

Challenging Voice: Study of the Connections Between Sylvia Plath's Poetry and Betty Friedan's Theory "The Feminine Mystique"

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the psychological and societal limits imposed on women in the mid-20th century, concentrating on Plath's poems "The Colossus," "Daddy," and "Lady Lazarus". This study demonstrates commonalities between Sylvia Plath's poetry and Betty Friedan's creative feminist work "The Feminine Mystique" (1963). Friedan's analysis of the feminine mystery which represent the societal myth asserting that women's fulfillment is exclusively linked to household responsibilities which reverberated profoundly with Plath's poetic depictions of enmeshment, degeneration and pantheistic dread. This research illustrates how Plath's depictions of suffocation patriarchal subjugation and fragmented identity resound with Friedan's sociological insights regarding women's constrained aspirations as evidenced in Plath's novel like "The Bell Jar," as well as her poem's "Daddy," and "Lady Lazarus." By underscoring the psychological and social limitations faced by women in the mid-20th century, this paper examines the connection between Sylvia Plath's poetry and Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*. This study examines the concepts of entrapment and identity fragmentation in Plath's work namely *The Bell Jar*, *Daddy*, and *Lady Lazarus*, in relation to Friedan's critique of the domestic ideal.

Keywords: Sylvia Plath, Confessional poetry, Betty Friedan, Feminine mystery, Patriarchal society, Suicide

Introduction

Sylvia Plath's poetry and Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* critically analyze the psychological and societal limitations imposed on women, offering a harsh critique of the feminine experience in mid-20th century America. Utilizing evocative imagery to depict her struggles with mental health, Plath, a prominent figure in confessional poetry, examines themes of identity, gender norms, and defiance against patriarchal authority. Plath's poems such as "Daddy" and "Lady Lazarus," function as enthusiastic critiques of patriarchal structures attempting to delineate female identity. Feminist Friedan published his *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, a sociological examination of the dissatisfaction of women in their domestic life. It also discusses the feminization of romanticism common in the postwar era, as well as shows that many women were not satisfied with their household duties.

The combination of psychological misery caused by enforced domesticity, described by Plath in her poems, as well as Friedan summarized this dilemma in the expression "the problem that has no name." The two authors explain how social norms can contribute to insufficient feelings,

as well as women's alienation. Pinke (2011). Plath critiques social norms through her works. Plath allusions to such protagonists as Esther Greenwood in *The Bell Jar* and illuminates the challenge unmentioned by Friedan. This indicates a common social attitude in which education or employment aspirations are viewed as nothing but dissatisfaction. Plath is a tragic poet who defies feminine conventions via the use of stinging metaphors that reveal her captivity within limited spaces. On the other hand, the empirical analysis of the experiences of women in suburban America by Friedan influences the perspectives of the two writers on the topic of femininity. Their works begin a discussion of gender roles. The works of Friedan as a researcher show the systematic aspects of the problem, and the works of Plath as an emotionally rich character depict the suffering of a person who cannot live within the framework of established limits. They establish a basic ground upon which to build a greater feminist discourse through the development of an awareness of personal and broader experiences that are shaped by different cultural discourses of women.

The dilemma of Sylvia Plath and feminist perspective

Sylvia wrote her first poem when she was eight years old in the Boston Sunday Herald. Plath quickly produced a substantial body of work, seventy short stories, a play in verse, children's literature, novels as well as drafts of a second novel. She was born on October 27, 1932, and has a brother named Warren. The death of Plath's father, who had diabetes, significantly influenced her. Sylvia matriculated at Smith College in 1950. She was awarded three scholarships during her inaugural year. She struggled with despair due to her rejection from Frank O'Connor's writing course at Harvard's summer school. She tried to suicide and this is first attempt when she took over dose of pills for sleeping after that they heard she sigh in the basement partially conscious and she resuscitated in the hospital. Sylvia married at 1956 from unknown poet Ted Hughes. She disappointed because she had marital problems with two children as a result she took overdose of pills of sleeping according to that she dead.(Gill,2007,pp.11-12).

According to death of her father Otto Plath as well as birth of her brother Warren she suffered from conflicted feeling of hate and love for those people who closer to her .This conflict represents the main reason for split personality and complex duality .Plath stay with instability and a hopeless wish for male replacement as a result of childhood emotional trauma, because her parents give attention to new baby and neglect her in addition to Plath death of her father Otto Plath .Her keen veneration and hostility of her father ,reflecting her self-centeredness and Freudian Electra complex , caused her psychic crisis disintegration and led to look for parental replacement like Ted Hughes , who became her husband and reason for her disappointment even worse .Plath's interior struggle was made worse by social requests , her poems specially confessional depicted her wishes for an acceptance and her insurgence against patriarchal and gender society standards.

Ultimately, Plath's poetry examines a psyche ensnared between genius, creativity, and existential dread, revealing a significant struggle with duality. Plath's oeuvre, which mirrors her tumultuous psyche, delusions, and obsessive-compulsive tendencies, oscillates between self-loathing and connection. She candidly addresses these matters in her poetry, longing for her father and contending with unresolved conflict, resulting in a fractured identity. Plath's work oscillates between brilliance and self-destruction these variables culminated in multiple suicide attempts. (Sharif, 2006). Feminism encompasses several beliefs and movements that seek to raise the social status of women and understand the nature of gender equality. These movements have persistently advocated for women's equal access to social, economic, and

political rights for over a century. Literary forms like as fables and fairy tales, with sculpture, ritual, dance, and needlework, expose their repression of social and political rights. Feminism has established boundaries and produced concepts across various sectors to emphasize its principal concerns, such as ensuring women equal access to education and jobs.

The phrase has been defined variably and analyzed from multiple perspectives in English literature. Plath's suicide profoundly impacted both the second wave of feminism and American confessionalism. A divorced mother with her children suffered from psychological pressure. Plath vigorously sought to maintain her individuality in a male-dominated world. Chronicled in her autobiographical work *The Bell Jar* (1963), her experiences as a young woman and psychiatric patient are reflected in "Daddy," her most renowned poem, published in 1965, which encapsulates American feminism. Plath criticized males broadly in the poem, using her father, Otto Plath, as a reference point. She narrates her experience as a woman in a patriarchal society, exposing her fragility via complete submission. Plath occasionally perceives her father as a fascist symbol, signifying ultimate power and dictatorial authority, thereby reflecting the patriarchal culture. Plath warns women in this stanza:

Every woman adores a Fascist,
The boot in the face, the brute
Brute heart of a brute like you. (plath,1981, p.222).

Plath adopts a jeering style to confirm to female who admires a fascist. She displays her suffering from patriarchal oppression and caution women in her time to reject male – dominant and patriarchal rules on women. (Jamil et al., 2024, p. 749). In addition to *The Bell Jar*, Plath's feminine voice can be examined in the poems "Lady Lazarus," "Daddy," and "The Applicant." The issues addressed by Plath in these works include pregnancy, transgression, familial dynamics, women's desire, subjectivity, creativity, and oppression. Furthermore, Plath adeptly explores the obstacles faced by women of her day through her poetry, utilizing her own anguish as a perspective. Sylvia Plath's poetry predominantly focuses on her enduring battle with her disturbed identity. Her poetry serves as a self-referential account of her suicidal and sexual inclinations. As a mental health patient, she constructed her own cosmos devoid of any specific existence outside reality. She observes the region characterized by intense passion and anxiety-laden terrains. Sylvia Plath was inherently complex, and her poetry distinctly reflects this intricacy. Despite being victimized in both instances, she momentarily experienced a sense of safety and confidence with her father and subsequently with her husband. This encounter altered her perspective on relationships overall. (Itoo, 2017, p. 279–280).

Betty Friedan and societal gender conventions

Friedan was born in 1921 in Illinois, United States, to Jewish parents of Russian and Hungarian descent. Friedan was an activist feminist author. She wrote about politics during her high school years. She has a degree in psychology from Smith College and the University of California, Berkeley. She assumed the role of a reporter in New York. Friedan was terminated from her position owing to her pregnancy but continued her career as a journalist for women's magazines. While composing a questionnaire for her 15-year-old student, Friedan identified an unacknowledged concern among American housewives. Friedan notes, "Each suburban wife struggled with it alone" (Friedan,1963, p.15). Their replies startled her due to their unarticulated suffering.

Encourage her to write "The Feminine Mystique," which scrutinized the discontent of American housewives, ignited the second wave of feminism globally, and catalyzed significant legal and social advancements for women, especially inside American society. (Whitaker, 2017, pp. 9-10). Friedan's seminal research demonstrates how post-World War II cultural traditions compelled middle-class American women to internalize the notion that they were solely responsible for home issues, resulting in profound dissatisfaction. In her book "The Feminine Mystique," Friedan references a cultural fallacy linking men's economic responsibilities to women's domestic duties and childrearing. Friedan examined how altered antiquated notions of male superiority and female inferiority portrayed gender roles as fundamentally distinct yet equivalent. This myth asserted that although men and women possessed equal legal and intellectual abilities, they favored distinct outcomes. To preserve femininity, women were dissuaded from competing in education and the workforce, fostering the illusion that their achievements could just be realized in family life rather than in public or professional domains. During the 1950s, the belief emerged that women who sought education or employment would forfeit their femininity. This concept is referred to as "masculinization" (Whitaker, 2017, p.11). It has become increasingly prevalent. The community saw the archetypal, content housewife as the epitome of femininity.

Rather than recognizing systemic limitations, these cultural and educational influences caused women to internalize their discontent. Women perceived their clumsiness as a personal deficiency in fulfilling their responsibilities as moms and wives. Friedan's work contests this erroneous belief. Friedan contends that the emotionally taxing cycle of incessant domestic chores and responsibilities, along with the restriction of women's ambitions, constitutes the true source of women's unhappiness, rather than individual shortcoming. This idealized domesticity typically engendered animosity, fatigued relationships, and inadequate parenting rather than fostering harmony. Moreover, Friedan illustrates how the pressure might adversely affect societal well-being. Friedan refers to "the problem that has no name" in her book "The Feminine Mystique" (1963), describing the widespread yet unrecognized discontent among American women during the mid-20th century. Suburban housewives, fulfilling their traditional roles as moms and wives, were plagued by an existential yearning and privately contemplated if their domestic lives truly embodied their full potential. Women were reluctant to express their subdued anguish when engaging in routine activities such as grocery shopping, cleaning beds, and caring for children: "Is this all?" (Friedan, 1963, p. 3). For over a decade, popular discourse overlooked this discontent, prioritizing the notion that marriage and motherhood were the ultimate pathways to women's fulfillment. Experts utilizing Freudian psychology and cultural history argued that "truly feminine" women ought to relinquish aspirations for political rights, education, or employment and objectives that previous feminists had championed ensured.

Women were instructed in domestic skills, child-rearing, and maintaining marriages, while being conditioned to perceive those aspiring to intellectual or professional ambitions as "neurotic" or "unfeminine" (Friedan, 1963, p. 4). Older women lamented that younger generations internalized social standards, perceiving marriage and motherhood as their sole objectives. These standards emerged as significant. Cultural norms and gender roles profoundly influenced the lives of American women in the mid-20th century. The dominant ideology characterized a woman primarily as a spouse and mother, with household responsibilities essential to her identity. Societal narratives that exalt parenthood while disparaging other ambitions exacerbated this divide. Betty Friedan's "The Feminine Mystique"

characterizes this trend as "the problem that has no name," illustrating the pervasive discontent among women relegated to these responsibilities (Zane, 2013). Friedan critiques the romanticized concept of gender that prioritized obligation over individual aspiration. She emphasizes how 1950s ads and media constructed a limited perspective of female fulfillment by associating happiness with domestic responsibilities and child-rearing (Zane, 2013). Women's Self-esteem was associated with the correlation between males and activities in the household; women were passive (Krafft, 2013). Women in this society were left with no option but to blend in, and this brought bitterness and loss of identity. The manifestations of this notion in the writings of Sylvia Plath are examples of the poetry of this author that criticizes social requirements. Her heroes sometimes struggle with the restrictions of domestic space created by male advancement. *The Bell Jar* by Esther Greenwood represents the resistance to social order that reduces women to motherhood as well as housewifery. As Plath claims, the genderizing nature of occupation is encoded in a metaphor where a male is an arrow and a fixed point is a female (Slater, 2022).

The identity issues of women explored by Plath coincide with the observations Friedan made regarding the psychological crisis that women experience when subjected to strict gender standards. Her work reflects broken identities that are subject to external influences. Her poem "Daddy" is a great outpouring of sorrow due to social restrictions. The communication between the literary act as well as the sociological criticism shows how the strict gender roles silenced the voice of many women about their dissatisfaction with the theme that Plath and Friedan address in their work. Women who had no choice but to suppress their urges to gain independence or rise in the work hierarchy felt even more alienated as they lacked the opportunity to express themselves (Mahdi, 2014). The two studies reveal the way in which established cultural scripts limited the lives of women, thus tamping down dreams outside the established order. With the development of feminist rhetoric, it became clear that such limitations were reflected in individual psyches as well as restricted the advancement of society along the path of gender equality. It was a turning point in the sphere of feminism in the middle of the 20th century when society, as well as culture, pressured women to live according to some standards. With men returning to their jobs after World War II, many women had to be satisfied with nursing and housekeeping.

This quick return to traditional gender roles angered those women who had previously found freedom as well as satisfaction in their jobs. Betty Friedan clearly defined the problem by giving it the name "the problem that has no name" in her book "The Feminine Mystique," which explains why so many people were not happy with being restricted in that way. Her criticism placed a strong emphasis on how societal ideals (both in media imagery as well as in educational systems) perpetuated a mythical idea of femininity that limited the ambitions of women and defined their identities (Zane, 2013). The creation of Second Wave Feminism catalyzed and also addressed wider discourses on women and their rights. This was a movement aimed at redefining the meaning of being a woman in society, and some of the dominant thinkers of the time, like Simone de Beauvoir, were able to change how society viewed gender roles as biologically determined with a book she wrote, "The Second Sex." Gender is produced socially by imposing it on women, as opposed to it being their nature (Sodha, 2024). This opinion echoed Friedan; both writers believed that women needed to rediscover their identities beyond the traditional role of housewives. The study conducted by Friedan revealed how many women found themselves in an inner conflict between what

society demands of them from being good wives and good mothers, as well as wanting to strive to achieve their own fulfillment beyond the social role.

She criticized the depiction of women in mass media as shallow people who were happy with household chores only, asserting that the portrayal of women fueled feelings of insecurity in people who wanted to gain other meaningful things in life (Zane, 2013). Literary pieces of this era encompassed a feeling of entrapment, and writers such as Sylvia Plath effectively depicted the plight of female characters who became trapped in the confines of patriarchy. With the growth of feminist consciousness in reaction to these criticisms, a vast number of women started to identify themselves by their common dissatisfaction. The general understanding that they were not in the wrong, but that the system was what sparked the change movements. Women began to organize rallies and promote rights related to access to higher education, to employment, as well as to reproductive control.

The rise of feminism at this time is not only defiant of limiting norms, but also a claim by women to their freedom of self-definition by going outside their customary limits. A host of evaluations of Plath's oeuvre, particularly her experiments with identity crises and fragmentation, show how her poetry expresses a growing feminist consciousness as well as defying social norms. The views expressed by Plath are quite similar to those of Friedan about the psychological weight that the role of a housewife imposes on the identity of women. Knowing how women might be made worse off by racism and class, this heightened awareness established a foundation upon which feminist movements could be built in the future, especially concerning intersectionality (Sodha, 2024). Ultimately, both Plath's literary oeuvre and Friedan's sociological critiques offer foundational narratives that elucidate the intricacies of mid-20th century feminism.

Sylvia Plath's poetic Examination of Femininity:

The Colossus: Reconstruction of Female Identity

The Colossus is one of the miracles of the ancient world. It is a statue located in Rhodes, Greece. "colossus" is the term widely used to denote the immense size of a monument. The monument in Rhodes was dedicated to the Greek sun deity. Sylvia Plath's desire for the title "The Colossus" for her inaugural poetry book and poem. In this poem, Plath conjures powerful deities, natural destruction, and the fragmentation of women's identities. In this poem, Plath addresses the colossus with "O father," (Plath, 1981, line 17) resembling a daughter's speech to her father, akin to a petition to God (Gill, 2007, p. 15). In her poems gender disparity and psychological distress may be seen as symbols. In her renowned work "Colossus" and "Crossing the Water", she critiques the patriarchal structure of American culture via discussions of love, marriage, and religion. Moreover, in "Colossus," male dominance is portrayed as a formidable force that women must contend with. Plath confronts the violence that transcends sexual relations as well as the methods of starvation, burning, hanging, and various forms of torture inflicted upon women in a male-dominated society when she discusses it (Ittoo, 2017, p. 277). The poem "The Colossus" articulates her feminist perspective more explicitly. She asserts it as:

His high cold masks of amnesia.

How did I get here?

Indeterminate criminal,

I die with variety –

Hung, starved, burned, hooked. (Plath,1981,p.227)

Through its examination of patriarchal oppression, fragmented selfhood, and the laborious process of reclaiming agency, Sylvia Plath's *The Colossus* (1960) critically interacts with the reconstruction of female identity. A reflection of patriarchal power that suppresses female autonomy, the poem's central metaphor is a destroyed statue representing Plath's father, Otto Plath. The speaker's vain attempts to "pieced, glued, and properly jointed"(Plath,1981, line 2). The broken statue mirrors the societal expectation for women to fit male-dominated stories, a topic important to feminist criticism of the mid-20th century (Mathew, 2016, p. 588). According to Neema Mathew (2016) Plath's poetry captures a "wounded, tortured, and handicapped" female consciousness fighting against repressive institutions (p. 588). This corresponds to Betty Friedan's idea of the "feminine mystique," which addresses the psychological toll of women's confinement to domestic duties and their erasure as autonomous agents (Mahdi, 2014, p. 93).

Framing female identity reconstruction as Sisyphean effort against patriarchal legacies, the poem's depiction of labor suffering patriarchal society parallels Friedan's criticism of unfulfilling societal expectations. Plath's depiction of fragmentation in *The Colossus* emphasizes the destabilization of female identity under patriarchal standards. The poem's disjointed structure and erratic imagery among them reflect the speaker's shattered psyche. Christina Britzolakis (1999) reads this fragmentation as a rejection of monolithic identity, suggesting that Plath's work "foregrounds the self as a site of rupture and reconstruction" (p. 135). Confronting her father as a symbol of paternal greatness the speaker recognizes the futility of restoring patriarchal beliefs and finally welcomes incompleteness as freedom. This fits Adrienne Rich's claim that Plath's poetry reclaims identity by means of "female energy" via its "rhythms of struggle" (Mathew, 2016, p. 589). The biographical background of the poem sheds light on its emphasis on identity rebuilding.

Plath's diaries expose her lingering grief over her father's passing, which she says left her "daddy's girl" identity in turmoil (Plath, 2000, p. 224). A decaying monument, the *Colossus* represents both personal and cultural male dominance, therefore Plath depicts suffering women's underappreciated labor in patriarchal societies. Jacqueline Rose (1991) contends that Plath's work mixes artistic and domestic labor, therefore presenting female selfhood as a result of "ceaseless, unacknowledged toil" (p. 112). The poem's ending. Plath suggests a rejection of pointless rebuilding and a preference for identity created by autonomy rather than patriarchal approval. In the end, *The Colossus* builds female identity by dismantling patriarchal myths. Plath's use of natural imagery, including the "garden of mouthings" with its "purple, scarlet-speckled black" flowers, contrasts the sterile dominance of the statue, which represents a turn toward organic, self-defined identity (Plath, 1960, lines 16-17).

Plath's poetry aims to "delink from conventional male culture" by embracing femininity as a source of creative power, therefore rejecting Mathew (2016). This corresponds to Hélène Cixous's demand for women to write their difficult experience recovering voice and power (Mathew, 2016, p. 591). Rejecting the *Colossus*'s oppressive shadow, the speaker reflects Friedan's idea of women overcoming the "feminine mystique" to seek self-actualization (Mahdi, 2014, p. 106). Plath's poem therefore rebuilds female identity by embracing fragmentation as resistance rather than by restoring the past.

Daddy: Confronting Patriarchal Authority

This poem is titled "Daddy," a colloquial and informal term that children use to refer to their father for the first time. The poem is replete with the recurring sounds of a distressed infant. Plath composed this poem prior to turning thirty. The poet rejects the life created by her father, depicting him as black and herself as white. The narrator attributes her difficult life on her father. (Gill, 2007, p. 41). By revealing the psychological and emotional price of male domination, Sylvia Plath's *Daddy* (1962) challenges patriarchal authority with its raw imagery and confessional tone. The speaker of the poem struggles with the suffocating legacies of her father and husband, who represent more general patriarchal society. Plath's portrayal of her father as a Nazi and herself as a persecuted Jew. Plath shows the systematic dehumanization women suffer under patriarchal systems.

This corresponds to Betty Friedan's criticism of the "feminine mystique," which characterizes the suffocating confinement of women to domestic duties and their erasure as autonomous people (Mahdi, 2014, p. 93). The poem's repeated allusions to labor such as the speaker's fruitless efforts to rebuild her father's broken statue in the poem "Colossus" reflect Friedan's claim that women's unacknowledged emotional and domestic labor reinforces their subjugation. Reflecting the society expectation for women to fit male-defined identities, a main topic in Friedan's work, the father's symbolic "black shoe" traps the speaker's "foot" for "thirty years". Plath's violent imagery, such as driving a "stake" into her father's "fat black heart," emphasizes her rejection of patriarchal control in line with Friedan's demand for women to destroy repressive conventions. Resonating with Friedan's portrayal of women's "quiet desperation," the poem's confessional approach, characterized by raw emotion and repetition. Plath writes :

Ich, ich, ich,

I could hardly speak.

I thought every German was you.

And the language obscene. (Plath, 1981, p. 222)

exposes the psychological fragmentation brought on by patriarchal power. Furthermore, the speaker's identification with Holocaust victims reflects Friedan's analogy of the "comfortable concentration camp," in which women are imprisoned in domesticity despite external comfort (Friedan, 1963, p. 305). Emphasizing women's exploitation, Plath's depiction of her husband as a "vampire" who "drank my blood" more criticizes the parasitic character of patriarchal relationships (Plath, 1962, line 72). The poem signals emancipation from patriarchal chains in line with Friedan's idea of women recovering agency. By stressing Plath's use of linguistic tools including apostrophe and hyperbole to challenge male dominance, feminist stylistic studies support Friedan's contention that language is a weapon of resistance. Plath reflects Friedan's focus on shared female experience by presenting her personal suffering as a universal battle, therefore changing personal suffering into a political message (Mahdi, 2014, p. 107). *Daddy* therefore not only challenges patriarchal power but also represents Friedan's demand for women to reject the "feminine mystique" and follow self-defined identities.

Lady Lazarus: Revitalizing the Feminine Voice.

This poem composed during difficult condition in October 1962 when the poet had problem with her husband, Ted Hughes and separated after that. The portrayal of woman in Sylvia

Plath's poem "Lady Lazarus," recognized as one of the preeminent writers of 20th-century Western literature. The title of the poem focuses on empowerment of female and Challenging patriarchy. Plath seeks to removed men by associating them with a feminine Lazarus figure, as derived from the biblical account of the resurrection of Lazarus. She seeks to elevate the concept of womanhood, replacing the historically downtrodden female figure with a challenge to male supremacy and the establishment of women's rebirth and identity within society. Plath describes in her poem the emotions of a woman who chooses death as a measure of liberation while under hardship. In this context, "Lady Lazarus" articulates the obstacles Plath encountered inside a patriarchal society and her rebellion against it, making it a significant work that contributes to the movement for gender equality (Parlak & Bağırlar, 2018, P.100). Sylvia Plath linked her story to the biblical figure of Lazarus's resurrection, therefore using the metaphor of resurrection to investigate female power and personal autonomy. While reflecting broader societal discussions about women's duties and their fight against patriarchal tyranny, this relationship shows Plath's mental health problems, including suicide attempts. The speaker shows defiance against a society trying to silence women. The poem's opening statement of resilience. Plath writes :

I have done it again

One year in every ten

I manage it—— (Plath,1981, p.244)

reflects both personal triumph and a societal call for women facing subjugation. Plath's vivid imagery shows the psychological burden of society expectations as seen in the lines about being able to "I rise with my red hair /eat men like air,"(Plath,1981, lines 83-84) which challenges traditional gender roles and declares her superiority over those trying to dominate her. Through her confessional, Plath explores her internal struggle and opposes what society believes should be the identity of women. "I have done it again," (Plath, 1981, line 1). Her aggressive coloring indicates that she is disobeying social rules. Additionally, the fact that she says that her sources of authority are "Herr Doktor" further shows that she is opposing the patriarchal system, therefore can be classified as a change agent, but not just a victim. Through the combination of social and personal critique, Plath highlights the relationship between human experiences as well as cultural accounts of gender. She creates a greater emotional effect through literary devices used in "Lady Lazarus." Alliteration and rhythmic contrast of the terrible images with the poetic beauty create a shocking reading experience, thus, paying tribute to the endurance of thousands of women as well as emphasizing the inhumane situation they have to deal with. Dissatisfaction with the standards that have been imposed by society is another feature of the poem that highlights the criticisms of Betty Friedan in "The Feminine Mystique." Friedan and Plath express displeasure with the female identity that social pressures have created, situating Plath's work within the feminist discussion of gender inequality. Finally, Lady Lazarus expresses the ambiguous identity of Plath because it presents a narrative in which death is a means of resurrection, thus stimulating intensive gender reflection.

Conclusion

Combining the sociological work of Betty Friedan and the poetry of Sylvia Plath, one might observe some impressive parallels between the discussion of the identity of a woman and her social restrictions. Through many media, Friedan in "The Feminine Mystique" and Plath in descriptive, autobiographical poetry. They both challenge restrictive ideals of femininity in the

middle of the 20th century. Focusing on the mental pressure of the social expectations towards women, they demonstrate the inner conflict with the gender expectations. In many cases, there are prison and rebellion motifs in Plath. As Friedan reflects the pressures of the greater society, the protagonist Esther Greenwood in *The Bell Jar* reflects the existential pain created by the strict ideas of femininity. Her struggle within the glass bell jar signifies her opinion that a good portion of women experienced entrapment within unsatisfying family lives and thus signified a form of suffocating claustrophobia. Plath presents a complicated view of the female identity that aligns with Friedan on the issue of disenfranchising women. The two authors explore the effects of social pressure on the fragmentation of identity. In her poems, such as “Lady Lazarus,” Plath is a poet with strong imagination, along with an assertion of rebellion against male norms. This aligns with the analysis that Friedan provides of how the demands of society may undermine the self-concept of women, thus establishing a conflict between acting independently and fitting in. Another theme Plath is opposed to is the commodification of female identity. The Applicant employs sharp satire to demonstrate how the identity of women is diminished to mere utility based on their appearance as well as their domestic competency, as Friedan advocates the inability of women to escape menial tasks of the home that start and end there. The tone that Plath uses makes her critique of such forms of social organization even more acute, thus echoing the demands of agency explicitly in the story by Friedan. The authors both highlight the importance of the rebellion against the classical gender roles in an effort to empower women. In the poem “Ariel,” Plath eloquently writes about the hunt for freedom with limited resources, thereby telling a larger story of women fighting together. One of the means of literary and social approach, which helps us to know more about the complex reality of women in this period, is the common concern of resistance. Finally, the poetical questions of Plath seem to have only one clear response in the sociological explanation of the women, their rebelliousness before their own creation of traditional gender, as introduced by Friedan, as such, which leads to the psychological implications and, consequently, to the debate of resistance as well as identity formation, yet, does not lose its topicality in the present discourse of feminism.

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