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10.30546/2518-752X.1.601.061

REFLECTION OF THE FEMALE WORLD IN THE WORKS OF SYLVIA PLATH

Keywords: *Sylvia Plath, feminist criticism, women's voices, identity, poetry, "The Bell Jar"*

Açar sözlər: *Silviya Plat, feminist tənqid, qadınların səsləri, kimlik problemi, poeziya, "Şüşə qaraq altında"*

Ключевые слова: *Сильвия Плат, феминистская критика, женские голоса, идентичность, поэзия, «Под стеклянным колпаком»*

Introduction. This article examines the creative legacy of Sylvia Plath through the lens of feminist criticism, focusing on how her work articulates the complexities of female identity in the mid-twentieth century. By tracing the interplay between her life experiences and artistic expression, the article highlights the ways Plath challenged traditional expectations placed on women. Special attention is given to her representations of the female body, motherhood, mental struggle, and resistance to patriarchal norms. In doing so, the article situates Plath as both a profoundly personal and a profoundly universal writer whose voice continues to resonate in contemporary literary discourse.

Sylvia Plath's creative legacy stands as a defining contribution to modern literature. Her work is often categorized as confessional, yet it transcends autobiography by giving voice to experiences shared by countless women. Plath wrote at a time when expectations of women were sharply defined, and her refusal to conform opened new paths for poetic and narrative expression.

The life of Sylvia Plath is not merely a backdrop to her creative work but a source and a mirror from which her poetry and prose are born. Plath seemed to live several lives at once: the exemplary daughter and student, the gifted poet, the devoted mother, the restless woman who could not find peace within the confines of her marriage. Each of these facets left a deep imprint on her art.

From childhood, Sylvia experienced the duality of the world. In Sylvia's inner world this produced a painful hunger for validation: she wanted to be the best student, the most successful writer, the most obedient child – anything to feel the closeness she so desperately craved.

Her relationship with Ted Hughes was fateful. Their first conversations about poetry blossomed into a passionate and intense connection. In the early months their union seemed almost magical – two poets inspiring each other,

reading aloud and debating late into the night. Yet cracks soon began to appear: differing views on art, jealousy, and emotional volatility. Hughes's charisma and ambition often clashed with Plath's sensitivity and need for affirmation. What once inspired them both increasingly became a source of tension.

Motherhood brought new joys and new challenges. Plath adored her children and wrote of them with tenderness, but she also felt how the demands of domestic life eroded the time and energy she needed for her writing. In her journals she confessed: "*I feel split in two – one part of me writes, the other warms milk and rocks the baby to sleep.*" This inner division sharpened her sense of conflict between the world's expectations of her as a mother and her own creative aspirations. (The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath 2000:223-224)

Sylvia Plath's biography is the story of a woman living in a world that demanded much of her and offered little in return. That is why her personal journey is inseparable from her artistic universe. Every detail of her life – from memories of childhood to the dramatic entries of her final years – echoes through her writing, making it so authentic, so unsettling, and so deeply resonant with anyone who has ever reflected on the price one pays for the right to be oneself.

Sylvia Plath entered the world of literature early, as if words were her native breath. Even as a child, she filled her notebooks with poems and stories, sending them to school and local magazines. At the age of ten, her first poem appeared in print, and this small success felt like a promise of the future. In her youth, she already held the pen with confidence: writing for newspapers, winning competitions, submitting manuscripts to well-known journals. Each publication, each line became a step toward that vast, restless world that would later be recognized as uniquely her own. Even then, she understood: to write is to live.

When reading Sylvia Plath's poems, one has the feeling of stepping into someone's private confessional – yet here there is no repentance, no plea for forgiveness. There is only a voice – bare, furious, at times frightening. It is the voice of a woman who has decided not to remain silent, not to obey the rules of propriety, but to speak out everything that hurts.

From the very beginning of the poem, the motif of publicity and theatricality emerges:

*I am your little light-bringer. Once every ten years I do a trick.
It draws a crowd...*

In these lines the reader encounters a paradox: a private experience is displayed for all to see, turned into a spectacle. The woman described by Plath is not merely a victim of suffering. Her pain is transformed into a show, something the audience consumes with curiosity and a hidden thrill. Here Plath exposes the theme of objectification: a woman's fate becomes an object of observation rather than empathy.

Behind these lines lies Plath's own biographical reality – her suicide attempts, her struggle with depression, her sense that the world expected endless proofs of her strength and talent. Yet the poem moves beyond autobiography. It speaks on behalf of countless women whose lives are turned into "acts" for the amusement or judgment of others – whether as the role of the perfect mother, the

patient wife, or the tireless worker. Her death became the final, tragic chord of a life lived with uncompromising intensity.

In the early hours of February 11, 1963, Sylvia Plath carefully sealed the kitchen of her London flat, placed bread and milk by the cradles of her sleeping children, and turned on the gas. She knelt before the open oven, choosing silence where words had once burned so fiercely. This act was not only the end of a singular poetic voice but also a stark testament to the weight she had carried—an unbearable mix of artistic fire, isolation, and inner torment. Her passing turned her into both a myth and a warning, forever binding her art to the rawness of her fate.

Recurring images in Plath's poetry – glass, mirrors, wounds, rebirth – illustrate a sustained exploration of identity. The use of domestic objects often subverts their usual connotations: jars, kitchens, and household tools become sites of entrapment or transformation. Her attention to the female body is unflinching, depicting childbirth, menstruation, and physical pain with a clarity rarely seen in her era. These details situate her poetry within a larger conversation about the female experience as both embodied and intellectual. Her work confronts the silences surrounding women's inner lives and insists on rendering them in language.

The theme of identity occupies a central place in Sylvia Plath's creative legacy. Her poetry and prose are an ongoing search for an answer to the question: Who am I? This search unfolds under intense inner and outer pressures: personal trauma, cultural expectations, gender prescriptions, and her own ambitious dream of becoming a true artist.

For Plath, identity was never a given – it was always a process, dramatic and painful. She perceives herself simultaneously as a daughter and an orphan, a wife and an artist, a mother and a child, a person and a symbol. This inner split resonates in nearly every poem, becoming a leitmotif, a hidden dramaturgy in her artistic world.

The female identity in Plath's poetry is multi-layered. She is a mother, a wife, a lover, a rebel. In *The Applicant* she is reduced to a “product,” a set of functions for a future husband. In *Daddy* she is a daughter who both fears and hates the tyrannical father. In *Ariel* she becomes a free being, riding into the unknown. Each of these roles challenges stereotypes and reveals how difficult it is for a woman to achieve wholeness in a world that demands fragmentation.

The literary voice of Sylvia Plath is more than poetry; it is an act of resistance. Resistance to silence, to prescribed roles, to male authority, to the slow extinction of one's inner life. Her lines were born not in peace but in struggle, and for that reason they still feel sharp and alive decades later. Although Plath herself never called herself a feminist in any manifesto-like sense, her work has become one of the cornerstones of the feminist literary tradition. In her words we hear pain and anger, but also tenderness and the fierce resolve of a woman forced into narrow frames, who managed to turn those frames into material for her art – breaking them apart from within.

Among all of Sylvia Plath's works, it is her novel *The Bell Jar* that stands as her most personal and, perhaps, her most piercing statement. Published in January 1963 under the pseudonym Victoria Lucas, it appeared only a few weeks before the author's death. This text is not merely a work of fiction; it is a document of

inner collapse, recorded with devastating precision. Within its pages we hear not only the story of a single young woman, but also the collective experience of women in the mid-twentieth century, caught in the narrow space between their own aspirations and society's rigid prescriptions.

The novel is not only a chronicle of illness; it is also a manifesto of female experience. Esther faces a truth that is still striking: for a man with her level of education and ambition, countless paths would be open. For a woman in the 1950s, the script was nearly identical for all – marry, bear children, dissolve into family life. Plath shows how this script is enforced, how mothers, friends, and colleagues repeat it without realizing it erases individuality. *The Bell Jar* thus becomes a novel not only about personal pain, but also about systemic pressure felt by every woman who dares step beyond the lines.

Plath masterfully combines lyrical imagery with almost reportorial accuracy. Her language is simple yet rich in detail. She writes as if keeping a diary – unadorned but with a poet's ear for rhythm. Irony plays a special role: even in the darkest scenes, sharp observations and biting phrases emerge, preventing the text from turning into a monotone lament. This irony is another form of resistance, a way of preserving the inner self even in moments of collapse.

The work of Sylvia Plath is not simply a page in the history of twentieth-century literature. It is a living organism – pulsing, unsettling, unrelenting. It is a voice breaking free from centuries of silence, the voice of a woman who refused to dissolve in the expectations of others, who dared to bring to the surface what is usually hidden behind masks.

Plath was not born a symbol – she became one because her life and her writing fused into a single gesture: the gesture of a person who refuses to fall silent. Her lines are not merely words about pain; they are pain itself, transfigured into language. Her texts are not only descriptions of a woman's fate but acts of defiance against a model in which a woman exists only as the background to someone else's story.

The images and themes running through Plath's work create an entire universe.

In it we find the glass bell jar under which the heroine suffocates; Lazarus, who dies and rises again; the father figure turned into a tyrant; Ariel, the horse galloping into the unknown; and finally Plath herself, transforming suffering into text. These are not only artistic devices but inner symbols of the struggle for one's voice. They have outlived decades, which is why they still feel so familiar today.

We live in a world very different from the 1950s, yet many of the questions that haunted Plath remain painfully relevant. How can a woman reconcile inner freedom with outer expectations? How does one keep her voice amid the noise of a society that dictates standards? How can one speak of pain without being accused of weakness? How do you avoid losing yourself in love, in motherhood, in ambition?

She became not only a poet but a symbol – a symbol of a woman who dared to be imperfect, a symbol of a voice that sounds even from beneath the suffocating glass, a symbol of art that does more than reflect reality: it shapes it, alters the way a generation sees itself.

She shows that to be a woman is not to be “convenient” or “ideal.” It is to be alive, with all one's contradictions, with a hunger for freedom and a fear of it, with

the right to pain and the right to joy. Her work teaches us not to fear being ourselves, even when the world is not ready to accept it. Her words are both a mirror and a weapon.

That is why, when we read Sylvia Plath today, we do not hear only the voice of a woman from the 1960s. We hear a voice that transcends time, speaking to each and every one of us: **find your voice, do not be afraid to speak, do not be afraid to be.**

Thus, the “female world” in her works ceases to be private and becomes universal. And that is why the art of Sylvia Plath continues to live – not as a museum piece, but as a living word that transforms all who hear it.

Subject of the article. This article examines Sylvia Plath’s representation of female identity, inner conflict, and self-expression within the cultural and psychological constraints of mid-twentieth-century society. It focuses on how Plath transforms personal experience into symbolic imagery that reflects broader patterns of women’s lives. The study analyzes her poetic voice as both confessional and resistant, revealing how her work challenges established norms of femininity and authorship.

Scientific novelty. This article offers a renewed interpretation of Sylvia Plath’s work by examining her poetic voice through the combined framework of feminist criticism and identity studies. Unlike traditional biographical readings, it emphasizes how Plath’s imagery transforms private experience into a collective expression of women’s psychological and cultural struggle. The study highlights the symbolic role of the female body and domestic space as sites of both constraint and resistance in her poetry. In doing so, it expands the understanding of Plath’s legacy, positioning her not only as a confessional writer but as a key figure in the evolution of modern feminist aesthetics.

Conclusion. Sylvia Plath’s work reveals the complexity of female identity shaped by personal trauma, cultural expectations, and the struggle for self-expression. Her poetry and prose transform intimate experience into a universal language of resistance, giving voice to emotions traditionally silenced in women’s lives. By examining the female body, domestic space, and psychological conflict, Plath challenges prescribed roles and asserts the legitimacy of women’s inner worlds as subjects of literature. Her legacy endures as a powerful reminder that artistic truth can emerge from vulnerability, and that the search for one’s voice remains a vital act of self-affirmation.

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Xülasə

SİLVİYA PLATIN YARADICILIĞINDA QADIN DÜNYASININ ƏKSI

Bu məqalə Silviya Platin yaradıcılığında qadın dünyasının əksini araşdırır. Tədqiqat onun poeziyası və “*Şüşə Qapağın Altında*” romanında qadınların yaşadığı emosional, psixoloji və sosial çətinliklərin təsvirini təhlil edir. Məqalə cəmiyyətdəki gözləntilərlə qadının şəxsi kimliyi arasında yaranan ziddiyyəti vurğulayır. Feminist yanaşma əsasında Platin qadınların norma və rollara uyğunlaşmaq üçün gördüyü təzyiqləri necə göstərdiyi izah olunur. Eyni zamanda Platin şəxsi həyat təcrübələrinin onun ədəbi üslubuna təsiri nəzərdən keçirilir. Onun yaradıcılığında tənhalıq, daxili mübarizə və özünü müəyyən etmə istəyi kimi mövzuların ifadə olunduğu göstərilir.

Нигяр Сулейманова

Резюме

ОТРАЖЕНИЕ ЖЕНСКОГО МИРА В ТВОРЧЕСТВЕ СИЛЬВИИ ПЛАТ

В данной статье рассматривается отражение женского мира в произведениях Сильвии Плат. Исследование анализирует, как её поэзия и роман *«Под стеклянным колпаком»* изображают эмоциональные, психологические и социальные трудности, с которыми сталкиваются женщины. Особое внимание уделяется конфликту между общественными ожиданиями и личной идентичностью женщины. С позиции феминистской критики показано, как Плат раскрывает давление, оказываемое на женщин с целью соответствия нормам. В статье также рассматривается влияние личного жизненного опыта Плат на её художественный стиль. Показано, что её произведения выражают темы изоляции, внутренней борьбы и стремления к самоопределению. Кроме того, исследование оценивает критическое восприятие Плат и её вклад в феминистскую литературу.

Рәүғи: dos. G.Hüseynli