



SLOWLY BUT SURELY: THE MATERNAL PHASE OF SYLVIA PLATH IN HER LATE POEMS

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ABSTRACT

Being a mother is the most exclusive experience that only women experience. For centuries, women were forced to accept the dogma that motherhood is a wonderful experience. Sylvia Plath is one of the female poets who dared to express her original experience of being a mother without having to follow the language of patriarchal literature. The Gynocritic approach is applied because it places the female voice as the single most original voice for the experience of motherhood without patriarchal interference. Several selected poems at the end of life from Sylvia Plath were used as a source of research data. The finding shows that Plath had considerable difficulty in adapting to being a mother. Whatever experience Plath has, or any mother is an exclusive wealth that should only be owned and shared by women.

Keywords: motherhood; women experiences; Gynocritics; Sylvia Plath

ABSTRAK

Menjadi ibu merupakan pengalaman paling eksklusif yang hanya dialami oleh perempuan. Selama beberapa abad, perempuan dipaksa menerima dogma bahwa menjadi seorang ibu adalah pengalaman membahagiakan. Sylvia Plath, salah satu diantara penyair perempuan yang berani untuk menyatakan pengalaman orisinalnya menjadi seorang ibu tanpa harus mengikut kepada bahasa sastra patriarki. Pendekatan Ginokritik diaplikasikan karena menempatkan suara perempuan sebagai satu-satunya suara paling orisinal untuk pengalaman keibuan tanpa campur tangan patriarki. Beberapa puisi terpilih di akhir hayat dari Sylvia Plath digunakan sebagai sumber data penelitian. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Plath mengalami kesulitan yang cukup hebat dalam beradaptasi menjadi seorang ibu. Apapun pengalaman yang dialami Plath, atau ibu manapun merupakan kekayaan eksklusif yang seharusnya hanya dapat dimiliki dan dibagikan oleh perempuan semata.

kata kunci: Keibuan; pengalaman perempuan; Ginokritik; Sylvia Plath

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INTRODUCTION

A name that is comprehensively perceived as a driving figure in 20th-century writing and culture is Sylvia Plath. Alongside some well-known writers like Maya Angelou, Virginia Woolf, Anne Sexton, and Jamaica Kincaid, she is unceremoniously acclaimed as the best lady author in 20th-century writing (Kendall, 2001; Wagner-Martin, 1999; Gill, 2006). The brilliance of her writing was renowned by many critics and academics; her magnum opus, *The Bell Jar*, and posthumous work *Ariel* are profound and often linked to Plath's private life. Unsurprisingly, Plath

often states her life experiences in her writings which is known as confessional poetry (Naylor-Smith, 2013).

Plath was born on October 27th, 1932, in Boston, United States. She was a splendid understudy who got Fulbright Fellowship from Cambridge University. Afterwards, Plath met another famous poet, Ted Hughes, and got married in 1956. She had an unhappy companion with Hughes because of his affair with another woman. Despite of her unfortunate marriage, Sylvia Plath won the Pulitzer Prize in 1982 for *Collected Poems*. The narrative of Sylvia Plath—her grieved life and appalling passing—was the reason for the 2003 biopic *Sylvia* featuring Gwyneth Paltrow in the lead spot. She is a profoundly respected and much-examined artist right up until today (Kirk, 2004).

Discussing Plath's works is a lot of equivalents to debating a woman's deepest desires, oppression, subjectivity, creativity, family, pregnancy, transgression, children, body, and language. Plath and many other great writers consider writing as the most effective therapy and medium in conveying unspoken grievances (Holbrook, 2014). The problems Plath talked about were familiar to the bright and ambitious young women who grew up in mid-century America (Gill, 2008). Academics indeed agree to say that Plath's work represents a large part of the repressed voices of women in twentieth-century American culture.

Plath's poems, as many have called them, are display case of her life. Plath was eager to include topics about herself in poetry, such as death, depression, and everything else about her life experiences. Besides, Plath's writing also raises the issue of women's consciousness, experiences, and subjectivity as something important. Plath's voice about her experiences as a young mother is also one of the most critical issues in her works.

In this research, five poems entitled 'Metaphors' (1959), 'Morning Song' (1961) 'For A Fatherless Son' (1962), 'Balloons' (1963), and 'Child' (1963) selected as a data source. The selection of these five poems was based on the central issue raised as the center of conversation and the focus of this research, which is the issue of being a mother. In addition, the discussion also includes the initial conflicts between Plath as a woman and an artist up to the stage of acceptance as a mother. Based on the description of the hypothesis above, this study is categorized as Gynocriticism (women as authors).

So far, the academic discussion regarding Plath's motherhood is still limited. In the previous studies, scholars have tended to focus on the tragic dimensions of the poet's life, exploring the premature death of her father, problematic relationships with her mother and husband, and on self-inflicted death (see Axelrod, 1990; Butscher, 1976; Holbrook, 1968, 1976; Rose, 1991; Stevenson, 1990).

As for studies discussing Plath's motherhood, the focus points tend to be uniform, highlighting, among other things, themes related to death and emotional distress, which recurrently refer to Plath's psychic analysis, and mainly concerning her parents and husband. This idea is reinforced by the opinion of Aneesh Barai, who stated that: "Although much criticism of Sylvia Plath was directed at her father, and recently, blaming her mother through *The Bell Jar* (1963) and

her letters, very little is said about children's literature, her child or Plath as a mother herself, even though she had two children" (2015, p. 39).

The scarcity of studies on the issue of Plath's motherhood has been initiated in recent years, as did Cosslett (1994); Christodoulides (2005); Souffrant (2009); Meimije Ruiz (2016). This paper seeks to fill in the gaps between the studies mentioned above, namely, highlighting the phases Plath went through in becoming a mother. It is also suggested that readers should not prematurely judge Plath as a person who always contrasts with maternal ideas.

In general, this study aimed to demonstrate the voices of twentieth-century American women about their experiences, especially as mothers and wives, and their efforts to overcome them, which are represented in Plath's selected poems. It is crucial to bring this matter forward because women's desires do not speak the same language as men's desires (Showalter, 1978; 2012). This difference must be expressed in a natural way to strengthen the culture of women's writing as expected by Gynocriticism.

RESEARCH METHOD

Based on the research objectives, the characteristics of the data collected, and the data analysis carried out by the leading research problem, the suitable type of research is descriptive-analytical research with a qualitative approach. As is common in qualitative research, the researchers are the primary instruments of the research. Researchers become the main instrument who design and perform the analysis and become actors who present data (Johnson-Bailey & Ray, 2008). Data of this research are textual material (Saldana, 2011). Since the focus of the research is women's experiences, the textual material in the poetry is focused on its relevance to women's subjective voices, especially those related to maternity experiences.

Data collection was undertaken by reading precisely (or closed reading). In assiduous reading, the marking process is completed all through the reading activity as per the issues that are the focal point of the investigation (Jänicke et al., 2015). The analysis was carried out by using the content analysis method. Content analysis is the work of reading the text to reveal the manifest meaning (on the surface) and the latent meaning of a text (Saldana, 2011). In this case, this study intends to reveal the personal experience of a woman author regarding how complicated the situation is in living and being a mother.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Based on the analysis of five selected poems, three phases that reflect Plath's experiences of being a mother were found. In short, the researchers identified the first phase as rejection, the second phase as a dilemma, and the last one as acceptance. For more details, the details of the three stages can be seen in the following table:

Table 1. Plath's Phases and Experiences in Becoming a Mother

No.	Title of Poems	Phase	Experience
1.	Metaphor (MP)	Denial	Plath's anxiety during the pregnancy period
2.	Morning Song (MS)		unsympathetic feelings toward her new infant
3.	For A Fatherless Son (FFS)	Dilemma	her hatred toward the childcare period & goodness comes within the baby
4.	Balloons (Ba)		her youthful spirit is spoiled by her son & Plath doesn't show any resentment or anguish towards the son
5.	Child (Ch)	Acceptance	Plath's praising for the child, Plath's admission for awful past.

1. First Phase: Denial

In the early days Plath was crowned a future mother, she clearly rejects the ideas of motherhood. This view was revealed by Plath's anxiety about her helpless and unsafe physical condition as a pregnant woman (Moosavinia & Mazlounian, 2018). In addition, Plath's refusal was also identified through the anguish and discomfort experienced during the first labor. Those ideas above are uttered in two poems entitled *Metaphor* and *Morning Song*.

Before analyzing the text, a comparison of the publication time of the poem with the context of the events in the poem was introduced. According to Plath's mother, Aurelia Plath, in April 1960, 'Plath gave birth to her first baby, Frieda' (qt from *Letters Home* in Gill 10). During this period (1959-1960), Plath published the poem, *Metaphor*. The second poem, *Morning Song*, released in 1961, a year after her first baby. Based on these facts, this study concluded that the two lyrics were closely related to Plath's first pregnancy and baby.

The denial signs can be noticed in both poems. The first one occurs in the poem "Metaphors" that implicitly tells Plath's anxiety during the pregnancy period. Unconsciously, Plath reveals her discontent toward pregnancy that highly bothers her physical and mental. The idea of pregnancy itself can be seen in the phrase 'in nine syllables' (line 1), nine lines of form, and nine letters of titles 'metaphors' that refer to nine months of pregnancy.

In the first line, Plath shows a straightforward attitude toward pregnancy. The diction chosen to describe her suffering and pain is a 'riddle' (line 1). 'Riddle' implicitly gives readers a negative tone and stigma towards pregnancy. Plath did not hesitate to point out the difficulties and confusion she suffered at this time. Indirectly, Plath also wants to reject the discourse in the society that over glorifies pregnancy as the only possible achievement made by women in society.

In the second line, Plath starts to explain in detail her physical transformation within her mind. The metaphor 'elephant and house' imply a bigger size of her body. Plath's attitude toward this radical change can be seen from diction 'ponderous' (line 2). 'Ponderous' literally means

'slow' and 'laborious'. These dictions point out the problematic situation and sufferings that Plath's experience during her pregnancy period.

In the third line, Plath reemphasizes the physical change within herself. Plath uses the image of 'melon' as a metaphor. However, Plath's cynical manner is reflected through her choice of words that create the same image about her physical: 'with two tendrils'. This metaphor gives us a vision of a strange, unsymmetrical, and creepy form. Plath indirectly states that her pregnancy has damaged her appearances by presenting an ugly and weird paper.

In the fourth line, Plath is seen praising the physical appearance of the baby in a mesmerizing metaphor. This premise is illustrated in a compliment 'O red fruit, ivory, fine timbers!' The phrase 'red fruit' indicates the color of the baby that was just born. The word 'Ivory' refers to the delicate skin of the baby. The compliment is complemented by fine timber diction, which reflects the splendor of her tiny legs. However, this compliment feels quite heartbreaking when compared to Plath's deteriorating physical condition.

In the following three lines, Plath again emphasized the conflict between herself and society. On these three lines, Plath rejects the image of a happy and beautiful pregnancy in the phrases 'yeasty rising' and 'money new-minted' as is often perceived by society. Furthermore, Plath likens her pregnancy to be not much different from that of 'a cow'. Plath did not hesitate to reveal that she could not achieve the emotional bond between mother and baby like other women. Plath coldly also told that she was only a 'means' and a 'stage' performance stage.

The eighth line shows Plath's view of pregnancy itself. The statement 'I ate a bag of green apples' (line 8) relates to the story of Adam and Eve about the origin of the pain and suffering of a pregnant woman. On this line, Plath likens her pregnancy to a curse and a source of suffering for her. Pregnancy, too, has sacrificed her time and opportunity as a promising writer. Pregnancy for Plath is nothing more than a bunch of bad luck.

In the final line, Plath reveals her helplessness to escape from this situation. The line 'there is no getting off' (line 9) seemed to reflect her discomfort to get out of this unpleasant situation. In the end, Plath concludes that pregnancy is a trap-like cage and a labyrinth that has no way out.

Plath's subsequent denial of the idea of motherhood is presented in a poem entitled *Morning Song*. Implicitly, this was manifested by Plath through unsympathetic feelings for towards her newborn baby. Similar to "Metaphors", "Morning Song" is also displayed in a satirical tone. The 'Song' diction, which is generally synonymous with feeling happy and cheerful, is used in contrast by Plath as a paradox.

In the first line, Plath compares her infant with a 'fat-gold watch'. This parable seems surrealistic. The 'fat-gold' diction might make a positive impression. The image rendered of that phrase is a bright and healthy baby. However, the wording of 'watch' also can create ambiguity of overall meaning since 'watches' can refer to something that is usually given as a gift.

It is indicated that there is separation and distance between the mother (Plath) and her newborn baby. The speaker places the baby as a gift, not a part of her. According to Sing and

Minhas, this uncomfortable situation becomes clearer because 'the absence of the happy feelings generally associated with childbirth, is also linked to the absence of any mention of the child's father, and also absent is any reference to the holding and cuddling of the newborn baby' (Institution and Experiences, 6). This beginning line indicates the seeds of Plath's denial toward her child.

The subsequent evidence comes from the following line. The diction 'your bald cry' emphasizes an idea about the emotional detachment between the mother and her infant. The speaker is much more aware of the baby's presence through the crying than other good features. The diction 'bald' is rather odd. Bald refers to the opposing perspective for a cry. It is a state of displeasure, unmelodious and inharmonious. This line fortifies the signal rift between Plath and her baby.

Another oddity that could be used as evidence is contained in the next stanza. In the line 'our voice echo, magnifying your arrival' (line 4), Plath shows the inferiority of the baby as a source of wonderment. Plath ironically puts the position of 'our voice echo' higher intensity than the baby's presence itself. This line degrades the arrival of the baby from the speaker's perspective.

The evidence of the distance between the speaker and the baby is present when Plath uses the metaphor of 'new statue' to describe the baby. As an inanimate creature, the 'statue' does not pose any desire to interact like a living creature. Alienation is more apparent when the speaker takes the attitude 'we stand round blankly as walls'. Baby here can be interpreted as an object, beautiful, fresh, and raises admiration. As an object, the emotional bond between the audience and the thing is absent. It was further reinforced by the lack of identification by the mother as a distinct entity with other visitors. The atmosphere of rigidity, shock, and unfamiliarity appeared so thick in this stanza.

In the third stanza, Plath became clearer to reveal her attitude towards her child. She opens the stanza with an explicit declaration: 'I'm no more your mother'. More profoundly, this line reveals Plath's difficulties forming the bond between her and her new infant. This supposition becomes opener in the following line while Plath compares her relationship with her infant no more than '... the cloud that distills a mirror to reflect its own slow/effacement at the wind's hand' (line 8-9).

In the fourth stanza, Plath again expresses her difficulty adapting to child-rearing. Plath discloses how she should be awake all night because of the sounds of the baby 'all night your moth-breath' [...] 'I wake to listen'. Plath's unpreparedness in facing these drastic changes make this a sort of heavy burden to bear. It is increasingly making herself disturbed and delusional as in the line 'a far sea moves in my ear'.

In the fifth stanza, Plath underlines her awkwardness again due to taking care of the baby. When the baby cries 'one cry', Plath is distressed to take a stand. This depiction reflects in the line 'I stumble from my bed, cow-heavy and floral'. Plath follows her instinct to deal with it. Furthermore, Plath, on this line, prefers to point out her difficulties rather than the baby. On the other hand, the tenuous distance between Plath with the baby is maintained through the absence

of possessive pronouns on the baby. Plath describes herself in such a way as not to be in an emotional bond with the baby.

In the last four lines, Plath exhibits her reluctance with comparing the baby again with surrealistic images. As seen, Plath is comparing her infant with a cat 'your mouth opens clean as a cat's (line 15). The line is not found a word that indicates the sense of belonging or warmth from Plath to the object, but only coldness and antipathy. It becomes grimmer with the diction 'dull stars' in the following line. A similar comparison also uses in the closing couplet. Plath compares her infant's voice with balloons that refers to a monotonous and temporal feature.

2. Second Phase: Dilemma

In the second phase, the analysis identifies a dilemmatic situation that happened to Plath during her child-rearing. Plath illuminates her puzzlement toward her new life as an inexperienced mother. Furthermore, Plath also implicitly utters her dualism, 'love-hate' feelings towards her child. It intentionally reflects in two poems, "For a Fatherless Son" and "Balloons".

Initially, the writer must clarify the time of poetry's production, and the variable assumption is entirely applicable. Based on the fact, in the middle of 1962, Plath separated with her lovely husband, Ted Hughes (Gill, 11). Hughes had an affair with another woman and left Plath with their baby. However, Plath still wrote prolifically during that time. This clue gives a motive for what is For a Fatherless Son telling about. Then, the poems Balloons describes Plath's new fascination as found in her letter to Ruth Fanlight: 'I am fascinated by the polarities of muse-poet and mother housewife' (Ibid 29). At least, this data serves as a valid contextual in positing the poem in Plath's stage of life.

The dilemmatic situation comes to Plath in several manners. The first one can be looked into in the poem For A Fatherless Son. Plath here uses two contrasting ideas in delivering the exact meaning of the poetry. The first idea is her hatred toward the childcare period. The keyword for this interpretation is in the second line, 'growing beside you'. She states her relation to her child by comparing herself to the tree. It is a common simile for describing the mother-child relationship. By then, she reveals the hard truth of this duty as a single mother, will turn her into unattractiveness. In the first five lines of the poem, the simile 'like a tree', 'a sky like a pig's backside' and phrases 'A death tree', 'color gone', 'Balding', 'gelded by lightning' all express the horrible state of a single mother in a perspective of a tree. In our minds' eyes, we can view the loss of freedom and beauty which the speaker has been afraid of.

However, in the other parts of the poem, Plath displays goodness comes from the baby. It comes from the innocent baby feature: 'dumb', 'stupid', and 'blind'. Also, Plath expresses her excitement during her interaction with the baby 'it is good for me to have you grab my nose'. This contradiction creates a dilemmatic situation for Plath on deciding her choice. On one side, she is in pain and suffering. On the other side, the baby gives little happiness for her loneliness and 'find no face but my own' (line 9). This state of uncertainty overshadows Plath's attitude in this poem.

In the second poem, Balloons, Plath explores her thought about Balloons and her children. This poem consists of three people, Plath and both of her two children. In the beginning, the

speaker seems to talk with the older one. She explores the existence of the Balloons in line 1, 'they have live with us'. Next, she reveals the details of the balloons: 'Guileless and clear, 'Oval soul animals, 'Invisible air drifts', 'Giving a shriek and pop', 'Yellow cathead', 'blue fish', 'red', 'green', 'Delighting The heart', 'Peacocks blessing Old ground with a feather.

From those details above, it can be identified that this is more than just a balloon. Plath symbolizes something that refers to the balloon-thing. The writer offers the idea of Plath's youthful spirit. It certainly can be attributed to several associations that Plath made in this poem. The words 'guileless, clear, soul, animal, invisible' are very closely related to the nature of the soul and spirit. The words 'Shriek, pop, red, green, feather' bring us closer to a vibrant, youthful, and colorful. The group of words 'animal, peacock, fish, and paint' also gives images of the dynamism of young people. All these references combine each other and form a concept that Plath hides behind the figure of the balloon.

The following part of the poem or the last two stanzas gives an overview of the interaction between Plath's youngest children with the balloon. This intention is seen from the line 'Your small / Brother is making ...' (line 20-21). The word 'small' refers to the youngest one. The pronouns 'your' once again emphasize the apparent distance between the mother and her child.

Moreover, Plath's attitude toward her son is reflected in this poem. Plath chooses several dictions that give a clue in revealing her purpose that is; 'squeak, eat, bite, shred'. All of these words refer to similar activities. That is the action of hurting or destroying. In this case, the object is the balloons.

At last, the entire assumption gets to conclude. The Balloons, as identified before, represent Plath's youthful spirit. The first part of the poem consists of Plath's admiration towards the balloons. In the beginning, she truly feels the existence of the balloons (line 1). Then, she praises its form and movement (line 2,3,6,9). Afterwards, she respects its quality to make something around her more beautiful (lines 10, 15, 17). The second part of the poem is the interaction between Plath's son with the balloons. As examined before, the attitude of the son toward the balloons is somewhat rude. He 'squeak, eat, bite and shred' the balloons.

Finally, the poem is revealed by itself. It suggests the contradiction that happens indirectly between Plath's youthful spirits with her son's action. She metaphorically explains that her son spoils her youthful spirit. Plath displays her freedom, beauty, and joyful life through the balloons imagery, seized up by way of child-rearing. However, Plath here doesn't show any resentment or anguish towards the son as seen in previous poems. The tone of the poem is somehow flat and vague. The writer argues here that Plath is about to change. She begins to aware and consciously admits that her son is 'guileless and clear'.

Those poems, *For a Fatherless Son* and *Balloons*, can be captured a recurring theme; the conflict between Plath with her duty as a mother. In detail, we can simplify this to be Plath with her son. Plath, who was at the peak of optimism and passion, must face the fact that he had to bear two children without a husband. This situation triggered unpleasantness, resistance, and inner conflict for Plath. This complexity is ultimately reflected in the poem above.

The conflict that occurred in both poems is an irony. Plath had to choose one of the parts herself: her career or her children? It is a fight that does not have to have a winner for the victory also means the defeat on the other side. This dilemmatic position makes Plath wandered blindly in taking attitudes and actions. In the end, Plath could only express her wounds and suffering without having to impose a heavy burden on her innocent children.

3. Final Phase: Acceptance

In the last phase, the writer finds a considerable difference in Plath's attitude toward her child through the poem "Child". Plath displays her tenderness toward her child as a lovely mother. Also, she has the vision to grow up her child in a blissful way. However, in the other part of the poem, Plath explicitly utters her past as bad experiences.

The time production of the poem is in the last year of Plath's life (1963). Some scholars and researchers believe that this is the last poem written by Plath. According to Harold Bloom, in that year, Plath's life is cluttered because of several indications:

The poems she sent to publications at this time were slow to be received, also adding to her frustration. Disillusioned from her crumbled marriage, financial burden, struggling to care for two young children, and affected by the medication she was taking, Plath took many sleeping pills ... (Comprehensive, 13).

It is more evident than Plath's acknowledgement of her bitter and dark life poetry in line with the experience she acquired in the real world. Through her poems, Plath can channel all the ranges of emotions that squeeze her without causing damage to those around her. To conclude, the poem 'Child' describes Plath's message and a testament to her son before committing suicide in February 1963.

The early hypothesis in this study is clear; this poem reflects Plath's acceptance of the motherhood idea. It is mirrored in several lines of the poem. Her tenderness and gentleness exist in every way. Plath changes her perspective gradually and wisely.

In the first line, Plath praises her child's eye as high as possible 'Your clear eye is the one absolutely beautiful thing' (line 1). She no longer uses the surrealism technique. She applies hyperbole to magnify the effect of praise. This change seems extraordinary because Plath never throws up any compliments to her child in the previous poems. In the poem "Morning Song", Plath compares her baby with these images 'fat gold watch, statue, cloud, cat, etc. In the poem "For a Fatherless Son", Plath uses the words 'dumb, stupid, and blind'. In the poem "Balloons", she compares her child to a 'fat jug'.

Plath seemed confused and embarrassed to give absolute comparisons to her son in the previous poems because of the inner struggle that was so evident that it ended into a surrealistic description. Awkwardness and alienation create a distance between Plath with and her son. However, in the poem "Child", Plath looks confident to express her emotion toward her child. Without using the Surrealism technique, Plath cuts off the gap between the child and herself.

In the following lines, Plath presents her tenderness through her vision toward the child. Plath wants her child to see all these beautiful things in the world, as seen in the line 'I want to fill

it with color and ducks' (line 2). Furthermore, Plath wants to teach her child to be as clear, innocent, and pure as 'April snowdrop' and peaceful and wisdom as 'Indian Pipe' (line 5). Besides, she would like his eye to bear witness to only the wonderful and beautiful things in life 'should be grand and classical' (line 9). Plath here clearly talks about happiness that can be prepared for her child.

However, in the rest of the poem, Plath talks about her dark past time. She reveals her past as 'troublous' (line 10). She cannot do anything to cope with it except to accept it, as reflects in the line 'wringing of hands' (line 11). Then, Plath continues her confession about her shady past that mirrors the line 'this dark ceiling without a star' (line 11-12). Plath, in this poem, admits that all her suffering has no way related to the child. The child deserves more than a 'ceiling without a star'.

To sums up, the findings must be collected. The first one is Plath's changing of style. Plath leaves surrealistic imagery in describing her child and herself. The direct contact indicates intimacy between mother-child bonds. It implicitly cuts the gap between the baby and herself, as happens in the previous poems. The second finding is Plath's praising for the child. Plath never uses praise or delightful feelings to describe her child's form or situation in the four last poems.

On the contrary, Plath appears to take a distance or unsympathetic to her child. This seemingly encourages the shift of attitude in Plath's mind. The last one is Plath's admission. The admission of her awful past reveals her awareness to create something good in the future, especially for her child. Her vision in this poem shows Plath's desire to be a good mother. In conclusion, Plath, in this poem, has been perfectly accepted the idea of motherhood.

Discussion

Referring to the analysis of both poems, "Metaphors" and "Morning Song", Plath openly shows her antagonistic attitude toward pregnancy and childbirth. Plath argued that pregnancy and childbirth, to some extent, caused her to lose her identity as both a woman and a writer due to the heavy burden of parenting. This attitude is typical. At that age (27 years), who had high ambitions for her writing career, the idea of becoming a mother could become a barrier on her way.

This argument is in line with the findings of Jeany Dobbs in her writing entitled *Viciousness in the Kitchen: Sylvia Plath's Domestic Poetry* (1977). Dobbs stated that Plath's poetry was filled with anxiety and anguish as she struggled to choose and fulfil the roles of mother and writer. Dobbs also found some of Plath's objections and distress to the burden of bearing children and then caring for them, who has taken away from his productivity rather than giving him a sense of satisfaction and freedom (13). This traditional conflict is vital in understanding Plath's attitude in her authentic experience of mothering.

The same finding is also offered by Moosavinia & Mazlounian (2018) which also discusses the language of pregnancy in a poem entitled *Metaphors*. In the poem, Plath describes in detail the dynamics experienced by a mother-to-be. Pregnancy is declared not a process that taken for granted but has a terrible impact on a woman. The use of the words 'amputated' and 'cut off' shows how brutal and banal the experience of giving birth is for a mother-to-be.

In the following two poems, *FFS* and *Ballon*, Plath began to show an ambivalent attitude. Plath was no longer limited to expressing her objections to the function of being a mother and even the head of the house, but the mother began to share her views and interactions with his children. This clue shows the progress that Plath is trying to reconcile the mixed feelings that exist within him.

The opinion above is supported by Barai (2015) findings, which states that Plath's poetry with the theme of children combines contradictory and ambiguous elements into maternal poetics. Including the conflict between herself and her children. Wierzchowska (2018) adds that even though Plath's poetry expresses a strong attraction to the intimacy inherent in the relationship, she does not imagine herself to be one with her children. In this case, the delay in the union between Plath and her children implies Plath's dilemma in carrying out the role of a mother.

In the last poem entitled *Child*, Plath begins to show her acceptance of the idea of motherhood. This can be seen from how Plath views the presence of her children as something positive and appreciative in tone. This image is in stark contrast to the previous poems, which show opposition to motherhood. In addition, in the last part of this poem, Plath expresses a vision to prepare for a life much better than the life she had ever lived. The evidence above confirms that Plath began to tolerate her role as a mother for her children.

The claim for the presence of Plath's acceptance of the idea of motherhood is also identified by Moses (2007) in Plath's letters to her mother, Aurelia Plath. Moses also finds Plath's expression of joy over the birth of baby Frieda. Apart from that, Moses also finds this joy in the poem entitled *Winter Trees* which shows an entirely different attitude in the poem entitled *Morning Song*. This joy of Plath gave a strong signal that Plath had been and had been in a position to accept enjoying the role of a mother.

CONCLUSION

Women's experience in performing the duties of motherhood is fairly problematic. This is due to a paradigm in society that considers motherhood as an outward talent that every woman must-have. This notion is made worse by the assumption that women should enjoy this role without exception. However, in reality, not all women encounter the same experience of motherhood. One such diversity is more or less illustrated in the motherhood poem of Sylvia Plath. Based on the five selected poems that were analyzed, insight (idea) was found that motherhood is not a natural talent taken for granted by every woman. Plath voiced this message through the process of her struggle to become a mother, namely through three phases: denial-dilemma-acceptance. The complexity of physical and mental exhaustion was the price she had to pay as a mother. This research only focuses on how Sylvia Plath undertook the process of motherhood as a young woman who had a promising career like most American women. Many other things can be traced from Plath's poetry, especially regarding the issue of young women who want to show their talents and abilities as well as to take care for their families. By hearing more women's voices through their works, it is hoped

that women's literatures will be unique and original without the demand to be represented by another gender.

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