

Sylvia Plath as an Androgynous Poet: A Deconstruction of Gender Norms in Poetry

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Abstract

This research article examines Sylvia Plath's poetic exploration of androgyny, focusing on her work *Ariel* as a primary analysis text. Plath's poetry eclipses the conventional gender roles, by transcending above and beyond them to craft an art that challenges the societal norms and expectations. Drawing inspiration from Virginia Woolf's feminist philosophy, Plath aims to construct an androgynous poetic voice, enabling her to assert herself with confidence and authority. The paper delves into Plath's struggles with suffering and sin, shedding light on her intricate relationship with gender constructs and societal pressures. Through a comprehensive analysis of Plath's literary corpus and her engagement with Woolf's ideas, this article explores how Plath navigates the complexities of gender roles, societal expectations, and artistic expression, ultimately striving for liberation from patriarchal constraints. Plath's poetic voice epitomizes a feminist stance which allowed her to speak with authority while retaining sensitivity and introspection. By adopting Woolf's notion of an androgynous consciousness, Plath empowers herself to explore the complexities of human emotion and experience without being confined by societal expectations based on gender. Using language and imagery, Plath crafts a narrative that challenges the dichotomous view of gender, presenting a more nuanced and inclusive perspective. Plath's engagement with Virginia Woolf's feminist philosophy serves as a guiding force in her poetic exploration of androgyny. By aligning herself with Woolf's ideals, Plath seeks to dismantle patriarchal constraints and carve out a space for women within the literary landscape of feminism and American poetry in general.

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PLATH'S POETIC SELF & THE CONCEPT OF ANDROGYNY

In Sylvia Plath's poetry, sexuality often emerges as a burdensome reflection of societal pressures, with patriarchal ideals reinforcing oppressive sexual norms. Plath challenges the notion that sexual liberation equates to personal freedom, offering a critical perspective on how sexuality is entrenched in twentieth-century culture. Rather than a means of self-expression, sexuality, in her work, is depicted as a force that regulates subjectivity and constrains interpersonal connections. This analysis examines how societal discourses on sexuality, particularly within a framework of gender inequality, adversely impact individuality and intimate relationships in her poems.

Androgyny refers to masculine and feminine characteristics within an individual or a work of art. In poetry, androgyny allows a poet to transcend the limitations of gender stereotypes and delve into the realm of universal human experiences. The contemporary implications and undertones of the term have an identity associated with epicene/neuter or even a hermaphrodite. Sylvia Plath was renowned for her uncanny ability to imbue her poetry with a remarkable balance of masculine and feminine traits, affording her works a sense of depth and universality that resonates with readers from all walks of life. Virginia Woolf, an influential writer and feminist, commented on Sylvia Plath and her work *Ariel* in her essay "A Room of One's Own." Woolf recognized Plath's approach to writing as one that defied convention and embraced androgyny to explore the complexities of human emotions. Plath endeavors to liberate the female subject from her physical female body, enabling her to embody a transcendent spirit that represents her poetic voice, free from the constraints of societal gender norms. Plath's journal entries suggest that she perceives a woman's social role as closely tied to her biological body, burdening her with predetermined positions dictated by gender ideologies. However, by downplaying the significance of the female body in her poetry, Plath aims to challenge and even dismantle the restrictions imposed on her by a patriarchal society. She writes in *Letters Home*:

I am afraid of getting older. I am afraid of getting married. Spare me from cooking three meals a day - spare me from the relentless cage of routine and rote. I want to be free ... perhaps I am destined to be classified and qualified. But, oh, I cry out against it. (40)

The social identities of men and women are often constructed upon and rests on their gendered realities which in turn are defined/redefined, negotiated/configured in their everyday practices. Language, a crucial indicator of these identity formations, finds itself inclined to the hierarchical order of either depicting dominance, power and authority or the yielding, submissive powerlessness, though, gender-neuters, unsexed, gender-inclusive, unisex linguistic structures have increasingly been recognized in the everyday

discourse of life. The characteristics of soft power and of subservience, subjugation etc. have found themselves "associated" with femininity, while the identification of masculinity had been towards dominance, and authoritativeness. Plath intends to subvert these limitations faced by female writers within the patriarchal literary system. To achieve this, she seeks to blend authoritative language, conventionally seen as masculine/of the male, along with the female experience, aspiring to create an androgynous poetic voice, as Woolf advocates in her seminal essay. As early as 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft claimed that "women, socially defined and constructed, occupy an inferior position about their fellow "human creatures." () Her work was quite revolutionary and unprecedented-- given not only the sparse existence of writing published by female authors before the eighteenth century but also the controversial nature of her subject. According to Wollstonecraft, such social schemas prevent women from becoming fully functioning, conscious human beings, as "the minds of women are enfeebled by false refinement" and clouded by the conditioned belief that they must deny their natural inclinations and embrace the stereotypical definitions of their gender.

Similarly, in 1842, Margaret Fuller's essay, "Woman in the Nineteenth Century", asserts that "the idea of man, however imperfectly brought out, has been far more so than that of woman; that she, the other half of the same thought, the other chamber of the heart of life, needs now take her turn in the full pulsation [of life]." By both Wollstonecraft's and Fuller's reasoning, then, for centuries now, women (as social constructs) have been denied commonality with men in terms of human existence; women have essentially been elected a social role that differs from and is subordinate to a man's social position, furthering the patriarchal tendency to rationalize the inferiority of women by focusing on the difference between their physical bodies, thereby denying that a shared human consciousness can exist in the human psyche.

As Wollstonecraft and Fuller suggest, this social imposition that is placed upon women not only appears to subjugate them but also dehumanize them. Thus, the continual propagation of a belief

that suggests that women are so far removed from men in terms of their physical anatomy is carried further to imply that women do not possess the ability to discourse and reason with men as equally conscious human beings. Perhaps it is in response to such a notion that Wollstonecraft (and other female writers who followed) expressed the need for a clear distinction to be made between the term “female,” as the anatomical, biological sex, and “woman” as a gender construct. Through the practice and art of writing, however, early feminist writers, such as Wollstonecraft and Fuller, provoked an agent of change in the conventional view of women as inferior to men. As Helene Cixous explains in “Laugh of the Medusa,” published in 1975, “writing is the possibility of change, the space that can serve as a springboard for subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structures.” Thus, it was essentially these traditional social structures that many female writers attempted to debunk through writing.

In her 1928 essay “A Room of One’s Own,” Virginia Woolf argues that historical social and cultural norms have significantly hindered female writers. She contends that women’s values often differ from those established by men, yet they are masculine values that have historically prevailed. Woolf asserts that female writers conform to external authority and societal expectations, compromising their creative potential. Woolf emphasizes the importance of mental freedom for writers, regardless of gender. She believes that many female writers in the past could not achieve this due to societal constraints. Woolf encourages both male and female writers to transcend traditional gender roles and write freely, much like Shakespeare.

However, when addressing female writers specifically, Woolf suggests that achieving an androgynous mind is crucial. This androgynous perspective allows women to write without being conscious of their gender’s potential limitations. By adopting this mindset, female writers can fully develop their creative genius and overcome societal conventions that may restrict them. This concept of the androgynous mind, as discussed by Woolf, is relevant to the development of poets like Sylvia Plath. It enables female poets to speak with authority and self-assurance, regardless of the

societal expectations associated with their gender.

Plath believed “that if [she] read Woolf .. [she might] be itched and kindled to a great work”. Here, Plath’s focus on creating “great” work under the influence of Woolf is telling; it relieves her earlier apprehensions that, as a female writer, she might never be able to compete with the male “greats” before her, leading her to wonder, “how does Woolf do it?”. Plath also frequently aligned herself with Woolf, suggesting that she might become “a woman famous among women” writer. Furthermore, in a letter to her mother, dated March 20, 1956, Plath muses. She records:

All the scholarly boys I know here consider me a second Virginia Woolf. Some of them are so idealistic! While similarly, Plath complains that she has not yet found her poetic voice: “What is my voice? Woolfish, alas, but tough What is illustrated in Plath’s own words and handwriting validates her exceeding familiarity with Woolf’s work and indicates that she regarded Woolf as a literary mother and mastermind whose inspiration infused and stimulated her creative interests.

However, this endeavor to adopt Woolf’s theory is partly complicated because Plath feels forced to utilize the very gender-conscious implications she attempted to debunk in the first place. Plath, therefore, appropriates what may be considered the very worst qualities of a man’s gender construct, such as dominance, coercion, and violence. However, she does so only through the female subject’s voice rather than in explicit or overt actions aimed towards a single man. Plath seems not consumed with turning herself into the patriarchal oppressor. Instead, she is interested in appropriating characteristics of men’s speech to cautiously steer clear of the sentimental writing she believed the patriarchal, literary society vehemently abhorred.

Though Plath appropriates typically masculine-aggressive diction, she could not (and most likely refused to eliminate her own (or her female persona ‘s) subjectivity as a woman, nor did she have the ability to erase and completely recreate the fundamental gender role prescribed to women by society, as this task would not only prove to be daunting but entirely unattainable. Instead, I believe her first effort was to create a superhuman, androgynous entity that could speak with clarity

and total freedom of thought while simultaneously circumventing the boundaries of gender constructs.

Plath celebrates capabilities inherent in an all-female's power through mediums such as childbirth and sexual seduction, she concomitantly feels the need to appropriate masculine discourse to lend authority to her subordinate, female subject, utilizing such tropes of masculine discourse as staunch independence and self-resiliency. Understanding the task's difficulty, Plath often uses initiations of death and rebirth metaphors as vehicles through which the female subject can be released from the physical confinement of her biological body and, thereby, the social, political, and literary confinement.

Through Woolf's suggestion, Plath strives to create what she believes is the perfect poetic consciousness, one not consigned to the physical body's restrictions that implicate a definable and particular set of social conditions. Rather than what Plath has absorbed from Woolf's indications, perfection comes through the freedom to express oneself by removing the sociological interference of gender definitions. For Plath (as well as Woolf), only a consciousness that embodies both masculine and feminine awareness and understanding can transcend gender boundaries to create poetry that is luminous, enlightening, and open to infinite interpretations and imaginative possibilities.

Plath's judgment of her creative work thus intimates that if a female is to write anything of value or merit, she is forced to use language previously endorsed and indoctrinated by a predominantly male literary tradition because this was the precedent set before her and one that literary critics and early male writers highly venerated. Plath was taught early that language belonged to men, a lesson that she not only learned by the structure within her home life but one that was also reinforced in her high school curriculum and college education.

Like her female predecessors, Plath was cognizant of the gender paradigm that continued to be prescribed to women in the mid-twentieth century; she similarly expressed fears of becoming accustomed to identifying herself within a gendered system that granted men a superior position. In her work, the female subject simultaneously embodies

characteristics of both genders, speaking and aspiring for a hyper-gendered entity. Her poetic voice embraces traditional masculine traits, such as sexual aggression, political authority, autonomy, self-assertion, and self-confidence, at the same time, addressing and reflecting on the subordination and experiences of being a woman, delving into the realities of daily domestic routines, childbirth, marriage, and wifehood. In *Ariel* Plath presents her readers with a poetic voice that is both tender and assertive. She breaks free from the confines of traditional gender roles and delves into a realm where the masculine and feminine coexist harmoniously.

This amalgamation allows her to challenge and transcend the conventions of gender roles and expectations and somehow opened doors for a more gender-neutered normative structure that initiates from and encompasses many other socio-cultural practices. Like Woolf, Plath contends that embracing an androgynous poetic voice enables her to break free from the shackles of societal norms, empowering her to explore a broader range of human experiences and emotions. In her oeuvre, Plath seeks to reshape the notion of femininity, dismantling the limitations imposed on her by patriarchal society and affirming the potency of an androgynous poetic expression.

ARIEL: A DETAILED ANALYSIS

Plath's *Ariel* delves deeper into the shadows of self, exploring the concept of identity and the feelings of alienation that arise when one attempts to transcend societal norms. The poem grapples with the idea that achieving an androgynous state often entails losing touch with one's authentic self, leading to disconnection and isolation. Many of Sylvia Plath's poems center around the theme of suffering, encompassing various forms such as illness, injury, torture, madness, and death. The titles of her poems, such as "Cut," "Fever 103°," "Paralytic," "Contusion," "Thalidomide," "Amnesiac," and "Witch Burning," illustrate this focus on pain and agony. This preoccupation with suffering is unsurprising, given that a higher-than-average share of illness and loss marked Plath's life and those close to her. The poet's personal experiences were filled with

significant incidents of suffering. Her father's leg amputation and subsequent death when she was just seven years old, her mother's chronic ulcer, her grandmother's death, her own mental breakdown and institutionalization, as well as various physical ailments like chronic sinus condition, broken leg, miscarriage, and appendectomy, all contributed to the pain she endured. Additionally, her former partner Buddy Willard's struggle with tuberculosis and his confinement to a sanitarium added to the weight of suffering in her life. Plath's visit with Buddy Willard to Boston-Lying-In hospital, where she witnessed medical students dissecting cadavers, foetuses in bottles, and childbirth, extended her exposure to traumatic experiences.

Beyond Plath's work, which reflects pain and suffering, what is particularly intriguing is how she sometimes portrays physical and mental agony as retribution for perceived wrongdoing or bad behavior. Her poetry often contains imagery that associates suffering and even a form of living death or "effacement" with domestic relationships and roles. She draws connections between pain and suffering within the domestic realm, suggesting that domestic life can be oppressive and detrimental to one's well-being. In "Fever 103", she asks:

Does not my heat astound you. And my light.
All by myself i am a huge camellia
Glowing and coming and going, flush on flush.
Or in "Witch Burning", she notes:
In the marketplace they are piling the dry sticks.
A thickets of shadows is a poor coat. I inhabit
The wax image of myself, a doll's body.
Sickness begins here: I am the dartboard
for witches.
Only Devil can eat the devil out.
In the months of red leaves I climb to be a bed
of fire.

The speaker contemplates here the meaning of purity while embodying the conflict women face in challenging sexual stereotypes, particularly the saint/whore dichotomy imposed on the female gender. Throughout the poem, she undergoes a transformative journey, burning through oppressive sources such as history, religion, and

social conventions, seeking a state of purification. The poem raises questions about the possibility of breaking free from societal impositions on sexuality and individuality and interrogates if negating the body is the only escape from such constraints. As Christina Britzolakis observes that "Fever 103°" captures a woman oscillating between empowering and oppressive views of her sexuality, heavily influenced by male desire that constructs the female identity. The speaker parodically redefines transcendence as an erotic and orgasmic event, illustrating the complexities of sexuality as experienced by women.

These themes of suffering, sin, and the struggle to define oneself as a woman reflect Plath's inner turmoil and conflicting emotions. Plath's exploration of these themes provides a glimpse into the complexities of her psyche and the societal expectations that often weighed heavily on women during her time. The themes she delves into also testify to her mastery of language, as she skillfully crafts her poetry and prose to convey the depths of human emotions and experiences. Overall, Sylvia Plath's work remains a poignant portrayal of the human condition and the challenges faced in defining one's identity in a world riddled with societal norms and expectations.

As one delves into Ariel one encounters a poetic voice that grapples with the dark side of androgyny. Plath's exploration goes beyond the surface appeal, delving into the internal struggles and emotional turmoil experienced by those who embrace androgyny. She confronts the notion that androgyny is not a seamless and harmonious blend of masculine and feminine traits but a tug-of-war between conflicting identities.

In one of the poems, "Mirror" Plath captures the essence of this inner conflict, stating:

I am silver and exact. I have no
preconceptions.
Whatever I see, I swallow immediately
Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike.
I am not cruel, only truthful--
The eye of the little god four-cornered.

This stanza reflects her strife for objectivity and self-detachment from the biases and constraints imposed by gender roles. However, beneath the facade of objectivity lies a sense of detachment and emptiness, hinting at the darker aspects of androgyny.

Plath's works also explore the idea of self-inflicted revenge, where she becomes the object of her vengeance. This connection between suffering and sin gives rise to powerful and original imagery and language when she delves into complex and ambivalent subjects, particularly marriage and motherhood. In "Lady Lazarus" she writes -

Out of the ash
I rise with my red hair
And I eat men like air.

These are feminist assertions of resilience and strength in the face of societal expectations and women's challenges.

Sylvia Plath's androgynous poetry has undergone a fascinating evolution in reception and interpretation. Early reviews and critiques often struggled to grasp the intricacies of her work, leading to a range of interpretations. However, as time has passed, critics and scholars have delved deeper into her poems, recognizing the profound androgynous themes that challenge traditional gender boundaries. Readers, too, have embraced the evolving interpretations, finding Plath's work to be a rich source of exploration. The critical analysis has matured over the years, celebrating her role as a trailblazer in the world of androgynous literature. Some critics who recognize Plath's poems as dramatic are reluctant to analyze her technique comprehensively. Even when critics acknowledge Plath's crucial poems as dramatic monologues, they tend to defer analysis or take the dramatic qualities of the poems for granted. Axelrod, in his discussion of "Daddy," states: "Although we could profitably consider the poem as the dramatic monologue Plath called it in her BBC broadcast, let us regard it instead as the kind of poem most readers have taken it to be: a domestic poem."

Katha Pollitt names "Tulips," "Ariel, 11," "Daddy, 11,"

and "A Birthday Present" as dramatic monologues but does not elaborate on what makes them dramatic monologues or why it is essential to see them as such"(14). Other influential critics, prominently Margaret Dickie, who have discussed the speakers in several poems of Plath, fall short of examining the poems as dramatic monologues. Plath's approach evolved with works like "Lady Lazarus." She no longer sought to evade the female body's experiences but pursued the female subject's purification through a transcendent rebirth. In this transformation, the female subject became a seemingly androgynous figure, enlightened by physical experiences, eventually becoming a superpower embodying masculine and feminine attributes. In "Ariel," the female subject defies all gender-related preconceptions, transcending the boundaries of a singular gendered identity.

UNDERSTANDING THE CHANGE IN PLATH'S PERSPECTIVE

In one of her records, she notes:

My most significant trouble, arising from my essential and egoistic self-love, is jealousy. I am jealous of men - a dangerous and subtle envy that can corrode, I imagine, any relationship. It is an envy born of the desire to be active and doing, not passive and listening. I envy the man's physical freedom to lead a double life - his career and his sexual and family life. I can pretend to forget my envy, no matter if it is there, insidious, malignant, or latent. (98) J Plath's enduring "subtle envy" for the privileges accorded to men perhaps stemmed from her realization that the socially constructed notion of femininity was inherently confining. As both a woman and a writer, she grappled with the expectations imposed by patriarchal society (Alexrod 32). Plath found herself constrained by the expectation that, as a domestic figure, she should embody passivity and receptiveness while simultaneously battling against the prevalent belief that women were incapable of producing intellectually significant literature. These biases dictated that works by female writers were often dismissed as sentimental and emotional, lacking in depth and merit. These prejudices against female writers were not new; they had persisted since Wollstonecraft's era,

where elegance was deemed inferior to virtue, and employing soft, sensuous language was seen as a sign of weakness. Plath was acutely aware of these challenges, yet she also dreaded their implications, recognizing them as a harsh reality she was compelled to confront and endure. Acknowledging her profound jealousy, Plath vividly depicts the daunting paradigm imposed on female writers. To be deemed respectable and achieve greatness in writing, a woman often faced the expectation of either being biologically male or adopting the stylistic conventions typically associated with male authors. This meant utilizing expressions and linguistic idioms traditionally crafted and structured by men. Recognizing that she did not influence her biological sex, Plath may have resigned herself to embrace the latter option, believing that conforming to masculine writing norms would offer her a pathway to literary acclaim. Woolf's questioning of gender issues must have captivated a writer such as Plath, who demonstrates early on in her journals a proclivity towards confronting and challenging the stereotypes associated with her gender. However, to be accepted by public standards and her surrounding social environment, Plath realized that she was forced to adopt (at least in her outward demeanor) the gender conventions that she protested in her writing. For instance, speaking of herself in the third person omniscient (most commonly in her early journals), Plath makes the "terrible discovery" that in order to take part in courting and dating rituals, she will have to assume the characteristics of her gender: "this woman, whom I have not recognized for 23 years, whom I have scorned and denied, comes to taunt me now when I am weakest in my terrible discovery." Nevertheless, when in the privacy of her room, as Woolf would have it, Plath resolutely admits, "being a woman, it is like being crucified . . . I have felt smothered. Plath thus echoes the need to have her own space in which to write, claiming that she "long[s] for an external view of[her]self & [a] room to confirm its reality. For a young female writer then, notably entranced and preoccupied with gender issues and the resounding effect they have on the mind, encountering Woolf may have fortuitously provided the answers (or at least encouraged a temporary solution) to the dilemma

a female writer faces when attempting to broach the subject of her gender and her writing. Thirteen years following the publication of *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf maintains in a similar essay, *Professions for Women*, that the female writer must "kill" the "Angel in the House" (qtd. in Norton Anthology 1988), which Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar propose is Woolf's insistent reminder that female writers must tear down the aesthetic ideal they have historically been made to uphold (17). In a letter to her mother, dated March 9, 1956, and several journal entries, Plath appears to echo her preceding passage, conveying the personal struggle of a female writer who feels compelled to confront societal expectations and her existence. It emphasizes her battles' intricate and complex nature and her resolute determination to face them without succumbing to despair. She likens her journey to wrestling with angels, a metaphor for the inevitable conflicts one encounters. The reference to writing a diary, never intending to send it, highlights the monumental and daunting nature of her inner struggles, akin to wrestling with her inner demons. This struggle is a significant and recurring theme in her life, as indicated by the reference to "each time" being a witness to her ongoing confrontation with her most formidable challenges.

CONCLUSION

Sylvia Plath's poetry invites a compelling feminist interpretation. Her work is a literary battleground where she challenges and deconstructs traditional gender roles with unmatched fervor. Plath's poems often reflect her struggles with societal expectations and her journey toward self-discovery. Through a feminist lens, we can discern her commitment to dismantling the restrictive roles assigned to women, her exploration of female subjectivity, and her unapologetic embrace of female sexuality. Plath's poetry embodies the essence of the feminist literary movement, where women's voices are empowered to break free from the constraints of a patriarchal society.

Plathian scholars have often described the female speaker in Plath's poetry as one who appears to be "split," "divided," or reveals a "double self," suggesting that one half (self) pertains to her

true self. In contrast, the other half represents a false self that Plath conjures to maintain her public identity. Jon Rosenblatt thus notes that the “I” in Plath’s work is always working towards a new state of being” (144) as a result of the female subject’s “split into warring selves” (39). Despite critics’ detection of a definitive split or divide in the female psyche in Plath’s work, few have attempted to view this apparent “split” as Plath’s aspiration towards attaining, in some sense, the androgynous consciousness that Woolf describes. Moreover, while several scholars postulate that one side of a female’s psyche aims to become more aggressive, independent, and self-defined and that the other side seemingly upholds the stereotype of her gender (such as reveling in her success as a housewife, mother, and domesticator), too few have pointed out the evident gender associations underlying the “two selves” Plath forges for her female subject. Even more negligent to her creative work, some have insisted on speculating which “self” Plath seemed to resemble more closely in her personal life by attempting to analyze Plath’s thoughts about who she was. However, so many of these scholars have duly pointed out, quite clearly no less, the ambiguity of gender in many of Plath’s poems and the distinct markers of polarized gender roles in her work. Similarly, while some more recent scholars have traced the influences of Woolf’s work in Plath’s own (most notably, Sandra Gilbert, Tracy Brain, and Steven Gould Axelrod), few, if any, mention the possibility of Plath’s focus on the androgynous consciousness as a means to uplift her female subject’s social position and thereby enable Plath to escape the seeming boundaries of her poetic incarceration. Therefore, I believe that Woolf’s theory of the androgynous consciousness plays a significant role in Plath’s development as a poet and profoundly influences Plath’s later work.

Plath’s perspective can be seen as a reinterpretation of Woolf’s concept, suggesting that the female subject must fully engage with her corporeal reality to understand what it means to be a woman. In contrast to Woolf’s idea of androgyny, where women are expected to

erase their history, experiences, and subjectivity to adopt a less gendered perspective, Plath appears unsatisfied with this approach. Woolf’s androgynous mind, as described by her, aims to liberate female writers from social and literary subjugation and enable them to express their thoughts without gender-related constraints. While this idea may have appealed to Plath, who personally felt the limitations of her gender, achieving it was no simple task.

Plath may have realized that reversing or rewriting social history for women was an unattainable goal, given society’s deeply ingrained and widely accepted beliefs. Her ambivalent and often conflicted view of patriarchal ideologies suggests that her intention was not to rectify the wrongs imposed on women by men but rather to “record the self in the world” (Annas 131). Plath’s ultimate aim was to create a consciousness free from the constraints of a physical body and society’s gender expectations, a consciousness she considered truly worthy of greatness.

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