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THE MULTIPLE FACADES OF A MYTHIC FIGURE IN THE POETRY OF SYLVIA PLATH

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Abstract

This thesis examines the various manifestations of the same persona in the poetic cosmos of Sylvia Plath. To date, a number of critics have dedicated their studies mainly to the analysis of Plath's later poems, either from a feminist or a psychoanalytic, and hence biographical, point of view. However, as this thesis suggests, it is impossible to look at Sylvia Plath's poems from a single point of view, as this will lead the reader astray, who will find it impossible to understand the true meaning and purpose of the shifting persona of the poet. All major trends in Plath criticism will be examined in the chapters of the thesis (mainly feminist, psychoanalytic, cultural and historical theories) in order to reach the conclusion that Plath's poetry does not have only one meaning and one implication, but rather, that it is a unique literacy experience, it is poetry that uses all possible influences and available elements, it is a mixture of emotions, thoughts, ideas, metaphors of suffering, mythical elements and recurring motifs, which are manifested altogether in each poem through a different mythic persona, a mask, that the poet has so carefully created. Moreover, through a careful analysis of those poems that best illustrate this creation of a mythic persona ("Ariel", "Lady Lazarus", "Daddy" et al.) the "Plath myth" is identified and interpreted. Through her multiple facets, climaxing in the persona's transformation into poetry, in "Ariel," Sylvia Plath achieved a unique and distinctive female voice, as well as the creation of poems that invite us to reflect upon them continuously, so as to realize the ongoing proliferation of meaning inherent in their suggestive nuances.