

Abstract:

This thesis is concerned with an analysis of selected early poetry of Sylvia Plath on the basis of the apprentice period, in which she often relied on traditional verse forms and was inspired by poetic influences. Plath's poetry is marked by a progress from experimental phase to mature, powerful poetry of controlled rhythm. In the introductory chapter, we are concerned with an elucidation of the major verse forms Plath employed repeatedly exemplified by several poems Plath wrote in her early twenties including the poems of *The Colossus*. The later poems discussed display an effort for a freer structure and flexibility.

The second chapter focuses on the analysis of various poetic influences. Plath was immensely inspired by both her predecessors and contemporaries, which can be seen in her employment of poetic devices, diction and even themes. Plath's apparent meticulous practice and learning of the diverse traditional verse forms – for example the alliterative meter of Old English poetry – shall be examined in order to demonstrate the importance of this practice which later led to the poetry of high technical achievement.

The third chapter provides a survey on elegy and its major function in the course of development and analysis of Plath's early elegies with reference to Peter Sacks' study *The English Elegy* and the essay by Jahan Ramazani "Daddy, I Have Had to Kill You." The analysis focuses on the precarious struggle in Plath's early elegies and their nature, which shows a remarkable achievement in the development of Plath's poetic style. Also, a shift is seen from the tone of desperation to the one of bitter detachment as Plath rids of pompous diction and employs poetic devices unobtrusively. Plath's shared the innovative approach to elegy of the 20th century and together with the poets of her time who worked with this form, she participated in significantly recreating it. Plath's trademark theme of a patriarch as the addressee in her elegies and his obscure depiction as a grandiose, although shattered object raises a discussion as to how Plath tackles the autobiographical themes together with the universal ones, a crucial issue persistent in her poetry in general.