother hadn't let us come to his funeral because we were only children then, and he had died in the hospital, so the graveyard and even his death had always seemed unreal to me. (135)

Also, while looking at her father's grave, she says:

> A fine drizzle started drifting down from the grey sky, and I grew very depressed.
>
> I couldn't find my father anywhere. (136)

Esther Greenwood/Sylvia Plath speaks of her father as if he was not dead, as if she had not given up the possibility of finding him alive.

At the same time, after her husband's death Aurelia was not able to spend much time with her children because, unlike most other U.S. women in the 1950's, she needed to hold a full time job. Her mother's lack of affection would make Plath try to please her constantly to get the attention she needed.

Plath's ceaseless need to get her mother's attention and approval would probably derive as well from the writer's excessive psychological fusion with her since childhood. Therefore, Plath's necessary differentiation of self to get a state of increased individuality and independence was especially difficult. She, therefore, was constantly struggling between two opposite feelings: her extreme love for her mother and dependency on Aurelia's approval, and her hatred towards her mother as she realized her own inability to

break off the umbilical cord between both. Plath wrote the following on the afternoon of October 16th, 1962:

> Dear Mother,
> . . . I need help very much now. . . I am writing the best poems of my life; they will make my name. . .
> I 'm getting an unlisted phone put in as soon as possible so I can call out; you shall have the number. (Letters Home 468-9)

It is evident that Plath wanted to give her mother her phone number in order to mantain the suffocating connection that had kept them fused throughout their lives. Nevertheless, on the morning of the same day, she had just written her famous poem "Medusa":

> My mind winds to you
> Old barnacled umbilicus, Atlantic cable,
> keeping itself, it seems, in a state of miraculous repair
>
> In any case, you are always there,
> Tremulous breath at the end of the line. . . . (13-17)

Here Plath seems to resent the excessive involvement of her mother in her own life, her constant and asphyxiating presence.

Emotionally distanced from her father and mother as a child, Plath would have feelings of hatred toward both of them. At the same time, not being able to express her real feelings, she would internalize her guilt. This would cause her depression which manifested itself at the end of her adolescence, as the writer tried to rebuilt her own identity.

Plath was only able to express her profound hatred towards her parents at the very end of her life, in poems like "Daddy" and "Medusa":

There's a stake in your fat black heart

. . .

Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through. (76, 80)

Off, off, eely tentacle!

There is nothing between us. (40-41)

ACADEMIC LIFE AT SMITH COLLEGE

Sylvia Plath studied at Smith College, an institution "dedicated to fulfilling a moral but unrevolutionary social obligation to American womanhood" (Stevenson 24). The college was a prime example of an upper-class cultural institution. Though it took the education of women very seriously, it-as it reflected the culture of the times-prepared women to take their roles as wives of well-to-do men. It was conceived on liberal, ladylike principles and women were not expected to take "unwomanly roles" in affairs of government, business, art and sciences except as "volunteers" or hostesses, appendages to their husbands. During Sylvia's undergraduate years, most of the faculty members at Smith were men. Smith girls, educated for careers but prepared for marriage, were unquestionably valuable on the nuptial market; they were, like Aurelia Schober herself, trained to help their husbands with the kind of service that Plath's mother had provided for her spouse. They were trained to be submissive and complacent helpers rather than equal partners.

In the commencement address delivered by the Smith's Governor Adlai Stevenson in May 1955, Stevenson stated that women's unanimous vocation was to be wives and mothers who would eventually use their education to influence their husbands and children in a positive way: "Men", he said, "are under tremendous pressure to adopt the narrow view", therefore, women had to help them to resist it (qtd. in Stevenson 24).

This vision of a woman as part of a divided whole, as her husband's "better half," institutionalizes the desperate incompleteness which eventually left Plath bereft.

Five years later, when Plath was trying to be a successful writer, the situation at Smith had not changed: in an article of The New York Times published on January 3, 1960, its author, the President of Smith College at that time, complained: "there is a 60 per cent dropout of women students before graduation and most of this is due to their early marriage and almost immediate proliferation of the species." (Janeway 506). In the same article, a professor lamented the terrible waste represented by the education of women when even the most intelligent left the classes to get married and have children.

Years later, Sylvia Plath complained in an essay that the American educational system during the Fifties did a poor job and that there was no place in the American culture for the artist (Wagner-Martin 83). Probably this clear conviction in Plath's mind would contribute powerfully to her decision of leaving the United States looking for a country where she had more opportunities as an artist.

On the other hand, the Smith years were also a time of enervating emotional turbulence for the writer. She was trying to decide what kind of life she wanted. She knew she wanted to be a great writer but she was conscious that she was not prepared for that yet. She "needed experience" (The Bell Jar 99). Plath explains by means of her character, Esther Greenwood, that she could not be prepared to be a good writer as she had not experienced basic and very important experiences in life such as having a love affair or a baby, or seeing somebody die (she had not even seen her own father after he was dead). At the same time, she thought that, as a woman of the Fifties she should marry and become a mother, but she had not yet found the right man, and besides, she could not imagine herself living a life as limited and dependent as her mother's.

Plath's anxiety about her necessity to choose among different possible roles is very well illustrated in The Bell Jar by the fig's tree metaphor that appears in the novel. Esther/Sylvia explains her mental confusion in these terms:

> I saw my life branching out before me like the green fig tree in the story. From the tip of every branch, like a fat purple fig, a wonderful future beckoned and winked. One fig was a husband and a happy home and children, and another fig was a famous poet and another fig was a brilliant professor, . . . , and Europe and Africa and South America, and another fig was Constantin and Socrates and Attila and a pack of other lovers with queer names . . .
> I saw myself sitting in the crotch of this fig tree, starving to death, just because I couldn't make up my mind which of the figs I would choose. I wanted each and every one of them, but choosing one meant losing all the rest, and, as I sat there, unable to decide, the figs began to wrinkle and go black, and, one by one, they plopped to the ground at my feet (83).

Plath was torn between choices for the direction of her life. For example, she did not know if she should give priority to her personal or to her professional life. This indecision lead her to physical and mental paralysis: incapacity to move but also inability to think and write. This tendency to creativity drought would torment her and threatened her throughout all her professional career. For example, she complained in her Journals of her inability to be original: "I am living between two unachieved shapes: between the original teacher and the original writer: neither" (203). The same problem appears in The Bell Jar when, after her stay in New York, Esther Greenwood comes back home and is absolutely unable to write, to create, numbed by a physical and mental paralysis (98-103).

During the fall of 1952, the symptoms of the writer's growing anxiety became more and more evident. In the summer of 1953, after working for a month in New York for the Mademoiselle College Board her depression grew worse and the writer finally tried to commit suicide on August 24, 1953.

Thanks to the financial support of Olive Higgins Prouty, Sylvia Plath's benefactor at Smith, the writer was moved to McLean Hospital in Belmont, where she received insulin therapy and electroconvulsive shock treatment. The Bell Jar describes all these experiences with astonishing verisimilitude. In fact, the experiences and characters appeared illustrated with such verisimilitude in the novel that Plath's mother never wanted The Bell Jar to be published in the United States. Mentally and emotionally recovered, according to the doctors, Plath came back to Smith in the Spring semester of 1954. Her desire for perfectionism had led her to try to create an "ideal Sylvia" and her unrealistic expectations had made her collapse. The writer's personal doctor at the hospital, Beuscher, had tried to teach Sylvia to expect only reasonable successes but she would keep on imposing excessively high expectations on herself.

On the verge of graduating from Smith, Plath was still insecure, still trapped in the family value system that she had learned to question but could not reject entirely. Therefore, when at nearly twenty-three, she received a fellowship to go to Cambridge her goals were two: to get the best possible education there and to find a husband. On February 25 she wrote in her journal:

> My God, I'd love to cook and make a house, and surge force into a man's dreams, and write, . . . I can't bear to think of this potential for loving and giving going brown sere in me. Yet the choice is so important, it frightens me . . . a lot. (Journals 109)

Just some hours after Plath wrote these desperate words she met her future husband, Ted Hughes, at the St. Botolph's celebratory party.

Later, in March 1957, Sylvia came back in the United States and received official confirmation of an instructorship at Smith. In September, she became a full-time teacher at her old school. What was good news at the beginning ended up in a fierce internal struggle due to her never-ending search for perfection:

> I have this demon who wants me to run away screaming if I am going to be flawed, fallible. It wants me to think I'm so good I must be perfect. Or nothing. . . . The demon would humiliate me: throw me on my knees before the college president, . . . ,everyone, crying: look at me, miserable, I can't do it. (Journals 177)

Very soon, grading papers and attending the College's meetings were tasks too absorbing for Sylvia Plath, who could not find the necessary time for writing, her real vocation. She wrote to her brother, then in Austria:

> My ideal of being a good teacher, writing a book on the side, and being an entertaining homemaker, cook and wife is rapidly evaporating. I want to write first, and being kept apart from writing, . . . , is really very hard. (Letters Home 329)

As we can see, Plath had to cope not only with the usual incompatibilities of being a woman and trying to work at the same time, but with the added complication of trying to earn a living by writing. In fact, Plath would eventually feel guilty for not taking steady jobs, for refusing to teach and provide for a potential family. Therefore, she ended up taking part-time jobs to help to support the family. This was the way a woman raised in the Apollonian New England environment should behave, but Plath's commitment to the Dionysian world was by then too strong to obey the old rules and conventions.

Apart from the social component there was a personal one: the dissatisfaction she felt with herself for not working hard enough and the anger she felt towards her mother, who had wanted her to be "what I have not felt like really being" (qtd. in Stevenson 145), that was, a "success" on society's terms: a woman who tried to fulfill her professional aspirations without forgetting her traditional role as a housewife and mother. Sylvia's mother had struggled hard so that her daughter could have a better life, but this, in turn, caused Plath to continually make the effort to meet her mother's never-satisfied expectations: those ideals of self-denial, security and conventional domesticity which were embedded in her culture and which she would clearly attack in The Bell Jar.

Sylvia Plath knew her own ambivalent feelings and rebelled against them and the awareness of "hating" her mother. But her inability to live up to her own expectations contributed to her first suicide attempt in 1953 and, later on, to her death in 1963.

ANOTHER COUNTRY

Sylvia Plath arrived at Cambridge in September 1955 after earning a Fulbright Grant. She was twenty-three years old and expected to fulfill an academic goal as well as a much more personal one: to get immersed in the sources of wisdom of the Old Continent and find a husband.

In his book, Sylvia Plath: Method and Madness, Edward Butscher explains how Plath spent the entire journey from the United States to England making love in her cabin with different men (156-57). At a superficial level, this can be seen as the expression of the writer's relief after leaving her original country behind and, with it, all the values and taboo inherent to the Bostonian society in general and to her conservative family in particular. Nevertheless, at a deeper level, Plath's incessant love-making may be interpreted as the writer's urgent need to clarify and assert her own sexual identity. This may be because, as a child, after her father's death she may have tried to assume her father's male role. The early assumption of a male role would eventually cause on her serious doubts in the development of her own sexuality, and trying to clarify one's own sexual identity in a society and time where everything related to sex was taboo was a difficult task. This Freudian interpretation of Plath's behavior which emphasizes the importance of sex in the first stages of an individual's life, may be old-fashioned, but Freudian theories are nevertheless interesting, being the root of most modern theories about sexuality and a useful tool to interpret events.

It is difficult to determine how much Plath's decision to go and live in a different country affected her life and writings. What seems clear is that she tried to flee from the rigid Bostonian world to a place where she could exercise her own freedom and get rid of her family's puritanism. In fact, she was never able to leave this pressure entirely behind. This is why her letters home, when she was already in the United States, still portray her as a generally sweet and obedient daughter. Sylvia writes to her mother, once she knows she has got a Fulbright Grant to go to England:

> Dearest of Mothers,
> . . . You have *no idea* how wonderful and reassuring it was to talk to you yesterday! . . . I am so happy, so encouraged . . . Get well *fast*- can't wait to see you . .
> All my love . . . (Letters Home 175-76)

Even living in a different country very far from her native Boston, she was unable to free herself of her deep feeling of guilt because of her ambivalent feelings for her mother and tried incessantly to please her mother by writing the kind of letters she knew she would like to receive. Once in Cambridge, Sylvia kept on writing her highly affectionate letters:

> Dearest Mother,
> . . . It was so lovely to get your telegram and the wonderful birthday gifts . . . I must say the best present anyone can give me is a fat typed letter: all the news from home, . . . I feel so close to you all, as if I were only a short drive away. . . (Letters Home 192)

Living in England was probably hard for Plath. She had to respond to different expectations and struggle for her own place in literature in a country where she was absolutely unknown. She tried to get included in the elitist literary circles where she met her future husband. Ted Hughes was a strong, Dionysian character, a man in

love with nature and hunting. One of Plath's friends, Lucie McKee remembers how Ted was "warm and amusing, but had something to do with contained violence about him, in the way he expressed himself, his interests", also in the way he spoke about a tomcat whom he admired for his aggressiveness and prowess in the neighborhood when he was a child (Alexander 227). Plath needed a man with a powerful and magnetic personality, and a living mirror where she could see herself reflected. Therefore, he immediately became her colossus, her Adam. He had a decisive influence in her writings, dictating the topics she should write about and suggesting to her his favorite authors:

> During the early years of their marriage, Plath adopted Hughes's favorite writers as her own (Blake, Hopkins, Lawrence, Thomas) . . . and became interested in subjects he was interested in (ouija, tarot, horoscopes, fertility myths, exotic plants and animals, the white goddess, arcana). (Axelrod 195)

Hughes also made remarks about Plath's poems becoming his advisor and instructor:

> He became her teacher, opening to her a new vocabulary of words and animals and earth. He read horoscopes, recounted his 'marvelous colored dreams . . .' and educated her daily by setting exercises of concentration and observation. (Uroff 34)

He also became the substitute of her lost father and the double she had been looking for after Otto Plath's death:

> Hughes was the most immediate 'daddy' in her life, the nearest 'jealous god' in that pantheon that gave her life much of its meaning and more of its anguish. (Axelrod 187)

Plath also internalized her husband's interests and, to some extent, his "European" identity. She became interested in European history and culture, which we can see in her multiples references in her poems to W.W.II, Nazi concentration camps, etc.

> The fire makes it precious,
> The same fire
>
> Melting the tallow heretics,
> Ousting the Jews.
> Their thick palls float
>
> Over the cicatrix of Poland, burnt-out
> Germany
> (From "Mary's Song" lines 6-11)

> It is you the knives are out for
> At Waterloo, Waterloo, Napoleon,
> The hump of Elba on your short back,
> . . .
> The bees have got so far. Seventy feet high
> Russia, Poland and Germany!
> (From "The Swarm" lines 6-8, 26-27)

At the same time, Plath's descriptions of the landscape changed after she left the U.S. for England. Her descriptions became more internal and less physical. In some occasions she seems to use the English landscape to describe her own feelings and emotions, to pour herself into the poems:

> I have suffered the atrocity of sunsets.
> Scorched to the root
> My red filaments burn and stand, a hand of wires
> (From "Elm" lines 16-18)

> If I could bleed, or sleep!-
> If my mouth could marry a hurt like that!
>
> Or your liquors seep to me, in this glass capsule,

Dulling and stilling

But colorless. Colorless
(From "Poppies in July" lines 11-15)

There are some critics, nevertheless, who do not think that the British influence on Plath was significant. Uroff affirms that the fact of living in a different country was not remarkable either for Plath or for Hughes. He says: "They lived and worked both in America and in England; they admit reading and being influenced by both American and English contemporaries" but, most significantly, "they produced important portions of their major works as a result of their poetic association." (Uroff 150).

Ostriker insists that Plath's voice was distinctively American until the end of her life, as she always tended to the expression of physical and emotional facts (99-100).

Apart from these testimonies and considering Plath's own life, we can see that the poet was very keen on English literature since childhood and it is sure that her extensive reading of English writers had an influence in her own writing. She, for example, wrote to her mother:

> . . . from my childhood I built up by reading a feeling for England (I'd forgotten how many British writers I must have read, but so much here seems dearly loved already because I've met it before in my reading: the rooks and tea time from *The Cuckoo Clock*, the poetry about Granchester and the Cam, crumpets and scones from T.S. Eliot). (Letters Home 192)

Plath's decision to go to England seems to be deeply rooted in her childhood. Nevertheless, the fact that she met Ted Hughes there would completely change the course of her life and writing.

TED HUGHES: GOD AND MUSE

Sylvia Plath met Ted Hughes on February 25, 1956 at the St. Botolph's celebratory party in Falcom Yard. Theirs was a totally passionate encounter and, very soon, she wrote to her mother about Hughes:

> In the last two months I have fallen terribly in love, which can only lead to great hurt. I met the strongest man in the world, ex-Cambridge, brilliant poet whose work I loved before I met him, a large, hulking , healthy Adam . . . with a voice like the thunder of God - a singer, story teller, lion and world-wanderer, a vagabond who will never stop. (My emphasis) (Letters Home 233)

Only four months later, in the afternoon of June 16 (James Joyce's Bloomsday) in 1956, Sylvia Plath married Ted Hughes. The ceremony took place in St. George the Martyr, a church a five-minute walk from Ted's London flat. Plath's mother was the only guest, as Sylvia feared that the college authorities would disapprove it and the Fulbright Comission would cancel her scholarship (Stevenson 90). They spent a summer honeymoon in Spain where Plath already resented having to do the marketing and cooking as well as the housework (Wagner-Martin 135). It seemed that being married to "the most wonderful man" was not enough for the young writer who felt that her own time to write was being threatened.

In addition, in the summer of 1953 Sylvia thought that she was pregnant so that the plans she had made for the two of them: to be able to achieve success through their writings, free from responsibilities, seemed ruined. She wrote in her journal:

> The horror, day by day more sure, of being pregnant (...) clang, clang, one door after another banged shut with the overhanging terror which, I know now, would end me, probably Ted, and our writing and our possible impregnable togetherness. (qtd. in Wagner-Martin 144)

As we can see, Plath saw her potential of being a good writer seriously threatened by her role as a mother. At the same time, she felt a deep anger towards her

husband "for not assuming what she saw as his share of the household burden" (Wagner-Martin 145). Even while working at Smith, and exhausted by teaching, she still had to perform most of the household chores:

> She worried about household duties and cooking, about Ted, and about her own writing. She had no time to do anything creative. She resented the fact that Ted did have the time. (Wagner-Martin 149)

This was the period of Ted Hughes's growing success. His first published book, The Hawk in the Rain, had received good reviews and he was completing a second, Lupercal, which would confirm his growing reputation. He was also finishing a book of children's stories which had already been accepted for publication. Therefore, he decided not to look for a job. Hughes's confidence that income from their writing would support them unnerved Plath, who had been reared to think that the husband should be the provider. Therefore, Sylvia was usually the one who would look for a job to supplement their savings. For example, she worked transcribing the dreams of patients, and acting as receptionist and general office clerk in the psychiatric clinic of Massachusetts General Hospital. She also worked as secretary to the head of the Sanskrit Department at Harvard. Later on she held a copy-editing position with the magazine The Bookseller, for which she worked in the afternoons doing page layout and editing for special issues. After the birth of their first child she was happy but very tired too. She wanted to have the baby and fulfill, in that way, her role as a mother, but taking care of the baby, being a housewife and trying to get some time to write exhausted her terribly. She especially resented that she had so little time to write:

> The baby's feeding and keeping the house clean, cooking, and taking care of Ted's voluminous mail, plus my own, have driven me so I care only for carving out hours where I can start on my own writing. (My emphasis) (Letters Home 384)

The first years of their marriage were especially productive for Hughes. There is no doubt that his wife's constant support and profound admiration contributed to his own personal success. S.G. Axelrod describes Hughes as a domineering man who could outdo Plath in wildness and therefore domesticate her (191). In fact, this seems to be the key for Plath's overwhelming attraction toward the English writer who, at the same time, represented her own desires of creation phallicized. Nevertheless, Plath's desire to marry someone whom she could strongly admire, a god or "colossus" conflicted very soon with her own need to outstand, to shine with own light. According to Axelrod, Plath saw Hughes as her "male muse" and "god creator" but both images repelled each other (193). We can also image the mutual jealousy of both writers competing for success. After a while, Plath's own aspirations would make her unable to find personal satisfaction in her husband's literary successes despite her desire to help her husband continue writing full-time that she expressed in her letters to her mother. This mixture of loathing and envy is expressed in "The Wishing Box" and it is the central concern of contemporary feminism, according to Janet Malcolm. The critic writes:

> The premise of the story--that a woman's life can be poisoned, and even ultimately destroyed, by her feelings of inadequacy in the face of a man's superior achievement--is as farfetched and remote from observable experience as the Freudian concept of penis envy. And as true. (85)

Plath's struggles with writing became fused with her envy and resentment of men. In fact, many women who were trying to write in the 50's and 60's found themselves thinking that if they did not write well it was their husbands' fault (Malcolm 115-116). Besides, to maintain home and family left Plath no time for herself, or for her writing, or even for her relationship with her husband. She would then suffer the typical conflict of the Fifties of being unable to play too many roles at the same time, of being under constant stress, which would ultimately contribute to the failure of her marriage.

Throughout Plath's life there is a constant struggle between her "inner" and "outer" selves. When she married Hughes, her husband would become the representation of her outer public self. Just after meeting him she would feel the immediate urgency to merge with him, to feel one with him. Once their relationship went wrong, she would look for a refuge in her inner life, the complex self that the poet portrays best in Ariel. Something similar happened to her when she decided to quit teaching at Smith College to dedicate more time to her writing. She would have to submerge her public and acclaimed teaching self into her private and unrecognized writing self again, trying to find a refuge in an underworld that she knew it might destroy her.

If we try to interpret the couple's relationship in Freudian terms we have to mention again Plath's strong dependency on her mother and her difficulty in separating her own identity from Aurelia's successfully. This circumstance would interfere with Plath's capacity for empathy and for seeing others as they really were. In cases where the individual has such strong maternal dependency "the lover is idealized, separations are intolerable; and rejection may be life threatening" (Wedding 255). This seems to be entirely true in Plath's case and describes with accuracy her feelings towards Hughes.

A WOMAN IN THE FIFTIES

With regards to the influence that living in the Fifties had on the writer, we can note that Sylvia Plath's The Bell Jar was published in January 1963, just some months before the publication of Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique. Both authors write about the failure of the domesticity values of the "Happy Fifties", about the effects on women of the Cold War ideology, and about the "domestic trap" and the mental disorders of many women as an expression of their anxiety and dissatisfaction. Friedan explains it in this way:

> . . . There was a strange discrepancy between the reality of our lives as women and the image to which we were trying to conform, the image that I came to call the feminine mystique. I wonder if other women faced this schizophrenic split, and what it meant. (11)

By the "feminine mystique" Friedan meant a definition and glorificat

ion of the female role that focused exclusively on the woman's sexual and reproductive functions. Betty Friedan rejected and attacked the feminine mystique mainly because it discouraged women from making mature choices about their lives and from developing their talents (Harris 170). Friedan interviewed eighty women at certain crucial points of their life cycle. These women were profoundly unhappy without knowing why. Theirs was "the problem with no name" that gave explanation to the female physical and mental disorders such as anxiety, neuroses, depression, tiredness (what doctors called "housewife's fatigue"), sexual problems (frigidity, pregnancy fears), etc.

The basic problem for the American women in the Fifties was that society conveyed two powerful but contradictory messages concerning the goals that were acceptable for them. One message was, "Be a wife and mother and gain your fulfillment "at home". The other was, "Get a job" (Ogden 173).

Friedan's sample was basically composed of two distinct groups: radicalized but disillusioned college students and discontented, middle-class, suburban housewives (Harris 168). One of the women in the first group was Sylvia Plath who, in her writings, tells us about her difficulty in adjusting to the social values of the Fifties. Her novel, The Bell Jar is, in fact, based on the writer's own experiences in the summer of 53 and is also a product of her maladjustment to the society of the 50's. Plath wrote to her mother: "Boys live so much harder than girls, and they know so much about life. Learning the limitations of a woman's sphere is no fun at all" (Letters Home 72).

The high rate of emotional distress and breakdowns among women in their twenties and thirties at that time was caused by what Friedan called "role crisis", that is,

women were educated to fulfill a role that did not satisfy them at all. In The Bell Jar, Sylvia Plath explains what this role consisted of and tells us about her personal crisis through her main character and double, Esther Greenwood:

> I tried to imagine what it would be like if Constantin were my husband. It would mean getting up at seven and cooking him eggs and bacon and toast and coffee and dawdling about in my nightgown and curlers after he'd left for work to wash up the dirty plates and make the bed, and then when he came home after a lively, fascinating day he'd expect a big dinner, and I'd spend the evening washing up even more dirty plates till I fell into bed, utterly exhausted. (The Bell Jar 68)

This is not a very appealing and promising future for any woman, especially for a woman like Esther/Plath, who wants to gain experience and know more about life in order to be a writer. Therefore, after getting this mental picture of what marriage and "personal fulfillment at home" would suppose for her, Esther starts laughing when Buddy Willard, her boyfriend in the novel, asks her to marry him.

Plath's negative conception of what marriage makes of women in general and of women's role after the wedding appear clearly illustrated in her poems as well. In one of her poems in Ariel she writes:

> . . . Here is a hand
>
> To fill it and willing
> To bring teacups and roll away headaches
> And do whatever you tell it.
> Will you marry it?
> (From "The Applicant", lines 10-14)

The woman in the poem is just a thing ("it"), a human being without identity. She has gone through a process of reification by the male dominant society.

Trying to solve the problems which arose through the questioning of their own identities, many women left their domestic confines and tried to fulfill themselves in the

social and political sphere. Plath would not be one of the successful cases as she ended her life too soon due to insurmountable internal conflicts such as this split over how to express her identity as a woman.

Janet Malcolm writes about her in the following terms in an extensive article on Sylvia Plath titled "The Silent Woman":

> The history of her life. . . is a signature story of the fearful, double-faced fifties. Plath embodies in a vivid, almost emblematic way the schizoid character of the period. She is the divided self par excellence. The taut surrealism of the late poems and the slack, girls'-book realism of her life (...) are grotesquely incongruous. The photographs of Plath as a vacuous girl of the fifties, with dark lipstick and blond hair, add to one's sense of the jarring disparity between the life and the work. (89)

As Malcolm points out we can clearly see a split in the writer's identity: the Plath of Letters Home, a nice, sweet, obedient Sylvia, projection of the "desire" and "require" image of the Fifties:

> Dear Mum,
> . . . I realize now how much you mean to me - you and Warren and my dear Grampy and Grammy! . . . I love you *so.*
>
> (Letters Home 60)
>
> Dear Mummy,
> . . . I feel very sorry I don't write more often, Mumsy, because your letters are great substance to me. I miss you and home and Warren . . .
>
> (Letters Home 71)

and the Plath of The Bell Jar and the last poems in particular: an aggressive, sour, violent woman, a submerged and subversive identity:

> The silence depressed me. It wasn't the silence of silence. It was my own silence.
>
> (The Bell Jar 15)

> What a hotchpotch the world was!

(The Bell Jar 92)

A ring of gold with the sun in it?
Lies. Lies and a grief
(From "The Couriers" lines 5-6)

Out of the ash
I rise with my red hair
And I eat men like air.
(From "Lady Lazarus" lines 82-84)

The woman who speaks in these poems is not able to communicate with the outside world. She is also disappointed with the reality she faces and expresses her disappointment, first with irony and then with violence.

Plath's double identity appears more and more evident with time and the progressive change in Plath's physical aspect illustrates how her internal struggle is finally solved with the victory of Plath's "dark" self. Meanwhile, the Sylvia of Letters Home and The Journals is remembered by people who knew her as evoking "the soap and deodorant advertisements of the nineteen-forties and fifties, in which the words 'dainty' and 'fresh' never failed to appear" (Malcolm 106), on Christmas Eve, 1962, just two months before her death, Plath is no longer blond and no longer conspicuously clean. Al Alvarez remembers her like that: "Her hair, . . . was loose. It hung straight to her waist like a tent, giving her pale face and gaunt figure a curiously desolate, rapt air, like a priestess emptied out by the rites of her cult . . . her hair gave off a strong smell, sharp as an animal's" (qtd. in Malcolm 106).

Plath's only novel, completed before the new feminist consciousness had reached expression, would become, in this way, one of the touchstones for the women's movement and one of the more clear examples of the growing female dissatisfaction that lay behind the "mask of placidity" of the American women's postwar generation. At this point, we can not avoid thinking of Plath's lines in "The Applicant": "Will you marry it?/ It is guaranteed// To thumb shut your eyes at the end/ And dissolve of sorrow." (My emphasis)

(14-17). Plath's own life as much as her writings sharply illustrates this deep dissatisfaction and the influence that it had in the shaping of her identity.

PLATH 'S INFLUENTIAL READINGS ABOUT DOUBLENESS

We have just mentioned the writer's struggle to define her own identity and her propensity to see others as projections of her own fantasies. Such tendencies were not entirely unconscious for Plath who, from the very beginning of her academic career, showed her interest on such topics as doubleness and otherness.

Plath's extensive reading about such topic expressed her own initial interest on the subject but, at the same time, strengthened her original ideas on that topic. The psychological effect of her readings on her would make her more critical of her own behavior and thoughts. In fact, Plath's constant repetition of the tautology "I am I" throughout her writings derives from her inner confusion about who she is in fact. " I am, I am, I am", repeats Esther Greenwood at the end of The Bell Jar, and with this obsessive repetition Plath ends up her novel, apparently letting us know that Esther has recovered her lost identity.

While at Smith, Plath wrote papers on Thomas Mann's dualisms and Nietzche's philosophy on opposites. In a very personal term paper written during her senior year at Smith entitled "The Devil's Advocate", she explains how the conflicts and dichotomies in Dostoevsky's novels were echoed in her own mind (Axelrod 202). The next semester Plath used this paper, expanding it into her honors thesis titled: "The Magic Mirror: A Study of the Double in Two of Dostoevsky's Novels." Here she used the idea of the double to explain the enigma of identity and "the fundamental duality of man." (Axelrod 202).

Plath treated the idea of the double in Dostoevsky's The Brothers Karamazov and The Double. According to S.G. Axelrod, the importance of her thesis is not in the ideas that the writer developed there, but in the influence that such readings had on the shaping of Plath's own personality and on her special way of seeing through polarities.

In order to prepare her thesis, Plath read the two novels by Dostoevsky and also Hawthorne's "Monsieur du Miroir," Poe's "William Wilson," Stevenson's Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, and Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray. She also read Ernest Simmons' Dostoevski: The Making of a Novelist and, besides other literary texts, Plath read psychological, medical and religious studies as background for her thesis. The most important of Plath's readings were, nevertheless, James Frazer's chapter "The Perils of the Soul" in The Golden Bough, Otto Rank's chapter "The Double as Immortal Self" in Beyond Psychology, and Freud's "The Uncanny".

In his chapter, Frazer explained how all living creatures have two distinct selves, an outward body and an inward soul, and how the inward soul may escape through body apertures and become manifested through dreams, hallucinations, shadows, reflections, etc. Plath read Frazer's comment about the tribe of the Baganda, who believe that every person is born with a double. She also believed it but she did not consider such a double as the traditional soul but as an authentic or creative self (Axelrod 205). These ideas are clearly shown in Plath's "In Plaster" or in "Face Lift", where we find spatial and temporal doubles:

> I shall never get out of this! There are two of me now:
> This new absolutely white person and the old yellow one,
> . . .
> And I was scared, because she was shaped just the way I was.
> (From "In Plaster" lines1-2, 7)

> For five days I lie in secret,
> Trapped like a cask, the years draining into my pillow.
> . . .
> . . . I grow backward. I'm twenty,

Broody and in long skirts on my first husband's sofa, . . .
. . .
I hadn't a cat yet.

(From "Face Lift" lines 17-18, 20-22, 24)

Following Frazer's theories, Plath believed as well that to be alive is to be and to see double and that death is just the loss of doubleness (Axelrod 205).

Besides Frazer's ideas, Rank's theories about the double were determinant for Plath in the elaboration of her own symbology. In Beyond Psychology, Rank explains that although in primitive religion the double was considered a symbol of the individual's "immortal soul", in the occidental civilized culture the double has become, "a reminder of the individual's mortality, indeed, the announcer of death itself" (qtd. in Axelrod 206). In her thesis, Plath also explained how for the modern personality type the double represents the "almost pathological loss of one's real self through a superimposed one," or it may also represent the evil characteristics of its master presaging his ultimate destruction (qtd. in Axelrod 206).

These theories, and especially the one that considers the double like the "almost pathological loss of one's real self through a superimposed one," make us think of the fact that Plath's original self was a basically Apollonian one who she partially lost due to the superimposition of a Dionysian one.

In fact, Plath preferred Rank's theory to Frazer's more ancient one and she explained in one of her letters home how she felt about her readings: "All fascinating stuff about the ego as symbolized in reflections (mirror and water), shadows, twins--dividing off and becoming an enemy, or omen of death, or a warning conscience, or a means by which one denies the power of death." (Letters Home 146) As I have already mentioned, Plath tried to find alter egos in the outside world throughout her life and when she tried to find a double in her husband and he failed her, she could no longer deny the power that death exerted over her and was dragged into suicide, into nothingness. In this way, Plath

would confirm with her own example and life her own theory that death is just the loss of doubleness.

Plath's reading of Freud's "The Uncanny" (1919), contributed also to her consideration of the double as a rational examinator of the self, as an instrument of self-criticism and change.

We can see plenty of examples in Plath's writings of these three different ways to see the double: as immortal soul, as harbinger of death and as an instrument of self-criticism and change:

The double as immortal soul can be seen in the poem titled "The Babysitters", where Plath speaks about the unimportance of space, the possibility of feeling joined to a person despite physical barriers:

> O what has come over us, my sister!
> . . .
> I see us floating there yet, inseparable--two cork dolls.
> . . .
> The shadows of the grasses inched round like hands of a clock.
> And from our opposite continents we wave and call
> (From "The Babysitters" lines 28, 41, 43-44)

The double as an omen of death can be seen in "The Lady and the Earthenware Head". As Uroff says, "this head, a model of her own, seems to have no intellect but it is a sinister, seductive, even sexual image that she must protect in order to protect herself." (Uroff 80):

> . . . shrined on her shelf, the grisly visage endured,
> Despite her wrung hands, her tears, her praying: Vanish!
> Steadfast and evil-starred,
> It ogled through rock-fault, wind-flaw and fisted wave-
> An antique hag-head, too tough for knife to finish,
> Refusing to diminish
> By one jot its basilisk-look of love.
> (From "The Lady and the Earthenware" lines 29-35)

Doubleness is also considered threatening in the poem "In Plaster", where the cast's presumptions of superiority make the trapped self inside hate the cast's virtues and deny its importance for its own survival:

> . . . she'll soon find out that doesn't matter a bit.
> I'm collecting my strength; one day I shall manage without her,
> And she'll perish with emptiness, and begin to miss me.
> (From "In Plaster" lines 54-56)

In other poems like "Morning Song," or "Event", the writer identifies herself with her own children and the assurance of knowing them so helpless and dependent makes Plath aware of her importance for them. Here one can see the concept of the double as a means to gain wisdom and self-knowledge through others.

Apart from these different ways to interpret the presence of a double in Plath's work, we can see that the obsessive appearance of such a double in many of her writings is a clear indication of her schizoid personality, her dependence on the outside world and the impossibility to attain inner stability by her own means. According to R.D. Laing, schizoid people usually suffer "a failure to sustain a sense of one's own being without the presence of other people. It is a failure to be oneself, a failure to exist alone" (qtd. in Holbrook 153). Therefore, individuals who cannot exist by themselves need an object of identification and if this "mirror" in which they have projected themselves is lost they may perform desperate acts like suicide. Nevertheless, the destruction of themselves or the obliteration of the people they love is, in fact, a way to attain salvation, a manner to get a rebirth to a different self. According to Laing, schizoid people "are constantly afraid of being depersonalized by others", therefore, they prefer to do it themselves before (qt. in Holbrook 153). The images of rebirth in Plath's writing are overwhelming: the main

characters of "Face Lift", "Lady Lazarus" and "Edge" are all good examples of death as commencement of a new life:

> Out of the ash
> I rise with my red hair
> (From "Lady Lazarus" lines 82-83)
> The woman is perfected
> Her dead
>
> Body wears the smile of accomplishment,
> The illusion of a Greek necessity
> (From "Edge" lines1-4)

Also in The Bell Jar Esther Greenwood takes a hot bath that is described as a rebirth (21-22) and after her suicide attempt and the shock treatment she clearly feels that she is as new woman. The final rebirth to a new life requires the reaffirmation of the new identity, that is the reason why Esther needs to repeat to herself: "I am, I am, I am" (199).

The dissolution of the loved ones has also the purpose of salvation. Nevertheless, before salvation can be achieved she must reduce everything to nothing. In fact, according to Laing a schizoid individual " 'destroy[s]' in his mind the image of anyone or anything he may be in danger of being fond of, out of a desire to safeguard that person or thing in reality from being destroyed" (qtd. in Holbrook 174). Therefore, by getting rid of her mother in "Medusa" and of her father in "Daddy", Plath kills them in her mind to be able to keep them in her heart. Plath "did not kill" Hughes in her mind; that is perhaps the reason why she could not overcome his separation. Anyway, it is possible that she could not dissolve her mirror before she was able to find another one in which look at herself.

At the end of her life, Plath's struggle between two opposite identities exhausted her: the Apollonian self of the nice wife and mother and the Dionysian self of the lover, writer and rebellious daughter exhausted her. Plath was torn between choices and, as a

consequence, was not able to piece her self together. Many American women nowadays experience as well this artificial split in their lives when they have to choose between being successful as women or good professionals. Plath's schizoid condition made her especially able to have deep insights about herself and about her condition as a woman in such a difficult period of time for a woman as the 50's. This is the main reason why her writings and her thoughts are so contemporary and her personality as a woman-writer so fashionable. This is also the reason why is still difficult to write about her. Her presence is too alive in our minds to be able to understand with a certain distance the meaning of her life and death.

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