

Death, Depression, and Divine Faith: Contrasting The Confessional Poetics of Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton with Emily Dickinson's Spiritual Vision

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Abstract

Sylvia Plath and her poetry always remained a matter of discussion not only in her life but even after her death. Her tragic suicide made more enigmatic the probing of her personality through her work to find out whether her philosophy imprinted her life or her bitter experiences forged her personae. Although, feminists hold Ted Hughes, her 'unfortunate husband', responsible for this tragic waste, Plath's own knack for aggression cannot be set scot free for her own tragic demise. However, this article compares the poetry of Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton with that of Emily Dickinson from a psychological perspective. It argues that silence and violence function as two powerful emotional forces that simultaneously shape the body and mind of these remarkable poets. While both Plath and Sexton predominantly employ aggression as a means of expressing their emotions, personal conflicts, and perceptions of those close to them as well as the wider world, Dickinson's poetry is primarily governed by introspection and spiritual vision.

Key words: Bipolar Affective Disorder, Silence, Violence

1. Introduction

Death has long been one of the most enduring subjects in poetry, yet poets respond to mortality in profoundly different ways depending on their psychological experiences and philosophical or religious convictions. Among twentieth-century confessional poets, Sylvia Plath (1932-1963) and Anne Sexton (1928-1974) transformed personal suffering, depression, and emotional trauma into intensely autobiographical verse that exposes the fragile boundaries between life and death. Their poetry reflects an inward struggle with identity, mental anguish, and recurring thoughts of self-annihilation, making death not merely a poetic theme but an existential reality. In contrast, although Emily Dickinson's poetry is equally preoccupied with death, loss, and isolation, it rarely descends into despair. Instead, her poems frequently approach mortality through spiritual reflection, portraying death as a mysterious transition toward immortality and divine transcendence.

The relationship between psychological trauma and confessional poetry presents two drastically different directions of reaction and therefore provides an interpretive paradigm to this article, going far beyond simply comparing the biographies of the poets. The representatives of the confessional movement, Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton, express their trauma in pure poetic disclosure, putting the elements of physicality into poetry and using direct address as means for expressing suffering in such a way that the trajectory of their reaction leads them towards self-destruction, a characteristic which, while being oversimplified, is applied to both of them based on their suicides. Emily Dickinson, being the poetess who worked nearly a hundred years before the others and was not associated with any literary school at all, provides an alternative perspective. Dickinson uses poetic discourse to talk about death not through the prism of despair but rather through her theological uncertainty and searching faith, thus making the concept of dying something like a threshold for another peaceful world and not the end point. The formal difference, the directness of the expression of trauma contrasted with Dickinson's poetic handling of it through slant rhyme and syntactical fragmentation, points to the general distinction between two ways of dealing with trauma within the poetic form: the one is suffering that ends in self-destruction, and the other is trauma transformed through the lens of faith into transcendence.

1.1. Research Questions

1. How are death and depression represented in the confessional poetry of Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton in comparison with Emily Dickinson's spiritual vision?
2. How do Plath and Sexton employ confessional poetics to negotiate psychological suffering, mortality, and the desire for death, and how does this differ from Dickinson's treatment of death and immortality?
3. How does divine faith shape Dickinson's poetic response to death, suffering, and eternity, and in what ways does her spiritual vision contrast with the religious doubt and psychological anguish evident in the poetry of Plath and Sexton?

2. Literature Review

Previous research identifies Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton as writers in the school of confessional poetry, where the major themes are suffering and depression, traumas of the personal life, and death. However, research into Dickinson proves that her death poems are related to questions of faith and immortality, as well as doubts about religion and limits of human understanding. Thus, the theme of death as a psychological crisis in the work of Plath and Sexton and death as a spiritual-philosophical encounter in Dickinson is much less investigated.

In his analysis of the poetry of Anne Sexton, Gill (2004) suggests that Sexton's poetry cannot be viewed as merely an autobiographical depiction of the reality of her experiences. On the contrary, Sexton turns the intimate experiences of mental pain, deaths and crises into poetic constructs. This interpretation is of great importance to the current paper which analyzes the role of death and depression in the confessional poetry of Sexton and Sylvia Plath. The proposed interpretation helps us to read Sexton's depiction of death not as a mere reflection of personal experiences of depression but as an intentionally constructed poetic construct based on the language, identity and mediation. Therefore, one can speak about the difference between Sexton's confessional poetry and spiritual vision of Emily Dickinson where death is used as a means to explore faith and immortality.

The study of Waters (2015) provides a considerable academic discourse on Anne Sexton and Sylvia Plath as key representatives of the emergence of the confessional style of American poetry. This research is especially relevant to this study as it defines the methodological

foundation of comparing how these poets interpret their sufferings and psychological experience in poems. Death, depression, trauma, identity, and instability form the content of the poets' confessional poetics, but there are various ways of interpretation due to different poetic techniques and voices. The difference between these poets is essential in relation to the current paper that compares how death and depression are described by Plath and Sexton and how it differs from Dickinson's spiritual perspective on mortality.

In her recent research, Lim (2021) reviews the confessional poetry of Plath and Sexton by looking into the stylistic peculiarities of their poetic voices with the help of computer text analysis. Her work refutes the approach of considering Plath and Sexton as two similar representatives of confessional poetry. Their unique linguistic styles and poetic voices demonstrate distinct ways of describing psychological trauma, emotional problems, and death. The distinction between their approaches to depicting these aspects makes it possible to conduct a comparative analysis of their works without the need to include them into one confessional style. At the same time, this research adds Emily Dickinson to the list of poets whose depictions of death have more to do with religion, immortal life, and divine uncertainty.

Cazé's (2019) critical approach to the literary treatment of death in Emily Dickinson's poetry provides an invaluable insight into the way mortality becomes a philosophical and spiritual issue for the poetess. Contrary to the representation of death as merely a manifestation of the emotional and psychological pain and distress, Miss Dickinson frequently employs the notion of death to raise such issues as belief, immortality, divinity, and the incomprehensibility of life by humans. In this respect, Cazé's critical approach is especially useful for this research as it demonstrates the sharp distinction between the poetics of Dickinson and such confessional poets as Plath and Sexton, who usually associate the issue of death with the psychological trauma, depression, and mental crisis.

According to Wright (2017), Emily Dickinson is a poet who is interested in religious and existential issues such as faith, doubts, death, immortality, and eternity. Wright's argumentation is pertinent and especially important since it allows forming an understanding of Dickinson's "spiritual vision" that differs from psychological tension in the poetry of Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton. Death becomes a kind of metaphysical questioning of the existence of God and immortality in Dickinson's poetry. Therefore, her movement between faith and doubt creates a complicated attitude towards divine faith instead of the total denial or acceptance of religion. Hence, Wright's work allows understanding Dickinson as a poet who represents death

in the form of theological and spiritual death rather than depression and psychological pain as well.

3. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This study employs an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that combines Trauma Theory with the Psychology of Religion to examine the contrasting poetic responses to suffering, death, and psychological distress in the works of Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, and Emily Dickinson. While Trauma Theory serves as the primary analytical lens to interpret the confessional articulation of psychic wounds in Plath and Sexton, the Psychology of Religion provides a complementary perspective for understanding Dickinson's spiritual engagement with mortality and suffering.

The study primarily draws upon the trauma theories of Cathy Caruth (2016) and Dominick LaCapra (2014). Caruth (2016) in her book *Unclaimed Experience* conceptualizes trauma as an overwhelming experience that resists immediate comprehension and returns through fragmented memories, repetitive imagery, and indirect expression. Because traumatic experiences frequently remain beyond ordinary language, literature becomes a privileged site where psychological wounds are symbolically represented rather than directly narrated. This perspective is particularly relevant to confessional poetry, in which deeply personal experiences of depression, alienation, and emotional suffering emerge through metaphor, symbolism, and autobiographical reflection. Plath's and Sexton's poems exemplify this process as they transform private anguish into poetic discourse and reveal the lingering effects of trauma on identity, selfhood, and the perception of death.

LaCapra (2014) further in his book, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, distinguishes between "acting out" and "working through" trauma. Acting out refers to the compulsive repetition of traumatic experiences, while working through denotes the gradual process of confronting and integrating trauma into one's understanding of the self. This distinction provides a useful framework for examining the divergent trajectories of Plath and Sexton, whose poetry frequently revisits psychological pain without achieving emotional resolution. Their confessional voices repeatedly return to themes of death, despair, fractured identity and self-annihilation while suggesting that trauma remains unresolved and ultimately contributes to self-destructive impulses.

To complement Trauma Theory, this study incorporates insights from the Psychology of Religion, particularly the works of William James (1902) and Viktor Frankl (1946), to explain Emily Dickinson's distinctive response to suffering. In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, James (1902) argues that religious faith enables individuals to interpret suffering within a broader spiritual framework, transforming despair into hope and providing psychological resilience in the face of mortality. Rather than denying pain, religious consciousness offers a meaningful way of confronting it through faith, transcendence and inner conviction.

Similarly, Frankl's (1946) theory of meaning-making, developed in his book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, maintains that the human capacity to discover purpose amid suffering is fundamental to psychological survival. According to Frankl (1946), suffering becomes bearable when individuals can locate a transcendent meaning beyond immediate pain. This perspective offers a productive framework for interpreting Dickinson's poetry, where death is rarely represented as an endpoint of hopelessness. Instead, it becomes a metaphysical passage, inviting reflection on immortality, divine presence and eternal life. Her poems repeatedly transform grief into spiritual contemplation, revealing faith as a source of emotional endurance rather than existential collapse.

Therefore, this interdisciplinary framework argues that though, all three poetesses confront death, grief and emotional suffering, their poetic responses diverge significantly. Plath and Sexton represent trauma as an unresolved force that intensifies despair and fragmentation, while Dickinson transforms the inevitability of death through religious imagination and a search for transcendent meaning. The study therefore suggests that the presence or absence of spiritual meaning profoundly influences the poetic representation of suffering, making Trauma Theory and the Psychology of Religion complementary approaches for understanding these contrasting visions of mortality.

4. Textual Analysis of Selected Poetic Oeuvre

The integration of Trauma Theory and the Psychology of Religion enables this study to move beyond biographical interpretations of the poetesses' lives. Rather than reducing Plath's and Sexton's poetry to personal histories of depression or viewing Dickinson's religiosity merely as a reflection of her upbringing, the framework examines how different psychological and spiritual mechanisms shape poetic representations of suffering. Trauma Theory explains how Plath and Sexton convert psychic wounds into confessional expression that culminates in self-

destruction, whereas the Psychology of Religion demonstrates how Dickinson negotiates similar existential concerns through faith, meaning and spiritual resilience.

In one of her journal entries, dated June 20, 1958, Sylvia Plath expresses herself her inner feelings as following, "It is as if my life were magically run by two electric currents: joyous positive and despairing negative—whichever is running at the moment dominates my life, floods it." This bold and confident confession of a duo of moods in her personality is prominent trait and she herself gives the key to have a clearer comprehension of her life in poetry or her poetry in life. Plath's violent mood is manifestly revealed when she challenges even God in defiant tone, "I talk to God but the sky is empty." She does not spare even God if anything goes against her sensitivity even though she was a Christian believing in God. Yet, it is the same Plath who becomes docile and speechless as she admits that "the silence depressed me. It wasn't the silence of silence. It was my own silence."

Not only in her poetry but in her novel *The Bell Jar* she says, "All I want is blackness. Blackness and silence." Considering that she was contrarian with regards to moods, it should be noted that the bipolar affective disorder is a psychological disorder marked by periods of high mood and depression. This period of high mood is referred to as mania or hypomania. In mania, an individual feels or behaves unusually happy and full of energy but does poor decision making without considering the consequences. Depression entails crying, poor eye contact and negative attitudes towards life. The risk of suicide for such patients is very high above 20 years old. Some of other mental disorders that are seen in this patient include anxiety disorder and substance abuse. Both environmental and genetic factors have caused this illness. Environmental factors involve prolonged stress and abuse during childhood. According to a medical report, about 3% of people in the United States have bipolar disorder.

When we study the work and life of Sylvia Plath a striking resemblance with bipolar disorder is found throughout her poetry. So to say, we have two Plaths a 'joyous positive' and a 'despairing negative' and the former is dominated absolutely by the latter. She admits her proneness to violence in these words, "I have violence in me that is hot as death-blood."

In fact, two moods run simultaneously joyous and gloomy in her poetry. For instance, her love-hate relation with her father, Prof. Otto Plath In her famous poem, "The Colossus" can be read as evidence. It is a complex and strong poem which it seen to be dedicated to Plath's father who had passed away when she was only at the age of eight. She pictures her father as a

magnificent statue. She is by the side of her father at night to keep her safe. She says that there will be no ship to rescue her and she will stay forever in this wreck of memories.

On the contrary, "Daddy" is a daring and violent poem aimed once again at Plath's father. She now compares him with terrible images of patriarchy such as a vampire, a Nazi, and a devil. She compares herself with a Jew in concentration camps. Finally, she says that in order to set free from her husband Ted Hughes, she will have to kill both of them. It is a remarkable depiction of bipolar disorder which is also called manic depression.

However, it should be noted that when Plath discusses the death drive, she knows precisely what she is talking about. In *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath*, she (1982) says, "I want the things that will kill me in the end." Moreover, at the beginning of "Lady Lazarus" poem, Plath proudly proclaims about her suicide attempt, "I have done it again," Every ten years she succeeds in performing this unmentioned deed. Plath sees herself as a living miracle. She desires to die and be reborn like a phoenix. And then, further in the poem, Plath says:

Dying is an art, like everything else.

I do it exceptionally well.

I do it so it feels like hell.

I do it so it feels real. (L 43-47)

This is a complex, gloomy, and harsh poem first published in the collection *Ariel*. This is a poem which is traditionally considered to be about suicide. It is written by a woman and primarily directed to an unnamed addressee. The title is a reference to the Biblical figure of Lazarus whom Jesus resurrected. The traditional understanding of the poem is that it is about repeated suicide attempts. The details of the poem fit into this interpretation easily. "And I have done it again" means that she made her third suicide attempt after having tried once accidentally and once purposefully in the past. Every attempt happened in different decades and when she was writing this poem she was 30 years old. It is already known today that in August of 1953, being 19 years old, Plath attempted to kill herself. She succeeded but recovered and was put under electro-shock therapy but later she killed herself by inhaling gas from a kitchen oven.

In connexion with her violent reaction Ted Hughes (1977) recalls Plath as following, "Her reactions... to even tiny desecrations of plant-life were extremely violent" (p.36). With the juxtaposition of her poems the contrary genres are manifested and we may have a clearer idea

of her silence and violence in her. The poem "A Life" depicts a woman in a hospital (possibly a suicide victim) staring at a picture and observing the fixed, happy occupants of the painting. She goes on to say that life in real life is much more "frank."

On the contrary, in "Tulips," the speaker is a woman who has just been discharged after having undergone an operation in the hospital. Her mind is now happy, quiet, and calm. She likes this detachment from her life's baggage (husband and children). But there come tulips with their unexpected vitality, colors, and life force. In this way, the speaker allows herself to return to life with acceptance of the tulips.

Moreover, her other poem "Mirror" portrays a mirror which is always busy watching the wall that stands in front of it. A woman regularly looks at her face in the mirror, but she gets upset when she looks at herself through it because she does not like her aging appearance.

Furthermore, "Ariel" talks about a woman riding her horse through the fields very early in the morning in full energy and passion. In the first place, the poem begins in complete silence in the dark while the rider is waiting for something on her horse. Then, something happens as the intangible blue of the hills and distances materializes. The rider turns into "God's lioness," and she has the sense of merging with her horse through the connection of her knees and heels. The rider feels that she becomes one with her horse as she plunges into the hot sun.

In another poem, "You're" she watches as the morning colors the windowpanes, and then marvels at how the baby has begun to coo – a form of "singing" that the speaker likens to "vowels" flying up like "balloons. "And now you try your handful of notes / The clear vowels rise like balloons." Her poem "Child" is an expression that is written in respect to the child of Plath. The author expresses joy in baby's discoveries. Still, this poem ends with fear that child will not experience a wringing of hands and dark ceiling "without a star."

However, the same Sylvia Plath becomes an infanticide in "Edge". This is Plath's final poem which tells about a dead woman that is "perfected". The author is delighted to find the end of a trip. She has two dead children coiled up inside. This poem reflects her desire for committing suicide. It seems that the theme of the poem is connected with a woman who recently committed or is going to commit suicide and in a few days she did that. This poem starts from a description of "perfected" woman, whose dead body smiles with satisfaction. The author describes her as having a toga and bare feet indicating that she made long trip but has reached the end point. There are several dead children curled up like serpents each one with a pitcher

of milk. The woman curled up those children in her body. Also, there are allusions to Medea ("the illusion of a Greek necessity") who according to the Greek myths, retaliated on her betrayed husband by killing their two kids, a clear reference to the betrayal that Hughes caused her. The reference serves to strengthen the feeling of the suicidal mood, taking into account the fact that the Greeks thought that suicide was good and in most cases it was a noble act. Indeed, infanticide is an important issue in this poem, "Each dead child coiled, a white serpent/ She has folded them back into her body as petals" is an example that shows that Plath had considered killing her own kids in the process of suicide.

The poem "Sheep in Fog" is about the silence of the poetess, who describes how she rides on the slow horse through the foggy countryside. The poem is a very gloomy poem where the speaker talks about her fear of entering into heaven which does not have stars or her father in it. She is sad because she feels that everyone is disappointed in her. One more poem "Cut" is about a real-life experience of Plath where she nearly cuts off her thumb while cutting an onion.

What a thrill ---

My thumb instead of an onion.

The top quite gone

Except for a sort of a hinge (1-4)

However, she soon begins to feel physically ill, and takes a painkiller to get rid of her "Papery feeling." Once she reaches this stage, the thumb becomes a precarious figure – a Saboteur, a Kamikaze man (a Japanese suicide bomber in WWII). Getting a cut on fingers is a common risk which may happen with anybody performing domestic chores. Yet with Plath this incident becomes a matter of war and bloodshed and she equalizes a few blood drops to million of blood smeared soldiers, "A million soldiers run / Redcoats, every one. The blood comes out of the wound as if it is an army made up of a million tiny people. They are the redcoats in the Revolutionary War, but she does not know which side they represent, and she complains to her homunculus that she is sick. She takes medicine to relieve the pain.

Even the words in the titles of her poems show the degree of aggression in her. For instance, "Lady Lazarus", Cut, Ariel, Fever 103, Daddy, Edge, A Lesson in Vengeance", "The Ravaged Face", "The Fearful", "Suicide Off Egg Rock", "Stings", "The Beast", "The Goring" etc. Violence is shown in the words she uses in her poems. Violence is meant in the objects and

images she selects for her expression. Look at the words and images she aims to create, "bare," "white serpents," "hood of bone""wars, wars, wars," "bastard," "dead hands, dead stringencies death-blood.", "cry ", "kill", "blood" "death", "Dead white" " red plush' and the list goes on.

Plath was not a submissive country wife belonging to Victorian era. She was not Jane Austen of her age noting that she never changed the name of her father. She remained Sylvia Plath till her death and never became Sylvia Hughes contrary to the matrimonial prevalent European and American traditions. It just shows through the degree of her individuality, confidence level and independence in her personality and comparatively, to some extent, her more liking for her father than her husband as well.

Unfortunately but very strikingly we have another example of violence in another great poetess of the same era with a similar mood and mode of demise. Anne Sexton (1928-1974) grew up mainly in Boston, the same place in America where Plath lived. On August 16, 1948, she got married to Alfred Muller Sexton II. Anne Sexton had two children just as Plath had, who were Linda Gray and Joyce Ladd. This well-known American poetess is known for her extremely personal and confessional poetry which are quite similar to those of Plath. In 1967, she received Pulitzer Prize for her collection of poems titled *Live or Die*. Some themes of her poems include her struggle against depression and mania, suicides and relationships with her family members. In 1966, Anne Sexton wrote a poem entitled "Wanting to Die," in which she expresses her views on death and suicide as following, "But suicides have a special language / Like carpenters they want to know which tools / They never ask why build." (L 1-3)

Another interesting fact about Sylvia plath and Anne Sexton is that both studied with a very famous American confessional poet Robert Lowell at Boston University alongside distinguished poet George Starbuck. She was among the most decorated poets in America within a decade of publishing her first sonnet, having received a Pulitzer Prize and becoming a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and the first woman to be a fellow at Harvard. Like Sylvia Plath, she made many suicide attempts. After these attempts and manic or depressive episodes, therapist Dr. Martin Orne treated Sexton and diagnosed bipolar disorder with her. On October 4, 1974, Sexton had lunch with Kumin her close friend and discussed about her coming collection of poetry. She dressed up in her old mother's fur coat, she took off all her rings, she drank one glass of vodka and locked herself in her garage with her car engine running and committed suicide through inhalation of carbon monoxide poisoning. She too, by no means,

was a minor poetess as she contributed a great deal of work to poetry and prose. Anne Sexton too has a long list of her famous books, *Live or Die* (1966), Winner of the Pulitzer prize in 1967, *Love Poems* (1969), *The Death Notebooks* (1974), *Joey and the Birthday Present* are worth mentioning, expressing her dominant despairing and occasionally joyous moods.

However, the difference between silent or violent attitude gets clearer when we study Emily Dickinson (1830-1886), one of the greatest peerless American poetesses of her age and whose work is acknowledged globally. Miss Dickinson too was an American poetess who was greatly recognized around the world for her highly unique poems. The secluded life from the outside world and her introvert character are some of the things that she is renowned for. She was among the prominent personalities in American literature. This prolific poetess had more than 1700 poems written by her throughout her lifetime. The writing style of this poetess was very different from other poems of that time period. Short lines and no titles were used in her poems. Capitalization and unconventional rhyme made her poems unique in American literature. Her poems always focused on two basic themes, death and immortality, religion as the last resort and strong faith in God's goodness here and in the afterworld. Although, few poems were published during her lifetime, which ended in 1886, she is considered one of the greatest American poets. As a young woman, Emily Dickinson was lively and optimistic just like Sylvia Plath was. At the age of 20, Emily Dickinson was already following a secluded lifestyle, and her garden became her major preoccupation. Interestingly enough, Emily Dickinson, "Was known more widely as a gardener, perhaps, than a poet," until after her death, which makes her a great poetess even in silence. The latter years in Dickinson's life were marked by many deaths. Her father died unexpectedly. The deaths of some of her friends and tutors deepened her depression.

Having experienced several painful operations in the middle of the 1860s, Emily Dickinson was staying in hospitals in Boston city, where Plath received her medical treatment as well. Her favorite pastor, Charles Wadsworth, died in 1882, and five months later her mother died in 1883. Her father, Otis Taylor Lord died in 1884 after a prolonged illness. Even her own health began to decline after the death of her nephew who gave up the ghost in 1885. Miss Dickinson expressed her trauma in these words, "The Dyings have been too deep for me" Despite all these shocking bereavements she stood firm, kept her poise gorgeously and expresses her philanthropy beautifully in her poem titled, "If I Can Stop One Heart From Breaking", in these verses:

If I can stop one heart from breaking,
 I shall not live in vain;
 If I can ease one life the aching,
 Or cool one pain,
 Or help one fainting robin
 Unto his nest again,
 I shall not live in vain. (Dickinson, 1864/1955, lines 1–7)

Further,

“Hope” is the thing with feathers
 That perches in the soul
 And sings the tune without the words
 And never stops at all, (Dickinson, 1864/1955, lines 1–4)

Even ‘Death’ to her is a medium for peace and eternal serenity. In her poem, “Because I couldn’t Stop for Death”, she welcomes death in these words,

And I had put away
 My labor, and my leisure too,
 For His Civility. (Dickinson, 1864/1955, lines 6–8)

In these verses, the poetess shows us the image of death as something pleasant and courteous that makes people go to eternity in a polite manner. According to the her, "I have put away / My labor, and my leisure too," which means that all earthly tasks, dreams, and pleasures lose their sense once death comes, and Dickinson was sure that dying helps people free themselves from all those mundane things that bothered them before. In such a way, the phrase "For His Civility" shows that Death is represented as a courteous and kind gentleman who politely invites the speaker to travel, and not a monster that captures his victim against her will. In other words, the poem contradicts traditional views on death as something terrible and frightening. This attitude to death was formed under the influence of Dickinson's spiritual worldview according to which physical death is just the beginning of eternal existence. After the death of Emily Dickenson, her younger sister found seventeen hundred poems written by her. Her first poetry collection was published in 1890. The first poetry collection of her which had not been altered at all was published in 1955. This is a peerless example of a personae whose silence could not but express her greatness after her death.

However, comparing with Dickinson, it can be said that Plath and Sexton had two strong mood gleesome and gloomy, elated and dismal, aggressive and repressive, silent and violent but their furious and violent mood was far strong over their personality which not only dominated their poetry but entire life. Plath's poems prove that violence was not simply the manifestation of anger; it was a deeply psychological way to respond to the pain, social oppression, and existential crisis experienced by the poet. Death, rebirth, rage, and resistance are just some of the images that appear repeatedly throughout Plath's work and reveal the continuous effort made by the poet to regain her freedom and independence in a world where she did not find happiness and freedom. While there are instances of silence, weakness, and hope in Plath's poems, they are constantly overpowered by the passion of her emotional revolt. Hence, Plath's poetic voice becomes an ultimate representation of the human soul's dilemma between endurance and annihilation. She was more violent than silent and refused to suffer in silence.

5. Conclusion

In contrast to Dickinson, whose poems turn suffering into contemplation and spirituality, Plath and Sexton's poetry depicts psychological suffering through a harshly aggressive and confrontational style of expression. Yet, Plath, at heart, was a masochist rather than a sadist. Her fury was turned against herself and not others, even those that were a cause of her suffering. Sexton, too, expresses deep-seated psychological wounds by means of defiance, rage and intense emotion in her confessional poems. Both poets struggled for freedom, identity, equality, justice and unconditional love in what was an oppressive and uncaring world. They found it increasingly difficult to come to terms with their conflicts within the confines of the society they found themselves in, and so turned their aggression against themselves, eventually bringing about their untimely demise. Dickinson, on the other hand, faces up to suffering and death in her poetry through contemplation and spirituality, leaving room for silence and serenity.

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