

A Lacanian Reading of Sylvia  
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قراءة في قصيدة سيلفيا بلاث (المرآة) من منظور  
جاك لاكان

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أ.م. زينب حسون عبد الامير

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Asst. Prof. Zainab Hasoon Abd Al-Ameer  
University of Baghdad/ College of Lan-  
guages /Dept of English

أ.م. زينب حسون عبد الامير  
جامعة بغداد / كلية اللغات / قسم اللغة  
الإنكليزية

therose1978@yahoo.com

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### Abstract

This study aims at scrutinizing Sylvia Plath's poem the "Mirror" through the lenses of the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan. Plath's poem lends itself so readily to be approached from a Lacanian perspective, especially his theory of the mirror stage. This is so because the poet's life is so replete with the psychological tribulations that seep into her poetic production. In Lacan and Plath, the mirror or mirroring, both as a concept and as a metaphor, comes full circle through the linguistic outletting of the symbolic, psychoanalytically and poetically conceived. Throughout her poetry, Plath wants to heal herself and transforms her sense of lack into words. Her poem "Mirror" shows the shifting between the Lacanian Mirror stages. This act of mirroring is responsible for the poet's fictional self being re-generated without recovering the real.

**Keywords: Sylvia Plath; Jacques Lacan; Mirror stage, The Other; (mis) re-cognition;**

## ملخص البحث:

ترمي هذه الدراسة تحليل قصيدة سيلفيا بلاث "المرأة" من خلال توظيف نظرية التحليل النفسي لجاك لاكان. تعد القصيدة قابلة للتناول من منظور لاكان وخصوصاً نظريته فيما يتعلق بـ "عتبة المرأة" وذلك لان حياة الشاعرة تزخر بالارهاصات النفسية التي طالما وجدت طريقها في نتائجها الشعري. إن رمزية المرأة او فعل الانعكاس بوصفه مفهوماً ومجازاً يجد تعبيره الأمثل عبر البوح اللغوي كما هو رمزي في جانب الشعر والتحليل النفسي على حد سواء. تحاول بلاث من خلال الشعر أن تطبب ذاتها وترجم شعورها بالفقدان الى كلمات. إن قصيدتها "المرأة" افضل تعبير عن ذلك التحول في عتبات المرأة لدى لاكان. كما ان فعل الانعكاس هذا يضيف الى اعادة خلق الذات المتخيلة للشاعرة دون الوصول الى أفق الحقيقة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: سيلفيا بلاث، جاك لاكان، الآخر، التعرف / اللاتعرف

Seeing Sylvia Plath's poetic forays through Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytical insight is, in a good part of it, paying tribute and homage to the Lacanian legacy that dwelt so long on literature's deep dives into the human psyche. Hence, his literary learnings, allusions and metaphorism have provided the gear to approach literature. Amongst Plath's poems, "Mirror" (1961) is to be singled out as the most representative model of the psychic and metaphoric processing of the poet's deep-rooted sense of lack. The capacity of leaping from one image to another reflects her mental suffering. Consequently, it shows her suffering while passing through all Lacanian mirror stages (Imaginary, Symbolic, and the Real). Furthermore, it displays how she suffered from narcissism which was obvious in her character from her early childhood, especially when she wanted to be the reflection of her mother. After recognizing herself, she passed through the shifted from the *Desire of the Mother* to the *Name of the Father* (Lacan 2006, 278) and this stage is the start of her inauguration into the symbolic domain where language operates.

In his essay "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I" (2006, 75) Lacan examined the mirror and its relationship to personal identity. He introduces three concepts (Need- Demand- Desire) that are matched to the mirror stages. In his psychoanalytical hypothesis, the first concept is Need that is related to the Imaginary Order. The child's first assertion of its identity is when he sees its appearance in the mirror. The (I) is in a state of infancy, meaning that there is no language with which to identify or analyze a subject. The child observes no structures and hence sees no limits between his self and the things of the world. He does not have any sense of his body as a whole. He is driven by Need. He does not realize that

his need that comes from an object (his mother) is part of another person. He keeps on understanding life randomly until around the age of six to eight months when he enters what Lacan calls the mirror stage. In this case, he will form a separate identity in order to enter culture. This separation gives a feeling of Loss when he loses the main sense of unity and security.

Within the next six to eighteen months, the baby can perceive that the image in the mirror is an image of a child. The image in the mirror is portrayed by Lacan as the "Ideal I".

This jubilant assumption of his specular image by the child at the *in-fans* stage, still sunk in his motor incapacity and nursing dependence, would seem to exhibit in an exemplary situation the symbolic matrix in which the *I* is precipitated in a primordial form, before it is objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in the universal its function as subject. (Lacan 2006, 76)

Lacan states that the "ideal ego" is associated with the imaginary order while the "ego ideal" is associated with the symbolic order. Lacan's "ideal ego" is the ideal of image of the subject that the ego tries to follow; it first affects the subject when he sees himself in a mirror during the mirror stage, which occurs around six to eighteen months of age. The ideal ego splits into two parts: an *I* and an image of the *I*, the small other, the idealized image of the subject. The "ego ideal", by contrast, is the point of symbolic identification. It is the gaze of the Great Other who watches the subject and pushes him to do his best. The subject tries to impress the Great Other with his ideal ego. (Lacan 2006, 562)

Coupled with Lacan's Real Order, the child Plath experienced her recently discovered feeling of wholeness while as yet seeing herself

as brought together with her mother, the creator of her needs and desires. This association with the mother gives her a feeling of control and completeness, an experience mentioned as *the Desire of the Mother* by Lacan. At the beginning of the poem, she compares her mother with a mirror. The mirror image helps recall the Lacanian metaphorism of mirroring that frames his theory of the psyche. It lets the reader know that this mirror is the speaker, which is exact, truthful, and unemotional.

I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions.  
 Whatever I see I swallow immediately  
 Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike. (L.1-3)

The mirror here represents Plath's mother, Aurelia, who is in need of doing her duty towards her two children "unmisted by love or dislike". She had to give up her academic career and became a full time homemaker and this is made clear by her confession, "I wanted a peaceful home—and I did—I would simply have to become more submissive, although it was not my nature to be so" (*Letters Home* 1986, 13). This conduct was sometimes admired or scorned by her daughter Sylvia.

What is more, the first two lines of the first stanza stand for the first step of the mirror stages: The Real. The mirror here is trying to swallow everything "by love or dislike". This means that Plath's mother is giving her daughter what she needs and the mother takes what she needs to satisfy her desire. In this pre-lingual stage of development, the daughter is not speaking and the only one who speaks is the mirror—Sylvia's mother. The child Sylvia does not need to use language because she met all her needs. She is dominated by a chaotic mix of ideas, feelings, and needs. She cannot distinguish

her own self from that of her mother or even the world around her. This is the stage, then, when the subject is near to the pure materiality of existence, or what Lacan calls "the Real." At this stage, the subject, according to Julia Kristeva, is purely dominated by his drives, both life drives and the death drives<sup>15</sup> ,1982) .)

It follows then that, the child shifts from Needs to Demands. After the separation from the mother, the child's satisfaction gears towards other objects than the mother. However, this separation creates a sense of loss. Thus, the demand here means the demand for completeness. The mother is taking care of her child at the age 6-to-18 months, but no object can satisfy his demands. When the child reaches this stage, he will see himself in the mirror. He thinks that he is a whole being like others and his image in the mirror is recognized as "Me". The mother who stands near him is reinforcing this misrecognition that this image is "You". This misrecognition creates the Ego or the "I" and an identification with his image.

More importantly, Lacan clarifies that the gaze of the child at the mirror is the first step to the development of an "I" and the different functions of the Other. Without this gaze, no identification or differences can take place. The unemotional and impartial reflection of the mirror represents Plath's mother's eye. When the child Plath is gazing at her reflection in the mirror, the mirror itself is gazing too. The mother is looking at her child during the day and wants to be her reflection. The mirror sees the wall (her child Plath) pink in color with "flickers". This demonstrates how the mother wants her child to reach perfection like the perfection of the wall with its minor flaws.

Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall.

It is pink, with speckles. I have looked at it so long



I think it is part of my heart. But it flickers.

Faces and darkness separate us over and over. (L.6-9)  
The pink wall with the speckles symbolizes the heart of the mirror / the mother. This means that the mother is always looking at her child as a reflection of herself and her heart is always beating. In one of her confessions, Plath says that her mother “wants to be me: she wants me to be her: she wants to crawl into my stomach and be my baby and ride along.” (Kukil 2000, 433-4). In this stage, Plath feels that she will lose her identity and reflect a false self.

Similar to Freud’s idea of loss in his essay “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” (1920), Lacan finds that this game is a sign for the entry into the Symbolic Order. Freud talks about his nephew who was playing with spool tied with yarn. When the child threw away the spool, he said Fort which means “gone”. Then he pulled the spool back in, he said “Da” which means “here”. This very process correlates to the child’s feelings of loss of his mother or her absence. When the spool is far away, the child is experiencing the feeling of loss of an object while his “Da” reflects his pleasure if he restores this object.

This Fort/Da game is relevant to Plath’s line “But it flickers / Faces and darkness separate us over and over”. “Flickers” and “faces and darkness” are the images of many faces going to the mirror, taking a look at themselves, and then they turn off the lights and leave the mirror alone in darkness. The wall and the mirror are isolated from each other whenever such an interruption happens. This indicates Plath’s isolation and separation from her mother after recognizing her image in the mirror. After this stage, the child Plath is shifting from the *Desire of the Mother to the Name of the Father* and this second stage start with her inauguration into the Symbolic order.

By the same token, Lacan argues that the Imaginary order is the process of identification which is a result of the trauma of the mirror stage. When the infant's primary narcissism and his inability to differentiate between himself and any external entity or object are fractured, he can observe the differences between the self and the other. After the impossible effort of returning to the pre-imaginary stage of primary narcissism, the person will be forced to develop his identification and produce in the process an "imago" or "ideal ego", the vision of himself which he takes to be the essence of identity. (Reichardt 2008, 8) Carmen Birkle states that

The only way of becoming one with or like her [Plath's] mother would be to go through the crisis of separation, the time of the chora, the transition period from the Imaginary to the Symbolic, the Oedipal crisis, over and over again. In that sense, the poem represents the woman's recognition of the necessity for a final termination of the mirror stage, for a separation from the mother and thus for an entrance into the Symbolic order. (1996, 91)

The chora is here understood as the receptacle, when in Kristeva (1982, 4) it is quite explanatory of the nexus of the semiotic and the symbolic which stand for the imaginary and the symbolic respectively. The child expresses itself only through coos and cries in order to attract the attention. The chora is also "the place where the subject is made and negated" (Arya 2014, 20). When the child rejects any basic physical necessities provided by the mother trying to free himself from her, he refuses to accept food from the mother and he expresses disgust with any food associating with her. As Kristeva points out, "Food-loathing is perhaps the most elementary and most archaic form of abjection" (1982, 2). Kristeva further describes

this marvel as “the struggle to separate from the maternal body.” (13) Thus, it is a violence process of separation from the motherly body, the child’s own origin. The child not only leaves his mother’s body but also rejects everything associated with her body whether physically or symbolically.

After her separation from the mother, Plath realizes herself as “lacking” and that she is not “whole” until she uncovers her true desire. According to Lacanian theory, when the child realizes that he is an independent being through recognizing his own reflection in the mirror, the child also misrecognizes himself. Laura Mulvey posits:

The mirror phase occurs at a time when the child’s physical ambitions outstrip his motor capacity, with the result that his recognition of himself is joyous in that he imagines his mirror image to be more complete, more perfect than he experiences his own body. Recognition is thus overlaid with misrecognition; the image recognized is conceived as the reflected body of the self, but its misrecognition as superior projects this body outside itself as an ego ideal, gives rise to the future generation of identification with others. (1975, 749)

The terms “recognition” and “misrecognition” can be obviously observed in the second stanza when Plath replaces the mirror with the lake. She attempts to look away from the eyes of “her mother Medusa”, but she could not help it.

Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me, Searching my reaches for what she really is.

Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon. (L. 10-12)

The lake is reflecting the image of the person, but it is not clear and smooth like the surface of the mirror. The movement of the lake shows the “agitation” of the poet who is caught between two

worlds: the world of the mother and the world of the father. Karen Homey's states that "one way to allay this anxiety is to cling to one of the parents, and a child will do so if there is any chance of thus receiving reassuring affection" (1950, 38). Thus, Plath struggled for her father's attention through her perfect performance.

When translated into Lacanian context, metaphorism of Fort/Da game is a sign of the move from the Imaginary to the Symbolic Order. The child is using language to express his loss. The mirror/her mother which is objective and passive is replaced by the lake/her father. The lake's beauty is merciless and dangerous. It reminds Plath of her happy childhood with her father and how the family spent the last years at the seaside. The lake here means death and coldness. She thinks that the waves of the sea reflects the sadistic Oedipal father Otto and then her husband Ted Hughes. Both of them are being called "sea god" who are carrying her on their backs. Hence, Plath regarded the lake as a place of unity with her father and her first suicidal attempt was trying to drown herself. Somewhere in her poetic opus in "Full Fathom Five" Plath refers to her father a drowned seagod or godhead whose reappearance is grewed for by the poetic persona:

The muddy rumors  
Of your burial move me  
To half-believe: your reappearance  
Proves rumors shallow, (21-24)

Hence, she expresses the experience of her separate from her father so bitterly, "I walk dry on your kingdom's border/ Exiled to no good." (41-42) This underscores the psychoanalytic-poetic associate between the father and the lake in the act of mirroring.

The lack is the essential keyword of the Symbolic order which is associated with desire as Lacan puts it. It is a “lack which causes desire to arise” (Evans, 2006, 98). The object that causes that desire in motion is the “phallus.” But this “phallus”, contrary to Freud, is not the male organ. It is the elemental signifier of completeness and full self-realization. It represents the structure of language and the idea of culture or civilization. Everybody wants to get this phallus or the center of language, but no one can get there or reach his desire. With this in mind, Plath is the subject who thinks that desire is a continuous questioning of what the Other desires or lacks.

In order to avoid her longing for union with her father represented by the lake, Plath turns to the pre-Oedipal mother to control her longings. Alternatively, her mother becomes a symbol of coldness like the gaze of Medusa. Notably, Plath’s conflict to identify with her father is connected to her feminine sexual feelings. As a response to being a victim by males, the only way to fill her gap was her poetry. Hélène Cixous states:

By writing herself, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display – the ailing or dead figure, which so often turns out to be the nasty companion, the cause and location of inhibitions. Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time. Write yourself. Your body must be heard. Only then will the immense resources of the unconscious spring forth. (1975, 395).

Without expressing herself throughout writing, Cixous adds, woman will remain in a state of distressing, disordered, and fixed in the Imaginary in her unawareness of the Law of the Signifier. She should take control of her speech and find her pleasure. For Cixous, wom-

an should use her "white ink" in writing which presents the mother's milk or her desire to state the importance of reunion by turning to the maternal body which stands for the connection and completeness.

It is worth noting that the said faces of the first stanza disappear. We can only see one face which is a woman's. This woman refuses to see "what she really is" in this lake. The woman, which was once a child, moves into the Symbolic order. Her imago is not the same in the mirror. However, there is still a need for the previous imago again. She comes toward the reflection and strolls directly through it, into a world that is in reverse, where images are not what she has realized in the "real" world. She acknowledges she does not have any desire to be a part of it. This is a metaphor for the traumatic experience of the child realizing himself in a mirror, understanding that the child in the mirror is not another child. With his image being reflected, he understands that he is one and alone, and it follows that he will look at his mirror till his death.

Plath seems to convey her never-ending lack which Lacan calls desire. Her desire to be the Other. This desire cannot be reached: it is not a need or demand for love, but desire to be the center of the system or the Symbolic. In Lacan's subject theory, the Symbolic Order is also called the Great Other or merely the Other with a capital O – just to distinguish it from the other of the Imaginary Order. He believes that the social world is made through rules chosen to control many forms of personal relations and exchange. The most important form of connection and exchange for Lacan is verbal communication which is the base for the Symbolic Order. Within this Order, he asserts that the law of the Father is the law of the Word. (Murray 1983, 21). Plath's father dominates his child's lan-

guage learning. She was suffering from linguistic oppression when acquiring a male-dominated language and she was stuck between the varieties of her Austrian mother's and her father's language, but the power of the father begins to assume the vital role in her development process. With reference to Freud's and Lacan's endorsement of the father and his linguistic overshadowing presence in the child's life apropos of Plath's experience, Sahar Nejati Karimabad states that "Plath as a poet seems to have mastered language partially by a father's presence, and the rest of her linguistic capabilities by struggling with his absence" (2012, 274). It follows that this absence gives free reign to Plath's poetic discourse to draw on her semiotic arsenal as represented by the mother and her language, which explains the mirror-like duplicity in her poetry.

Plath's desire is directed at many objects during her life, starting from the mother who is the initial Great Other, moving to the father who is the central figure in the process of entering the Symbolic Order. Later on in life the role of the Great Other will be assumed by various types of social institutions represented by her husband, Ted Hughes. The first example of her desire which was directed towards her mother is when Plath tried to commit suicide after the rejection of her work by Harvard's Summer Writing Program. She realized that the Real is unattainable. In *Letters Home*, she says, "Never, never, will I reach the perfection I long for with all my soul" (1986, 40). Being unable to reach perfection damaged the bonds between her mother and herself and her suicidal attempt was only a message to the former. The lack and *Desire of the Mother* forced her to find another substitute for her lost object. Her father's death let her look for a father-like husband. Confirming this necessity, she

significantly says in her journals that Ted Hughes's male presence is "a substitute of my father" (1982, 280). Because of such reliance on others, Plath did not develop to be solid both physically and mentally and was not able to face any crisis she experienced in her life separately and freely. She directed her anger towards Hughes and linked his betrayal with the symbolic betrayal of her father when he left her. This made Plath somewhat unfeeling and hesitant to live, which prepares to her last suicide.

Plath, who is divorced from the motherly body, recognizes her individual narcissism. She expresses narcissism and the most profound side of her character through the image of the lake. The woman in Plath's poem "Mirror" is looking at herself in the lake like the legendary figure Narcissus, who is hopelessly charmed with himself and his reflection in the water and dies because of this fascination. On one occasion, Plath affirms her ego-centrism when she confesses in her journals: "I do not love; I do not love anyone except myself, this is rather a shocking thing to admit. I am capable of affection for those who reflect my own world" (Karen 2000, 98). Her narcissism is similar to Krestiva's comment on Lacan's Mirror Stages as she underscores the importance of the Imaginary Order which will stay influential on the child even if he reaches the Symbolic Order. She shows that the Abject is a pre-linguistic stage that occurs between the chora (from 0-6 months) and the mirror stages (6-18). Thus, the Imaginary Order or Abjection as Krestiva calls it, is troubled by the child's relation with the Abject and thus will be "a precondition of narcissism" (1982,13). Plath once explained her writing intentions and said: "You ask me why I spend my life writing? Do I find entertainment? Is it worthwhile? Above all, does it



pay? If not, then, is there a reason?...I write only because there is a voice within me that will not be still" (*Letters Home* 34-5). This Voice that Plath heard might be the result of her oscillating between the Imaginary and the Symbolic Order. Her conflictual frame of mind is the main idea of Plath's writing and the schizoid relationship with her mother is a notable factor that affected her work and life. She attempted to affirm to the desires of her mother. She wanted to be perfect in writing as well as in her life.

Pursuing this, the woman in the poem, turns her face towards the more sentimental and less sensible world of illusion: the candles and the moon. The mirror tells that the candles and the moon do not give honest lights, thus the mirror twists the picture, reflects back and presents them as liars since they do not allow the real picture to be manifest. The woman is trying to avoid seeing her image in the mirror, yet the mirror "see[s] her back, and reflect[s] it faithfully." It keeps on mirroring the woman's image inside itself and refuses the fact that the woman depends on any alternative such as the moon and the candles. At the point when the woman sees herself, she turns her back with "tears" and "agitation of hands". These tears show that Plath is trying to go back to the Real, but she could not.

Gathering from what she herself put down in her letters and journals, it might be said that Plath was suffering from irresolute personality and Electra complex (Rosenthal 1970, 70). Her poem "Daddy" obviously portrays her vacillating personality, and it mirrors that the poet experiences Electra complex. She herself stated that this poem "is talked by a young lady with an Electra complex" (Plath 1982). She generally looked for an anchored shelter under the protection of a god-like-person. Thus, the early death of Plath's

father is a "kind of primary trauma which is rewritten into the painful coming-of-age of the daughter as writer" (Manner 1996, 152). This trauma was enhanced by her mother who could not avoid her duplication. Sometimes the mother was too adorable and kind, and sometimes a "vampire" trying to suppress her children's autonomy. Plath wrote to her brother Warren:

You know, as I do, and it is a frightening thing, that mother would actually kill herself for us if we calmly accepted all she wanted to do for us. She is an abnormally altruistic person and I have realized lately that we have to fight against her selflessness as we would fight against a deadly disease. (*Letters Home* 112)

These contradictory love-hate feelings with her mother, the omnipresent other or Other, cannot be forgotten. Plath expresses her hate toward her mother as well as herself because she could not distinguish between her own existence and her mother's. She wrote in November 1952: "I am afraid. I am not solid but hollow. I feel behind my eyes a numb, paralyzed cavern, a pit of hell, a mimicking nothingness. I never thought, I never wrote, I never suffered. I want to kill myself, to escape from responsibility, to *crawl back abjectly into the womb*" (Kukul 2000, 149; italics mine). These lines lend further support to Plath's idea that death was the only pathway to rebirth. She needs to enter the womb-like cave which is a metaphor for her suicidal attempt. To put it another way, she desires to move back to the womb, her original home.

To push Freud's Fort/Da to its extreme, it might be argued that the adult Plath is Lacan's child who is seeking for his mother, as she enters the Symbolic order which is about loss and absence. She is in need to fulfill her desires by looking at the mirror every morning. Plath writes:

I am important to her. She comes and goes.

Each morning it is her face that replaces the darkness. (L.16-17)

She expresses her anxiety about her mother's absence by telling the reader about her experience of the loss of a beloved object. The only way to tell her pain is by using language or poetry because, for Lacan, language is always about loss and absence. When the child uses words, this means that he tries to get back his object again.

Plath's mirror, as Parivin Ghasemi states, "represents the unfeeling male view of a woman and what is socially expected of her: possessing an idealized beauty and ever-lasting youth" (2007, 58). The woman's loss of her youth and beauty causes a conflict within herself. Her realization of the truth that she is no longer young and beautiful makes her choose her inner self and then she will see only the "terrible fish." The woman needs to see the mirror only to tell her something about her identity, but the mirror only reflects reality from the objective male view, "the reflection of the feminine ideal in male eyes" (Freedman 1993,161). It is she who was drowned in the lake. The lake here represents time that has killed the young girl and transformed her into an old woman or "a terrible fish" as she goes on:

In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman  
Rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish. (L. 18- 19)

The "jubilant" person of Lacan's first stage is depressed now. The reflection of the water tells her that her past self is "drowning" and she should wait her horrible future. When the mirror describes her as "a terrible fish", the reader moves from the "Real" back to the "Imaginary order" again. He experiences what Lacan calls, "reality". This transition from the Real to the Imaginary helps the reader to shape a solid symbol in his mind about man's motion from the

Imaginary to the Real. A hole in the Real appears then a symbolic image shows up in this hole or gap which gives man a feeling of intelligible and steady interior harmony that leads to structuring his future commitment with the Real.

The poet at the last stage realizes her own identity. She knows from the beginning that she is a victim of a narcissistic parent-relationship in which the parents used their child as a mirror to see themselves. In "Mirror", Plath seems to be saying that Aurelia left her vulnerable. She does not offer her a safe haven but instead abandons her to the danger of the smothering sea, to death by drowning.

The only way to find her own self is by committing suicide. To that end, she will reach the Lacanian last stage, the Real. The Real cannot be symbolized or represented in the unconscious. It is related to the death drive: it is the relation between damaging behavior and the achievement of pleasure. Judith Kroll believes that any heroine who wants to find her true self should destroy the false self, "Life lived by the false self is death-in-life, while the rebirth of the true self promises life-in-death, expressed in the poetry in images of purgation, purification, and transcendence" (1976, 13)

In a forward to *The Journal of Sylvia Plath*, Hughes writes, illuminating Plath's self-revelation in the last three months of her life, that

Her real self had showed itself in her writing, just for a moment, three years earlier, and when I heard it—the self I had married, after all, and lived with and knew well—in that brief moment, three lines recited as she went out through a doorway, I knew that what I had always felt must happen had now begun to happen, that her real self, being the real poet, would now speak for itself, and would throw off all those lesser and artificial selves that had monopolized the words

up to that point. It was as if a dumb person suddenly spoke. (1982, xii)

The shedding-off these selves is part and parcel of Plath's psychic and poetic experience that leads her to meeting death's face represented by the return to the Real. She was grappling with her false self trying to hide it by death. Strong motives to demolition besides production appear in many of her poems. Through poetry she tried to connect death with rebirth. She believed that only death would help her to reach rebirth.

All things considered, it seems reasonable to think that the Symbolic- Imaginary-Real nexus of Lacan's three psychoanalytic orders form a trio of Plath's intrapsychic realm which shows all her needs, demands, and desires. She is trapped in the alienated webs of the Other who points her to what and how to desire. The subject is trapped in the webs of desire and cannot abscond from them. Plath's poem "Mirror" has a hallmark stamp of her experience, pain, anxiety, and manic depression. It shows how lack or absence opens up the road to desire.

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