

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences

An Exploration of Self in Sylvia Plath's Poems

A Dissertation

**Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Masters of Arts in English**

By

Reecha Regmi

Central Department of English

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

May 12, 2009

Tribhuvan University

Faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences

Letter of Approval

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “An Exploration of Self in Sylvia Plath’s Poems,” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Reecha Regmi, has been approved by the research committee.

Members of the Research Committee

Internal Examiner

External Examiner

Head, Central Department of English

Date: _____

Acknowledgements

I owe my deepest gratitude to my supervisor Mr. Shankar Subedi for his consistent guidance and valuable suggestions. His encouragement, supervision and support from the preliminary to the concluding level enabled me to bring this thesis in its present form.

I am heartily thankful to Professor Dr. Krishna Chandra Sharma, Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, for the approval of the dissertation. I would like to express my thanks to my teachers Mr. Pushpa Acharya and Mr. Raju Baral for generously giving their time and expertise to better my work.

I am most indebted to my father Late Kanchan Regmi who passed away five months ago. His encouragement and support during the last year of his life made it possible for me to complete this research. If this dissertation has merit, he deserves much of the credit.

Thanks to my colleagues Binod Nepal, Smarika Gauchan and Nirmala Bhandari for their inspiration for completing the work. I must acknowledge my family members Sushila, Yogesh, Kreepa and Rasik who assisted, advised and supported my research and writing efforts over the months. It would have been next to impossible to write this thesis without all these people's cooperation.

Reecha Regmi

April, 2009

Abstract

The thesis entitled 'An Exploration of Self in Sylvia Plath's Poems' relates the poems by Sylvia Plath, a prominent figure among the poets of the twentieth century. Plath wants to seek her identity in the world as an independent, female self through her poems. The dialectical tension between self and world is the location of meaning in Plath's poems characterized by a conflict between isolation and engagement. Her poems are largely about what stands in the way of the possibility of rebirth for the self.

Plath's rebellion against culture allegorizes the story of suffering of women with fragmented identity that is relevant even today. The poet frequently explores what it means to be a woman in terms of traditional conflict between family and career. Her writing is filled with anxiety and despair over her refusal to choose the society constructed by men where females like her are considered to be nobody.

Most of her poems are concerned at one level or another with suffering, sickness, injury, torture, madness, death. She shows her anger and frustration by the necessity of defining herself as a woman. The poet demonstrates her anger at patriarchal construction in her culture that marginalizes feminist concerns. She is radically rebellious against her suppressed and submerged personality.

CONTENTS

	Pages
Acknowledgements	iii
1. Introduction	
I. Question of Identity in Plath's Poems	1-12
2. Tools	
II. Feminism: A Theoretical Modality	13-48
3. Textual Analysis	
III. Plath's Search for Individuality: The Self Standing outside the Self	49-90
III. i. "Fever 103 degree"	51
III. ii. "In Plaster"	53
III. iii. "Cut"	56
III. iv. "Munich Mannequins"	58
III. v. "Purdah"	62
III. vi. "Tulips"	65
III. vii. "The Applicant"	71
III. viii. "Edge"	75
III. ix. "Daddy"	78
III. x. "Lady Lazarus"	82
III. xi. "Ariel"	85
III. xii. "Mirror"	87

4. Conclusion

IV. Speakers in Plath's Poetry as Assertive Individuals

91-92

5. Works Cited