

**The liminal space between ‘the self’ and the object: Representation of  
psychological alienation in Sylvia Plath’s poetry**

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## **The liminal space between ‘the self’ and the object: Representation of psychological alienation in Sylvia Plath’s poetry**

In recent discussions of Sylvia Plath, scholars have argued that her poetry consists of self-reflecting ambiguous themes and patterns of a self-defining subject. In addition to this, Plath scholars have argued that one cannot separate Plath’s own self from her poetry and that her work evidently showcases internal struggles with self-definition and self-discovery. The aim of my thesis is to investigate the poems “Elm”, “Tulips” and “Poppies in July” and look specifically at how flowers and elements of nature create a liminal space between the subject (‘the self’) and the object (flowers etc.) thus creating a sense of psychological alienation. To look at these poems, I intend to use Victor Gecas discussion on *The self-concept* to implement an understanding of self-identity. What this will show is that through Plath’s use of anthropomorphistic symbolism and use of color, the objects themselves become harmful to the psychological state of ‘the self’.

### **Introduction**

In this thesis I wish to broaden the discussion on subject-object relations in the Plath poems “Elm”, “Tulips” and “Poppies in July”, and argue how my depiction of a ‘liminal space’ results in psychological alienation of the subject (‘the self’). My main focus when engaging with scholars will be to investigate how they interact with the poem “Tulips”. However, in my own analysis I will be applying my finds from this investigation to “Elm” and “Poppies in July”. The idea of self-identity becomes important in this thesis because of the way ‘the self’ views themselves in relation to the objects. I argue that Plath utilizes anthropomorphism, giving the objects the ability to cause harm to the subject. To depict this, I will look at how she uses imagery of harm and suffocation, usage of color and how anthropomorphism works to elevate these elements. The objects become vividly alive and ‘the self’ in relation to the objects becomes alienated to that life, resulting in what I depict as a ‘liminal space’. To bring depth to this idea of a subject-object relation I juxtapose Michael K. Pedersen and Majorie Perloff’s discussion on this idea, especially regarding the poem Tulips. Pedersen argues that the subject and object in “Tulips” exist in “two different material movements within the poem” (104), in contrast, Perloff argues that “...there is no isolated subject who can observe and describe an outside-object world, but the subject itself is directly involved with objects, it becomes the object themselves” (94). Perloff depicts that “Plath’s poems belong to tradition of a ‘poetry of process’, whose ecstatic subject wholly identifies with the objects so that an act of ‘imaginative animism’ is performed” (94). According to this view, if the self/human is the

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subject and the literary image of a flower the object, then that would convey that the two become one and the same. The self becomes the object. As well as focusing on Pedersen and Perloff's discussion on subject-object relation, I intend to bring forward two additional Plath scholars, Jon Rosenblatt and Sandra M. Gilbert. Rosenblatt depicts in his article "The Drama of Initiation" that Plath poems like "Tulips" encompass a 'struggle for existence' and argues this to be apparent through anthropomorphism. In the words of Rosenblatt "Animals, insects, and vegetation in her poetry are aware of their roles and take on characteristics that are normally reserved for human beings..." (Rosenblatt 33) According to this view, it would seem that flowers and other elements from nature, as stated by Rosenblatt, "...suffer or feel pleasure" (33). Gilbert discusses in her article "My name is Darkness: The poetry of Self-definition" how Plath struggles towards 'self-definition' and how this is evident in her poetry. I find that by juxtaposing this article with Gecas's depiction of self-identity, the juxtaposition becomes important in ultimately understanding how Plath's struggle with identity might have manifested in her poetry. All in all, I find these specific scholars important because they engage with self-identity and subject-object manifestation in "Tulips" and other Plath poems, which helps me juxtapose my own arguments on the same ideas. Although I discuss many similar aspects as these scholars, I introduce a different conclusion, thus offering a broader discussion on self-identity and subject-object relations in Plath poems.

Viktor Gecas discusses the idea of self-identity and self-image in his work *The Self-Concept* through social psychology. In this section of my thesis, I would like to begin with introducing a short depiction of the theory of self-concept as I find it important to implement these ideas early on. Continuously in my thesis I wish to utilize Gecas ideas of self-concept to analyze the poems I have chosen to look at, as well as implementing them as I engage with Plath scholars. Since Gecas presents a socio-psychological aspect of this concept I find it necessary to depict that I utilize these ideas with the aim of understanding the psychological alienation of the self in the poems I investigate through the lens of self-concept. Gecas refers to 'self-concept' as "the concept the individual has of himself as a physical, social, and spiritual or moral being" (Gecas 3). He further differentiates self-conception and self-evaluations, identity being "the meanings comprising the self as an object, gives structure and content to self-concept, and anchors the self to social systems" and self-esteem "deals with the evaluative and emotional dimensions of the self-concept" (4). On the basis of these depictions the two ideas seem closely related, yet different, however "The self is seen as embracing

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multiple identities linked to the roles and role relationships that constitute significant elements of social structures” (14).

### **Pedersen and Perloff: The discussion of subject-object relations**

In this section of my thesis, I will be juxtaposing Pedersen and Perloff’s arguments in their discussion of subject-object relations, especially regarding the poem *Tulips*. I find this important because it introduces different ways of how ‘the self’ (subject) might interact with the objects in Plath’s poetry, as well as connecting these interactions with self-identity.

In his book chapter *Sylvia Plath’s Tulips: On Hostile Nature of Things*, Michael K. Pedersen presents arguments regarding Sylvia Plath’s late poetry and the usage of ‘things’ in her poems. What Pedersen depicts as ‘things’ I will refer to as the object or flowers/elements of nature. Pedersen argues the presence of ‘things’ as something of their “own ontology” (94) and in discussing the presence of things he utilizes arguments on post-anthropomorphic theory to suggest that ‘things’ are autonomous beings rather than somethings determined by “human presence” (94). His book chapter takes point of departure in the analysis of the poem “*Tulips*” where he argues the existence of a contrasting image between ‘things’ and the subject. The first stanza of the poem depicts a patient in a hospital room in contrast to what Pedersen argues as the “intrusion of the tulips” (95). He furthers this image of intrusion with the argument that it creates a ‘divide’ between the ‘things’ and the subject. Pedersen suggests that there is an existence of a death-like state of the patient, referring to the line “It is winter here” (95). As well as the death-like state of a patient in a hospital room, the tulips, by suggestion of Pedersen “forcefully disturbs the calmness of the hospital scene and the winter state of the patient” (95). Essentially this would suggest that the tulips (thing) become what Pedersen calls “an intervention... which reconnects the subject with the aggressive and pulsating vitality of life” (95). There is a notion within this line that that the two, object and subject, exists together but separately. Pedersen himself argues that the patient and the ‘thing’ exist in “two different material movements within the poem” (104) where one is harmful to the other. I find this specific line important regarding Pedersen’s argument: “Plath’s animism is therefore based on a core of material negativity, of earth, which means that the aliveness of things is fed by their sustained indifference to human life” (105). This line suggests that ‘things’ become negative in the way that they indeed are alive, in relation to the subject. Pedersen argues through this line “...I would argue, it is precisely because the patient cannot

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perform and act of identification – the tulips are not at all willingly inert objects, but exercise an aggressive resistance – that it can come truly and vitally alive again”(105) that the idea of the ‘things’ themselves are not unreactive, but indeed in relation to the subject actively causes negative reactions in the subject.

In contrast to Pedersen’s argument, Marjorie Perloff argues that “there is no isolated subject who can observe and describe an outside object-world, but the subject itself is directly involved with objects, it becomes the objects themselves” (94). Perloff’s idea of subject-object relations is in opposition to Pedersen much more binary. She suggests that Plath poetry encompass a sense of “being left alone and separated from the things of the world” (94). Pedersen and Perloff seem to agree on the matter that there is an opposition of life and death in Plath’s poetry, as well as a sense of alienation. Looking at the poem “Tulips”, Pedersen argues this ‘separation from the things of the world’ as “a fierce alienness inherent in the tulips” and that the subject and ‘things’ exists in two different “material movements” (94). In opposition to this, Perloff argues that ‘inanimate things’ “can only be transcended through the identification with nonhuman” (94). Pedersen’s reading of the poem tulips is, according to his own words “not read symbolically” (94), meaning that in reading the poem tulips, the tulips are in fact not a symbol of something else, but an object outside of the subject. In contrast to this, Perloff’s suggestion of what she depicts as “imaginative animism” becomes the notion that the subject identifies with the object and ultimately becomes one and the same.

### **Rosenblatt and Gilbert: Anthropomorphism and self-identity**

The subject of identity is indeed a frequent depiction in discussions of Plath’s late poetry, this can be argued to be present through the way suffering is depicted in flowers. Rosenblatt introduces the notion of anthropomorphism through arguing that flowers suffer in Plath’s poems. In correspondence to this argument, I argue that it is not the flowers themselves that suffer, but rather ‘the self’ that suffer at the hand of the flowers. Despite our difference in opinion on this matter I find it important to bring depth to the aspect of anthropomorphism and to do so use Rosenblatt’s argument as a comparable element.

Jon Rosenblatt argues the subject of these struggles for self-identity to be apparent in Plath’s depiction of life and death and defines it as a “struggle for existence” (Rosenblatt 22). He argues that through Plath’s depictions of life and death – birth/rebirth in her poetry there

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come exist a conjunction between the two oppositions. This means that instead of life and death existing separately, Rosenblatt argues these to “come together as one” (22). Furthering on this idea that life and death may exist together he argues that “her poems frequently perceive of death not as a suicidal ending but as the path to a transformed identity” (23). This transformation could perhaps also be depicted as similar to a rebirth. In discussing Plath’s works Rosenblatt, like Perloff and Pedersen, argues the existence of animistic elements: “The persistence and depth of the initiatory images and structures in Plath’s works point to the archaic nature of her beliefs, particularly her faith in spirit life and animism” (33). He furthers on this argument by stating that elements of nature “take on characteristics that are normally reserved for human beings” (33) as well as flowers in the poem *Poppies in July* “suffer or feel pleasure” (33).

To further on the idea on self-identity in Plath poems, this section will focus on Sandra M. Gilbert’s argument that Plath poetry encompass a struggle for identity. While Perloff argues Plath’s poetry to evidently embody a feeling of separation from ‘things’ in the world and Pedersen argues alienation to be inherent in the tulips themselves, Sandra M. Gilbert proposes similar arguments regarding the struggle in oneself. I have chosen to investigate Gilbert’s arguments because of her depiction on self-identity, which becomes important for my own argument in terms of how the subject and the object relate to each other. In other words, how ‘the self’ views themselves in relation to flowers and other elements of nature. Gilbert proposes an investigation of ‘the struggle towards a name’ which I find relates to how a lack of identity can create the feeling of psychological alienation. In discussion of her late poetry, Gilbert compares Plath to Robert Lowell, a male poet, and argue that they encompass a different process of self-discovery. She depicts that Lowell “has a cool faith in his own ability to classify his own exemplary sufferings” (Gilbert 445) and in juxtaposition Plath and other ‘female poets’ “feel no such paradoxal ease with her own anxieties” (445). She furthers her arguments on Plath with “To define her suffering would be to define her identity, and such self-definition is her goal, rather than her starting point” (446). The struggle towards self-discovery then becomes something that may be unobtainable, perhaps the ultimate goal of existence within the struggle of the self. An argument frequently used by Gilbert regarding Plath’s poetry of self-definition is the struggle towards ‘a name’, “to find some connection between the name the world has given her and the secret name she has given herself... The female poet’s second self, however, is associated with her secret name, her rebellious

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longings" (451). The struggle toward defining oneself in the light of society or perhaps even in the light of the people around you is, becomes an important depiction in Gilbert's argument. The female poet's 'second self' thus insinuate a separation of self, a voice that consists of "her rebellious longings" and a second voice with 'names' society has given her - 'mother', 'daughter'. As a result of this 'separation' one is left with a sense of otherness in one's own identity: "For inhabiting her, the second self is a cry that keeps her awake" (23). Looking upon what Gecas depict about self-identity then, this otherness from one's own identity could arguably be applied in looking at the 'separation of self'. In other words, one can apply the idea that self-identity "gives structure and content to self-concept and anchors the self to social systems" to understand Gilbert's argument of the female poet's second self. In her discussion of Elm, Gilbert investigates this line: "looking with its hooks, for something to love" (23) and argues that Plath "...can define it no more precisely, can define instead only her own pain, her fear of its otherness" (453). The 'otherness' in Gilbert's argument represents the estrangement Plath/'the self' seem to experience in her own identity and her own anxieties. I would like to argue that in opposition to what Gilbert argues as a separation of self, there exists a sense of psychological alienation in the way that 'the self' lacks relatability to others which ultimately results in alienation.

### **Analysis: "Elm", "Tulips" and "Poppies in July"**

Sylvia Plath's work evidently showcases internal struggles with self-definition and self-discovery. For one to fully understand my argument I would like to look at how Plath utilizes elements of nature, how these depict harm and suffocation and how they become symbols of the psychological alienation of 'the self' in her poems. The aim of this section thus becomes to investigate "Elm", "Tulips" and "Poppies in July" and look specifically at how flowers and elements of nature create a liminal space between the subject ('the self') and the object (flowers etc.) thus creating a sense of psychological alienation.

The first element I would like to look at is how Plath utilizes elements of nature to create an opposition of life and death, thus creating the notion of a 'liminal space' between 'the self' and these objects. In this case, I would like to repeat Victor Gecas depiction of self-identity as "the concept the individual has of himself as a physical, social, and spiritual or moral being" (Gecas 3). One can arguably understand this as self-identity being closely related to one's internal being and the depiction one has of oneself, as well as the identities connection to social

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systems. Regarding Gilbert's argument that Plath encompasses a struggle towards "self-discovery" and Rosenblatt's argument that she encompasses a "struggle for existence", I too would argue that there seem to be a constant contrasting fight within 'the self'. In the poem "Tulips" the idea of identity is raised in the first stanza: "I am nobody; I have nothing to do with explosions" (24).

The Tulips are too excitable, it is winter here.

Look how white everything is, how quiet, how snowed-in.

I am learning peacefulness, lying by myself quietly

As the light lies on these white walls, this bed, these hands.

I am nobody; I have nothing to do with explosions. (24)

In this stanza the reader is presented with a contrasting image of the 'excitable' tulips and something 'quiet' and 'snowed in'. I argue that Plath's imagery of this peaceful 'white winter' is quite ironically not peaceful, but rather the opposite. As the poem goes on the reader learns through lines like "The nurses pass and pass" (24) and "My body is a pebble to them" (24) that 'the self' in this poem most likely is institutionalized. 'The self' could arguably be in a lucid state, perhaps even drugged as they seem to rapidly transcend from describing the environment they find themselves in and questioning their own existence "I am nobody" (24). A similar identity-phrased statement can be found in Elm: "I am incapable of more knowledge" (Elm 44). Pedersen, like previously stated, frequently discusses "Tulips" in his book. I would like to look at his argument regarding the patient (the self) in this poem: "the patient is forced back to life, out of her death-like state" (Pedersen 95). While I would agree that 'the self' experiences a death-like state, lying in the hospital, possibly drugged, I would like to argue that the tulips do not "force her back to life" but rather makes her acutely aware of her existence. I would further this argument by stating that, by being aware of her death-like state, in contrast to the tulips, 'the self' feels isolated, and perhaps even more death-like. The contrast between living things and the dead-like self becomes important here. In "Elm" the theme of identity is evident. The self frequently utter existential dread within their own state of existence.

I am terrified by this dark thing

That sleeps in me;

All day I feel its soft, feathery turnings, its malignity. (Elm 44)



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The ‘dark thing’ depicted here is arguably the struggle ‘the self’ feels within themselves. This darkness can connect to the patient-like state in “Tulips” if we look at this line “They have swabbed me clear of my loving associations” (24 Tulips). When one’s ‘loving associations’ have been removed one can assume that what remains is some kind of void, perhaps even a darkness.

To continue this notion of identity, I would argue that there is a strong sense of self here in this line “I am nobody”. Looking at Gilbert’s argument on identity of the female poet: “To define her suffering would be to define her identity, and such self-definition is her goal, rather than her starting point” (446), this seems to insinuate a lack of awareness. In other words, in looking at Gilbert’s argument that Plath struggles towards self-discovery, I would like to emphasize that despite this, the lack of awareness of ‘the self’ is highly present. To take point in departure in Gecas depiction of self-esteem as “evaluative and emotional dimensions of the self-concept” (Gecas 4) ‘the self’ seem to be able to step into a questioning state in her own existence and conclude with “I am nobody” (24 Tulips). This, to me, evidently shows that ‘the self’ is able to evaluate their own internal struggles and seems highly aware of everything that is happening to them: “Now I have lost myself I am sick of baggage” (24). The existential statements along these poems seem to evidently accentuate the isolating feeling of ‘the self’. This ‘isolation’ can be argued through the contrasting language Plath utilizes to depict the self and the flowers. I argue that the contrast between the ‘excitable’ tulips and self ‘quietly’ existing in their own sphere of awareness creates a liminal space between the self and the tulips. This liminal space is truly evident in “Poppies in July”.

You flicker. I cannot touch you.

I put my hands among the flames. Nothing burns. (45)

‘The self’ goes on to explain the Poppies “You flicker” imposing the image of a burning fire. Then ‘the self’ goes on say “I cannot touch you”. In relation to the argument, I made in regard to “Tulips”, the liminal space between the self and the poppies again subsequently creates this notion of an estrangement/alienation. I would argue that the usage of such estranging language “I cannot touch you” reinforces that ‘liminal space’. The Poppies become something that the self cannot touch, something separate and unobtainable.

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I have now established that there evidently is an existence of a 'liminal space' between the subject and the object in the poems. This 'liminal space' is enhanced by 'the self's' struggle for an identity and struggle with existing. Through depicting 'the self' in a death-like state, struggling with their identity in contrast to inherently alive and 'excitable' flowers and other elements of nature this creates a 'liminal' space. To enhance the notion of a 'liminal space' in her poems and how the objects hurt 'the self', this section will focus on how Plath through anthropomorphism depict these objects as suffocating and hurtful to the subject. 'The self' in "Poppies in July" utter "And it exhausts me to me to watch you" (45). This notion of harm and exhaustion is apparent in the language Plath frequently utilizes, and it seems that 'living things' in "Tulips", "Elm" and "Poppies in July" cause 'the self' negative emotions:

"Elm":

The moon, also, is merciless: she would drag me" (43)

So murderous in its strangle of branches (44)

That kill, that kill, that kill (44)

I have suffered the atrocity of sunsets (43)

"Poppies in July":

Little hell flames...Do you do no harm? (45)

It exhausts me to watch you (45)

"Tulips":

A dozen red lead sinkers around my neck (25)

The tulips should be behind bars like dangerous animals (26)

This depiction of harm and suffocation create a clear contrast between 'the self' and the objects (branches, poppies, tulips). So much so that even beautifully living things like flowers, and sunsets cause 'the self' harm "I have suffered the atrocity of sunsets", "And I see myself, flat, ridiculous, a cut-paper shadow...Between the eyes of the tulips" (25). As well as harm, there is a similarity in the way suffocation is depicted in Elm and Tulips.

I know the bottom, she says. I know it with my great tap root:

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It is what you fear.

I do not fear it: I have been there. (43)

In the first stanza of “Elm”, the imagery of roots is implemented. There is also a depiction of bottom, although perhaps metaphorically. The imagery of a bottom is raised in “Tulips” with this line: “a dozen red lead sinkers around my neck”. Although not directly depicted, if we picture ‘lead sinkers’ this would, around ‘one’s neck’, be able to sink you to the bottom of an ocean. Another important similarity between these poems is found through “so murderous in its strangle of branches” (44). It is evident that this line from “Elm” can be compared to “a dozen red lead sinkers around my neck” from “Tulips”. The comparison can be made evident through their imagery of strangulation. However different, these poems suggest the idea of suffocation which becomes an important aspect of my argument. The anthropomorphic imagery where sunsets become atrocious, branches kill, poppies harm and the moon is merciless works as symbols of the distance ‘the self’ experience from otherwise beautiful things, as well as the suffocation living things cause. Thus, the sense of psychological alienation is incorporated.

In the last section of my analysis, I find it important to, in order to enhance my argument, look at how Plath utilizes color. The colors white and red become especially important looking at these poems, where I argue that the color white becomes the color of death and red the color of life. The imagery of this color opposition enforces the image that the objects hurt the subject and thus enhances the ‘liminal’ space that ultimately leads to psychological alienation. The fifth stanza of “Tulips” juxtapose the idea of peacefulness and death.

I didn’t want any flowers, I only wanted

To lie with my hands turned up and be utterly empty.

How free it is, you have no idea how free –

The peacefulness is so big it dazes you. (25)

The second line here could depict suicidal ideation “To lie with my hands up and be utterly empty” (25), and the peacefulness thus becomes a depiction of death. This shows evidence that ‘the self’s struggles are projected onto the elements of nature. I argue that this is true both in this stanza as well as the first stanza “I am learning peacefulness, lying by myself quietly” (25). Again, it is evident that the depiction of death is raised in contrast to the flowers as Plath

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begins the stanza with "I didn't want any flowers" (25) and goes on to express her suicidal ideation. "The tulips are too red in the first place, they hurt me... Even through the gift paper I could hear them breathe" (25). The color red becomes an important point here, as well as in "Poppies in July" where the image of the poppies as "little hell flames" is raised:

Little poppies, little hell flames,  
Do you do no harm? (45)

There is a notion of something red and perhaps 'burning' in the first line of this poem. In "Tulips" as well as this poem the flowers are indeed the color red: "Little hell flames" (45), insinuating that the poppies are not only that the flowers are red in color, but in addition also perhaps excitable like the way Plath exaggerates the tulips. In the first stanza of "Tulips" there is the imagery of a *white* winter, while further in the poem we learn that the tulips, like the poppies, are *red* and that they *hurt me*. I argue that the 'peacefulness' depicted in tulips 'the self' feels in death is evident in the white winter, thus this become the color of *death*, and the red tulips that hurt 'the self' thus become the color of *life*. In addition, Plath incorporates both the color red and the burning element in "Elm" "My red filaments burn and stand, a hand of wires" (43). In this case the 'red' is related to the suffering at the "atrociousness of sunsets" (43). It seems that in "Elm" it is 'the self' that burns at the sight of something vivid and alive.

Although this is a different approach to the burning aspect than in "Poppies in July", I argue that they convey the same meaning. The object inflicts harm on the subject in the way that a sunset is vividly alive and 'the self' considers herself in contrast to this aliveness. Thus, the sunset becomes harmful. I argue further that this opposition between life and death is evident through the way 'the self' view themselves in contrast to the tulips. Primarily focusing on this line "The vivid tulips eat my oxygen" (25), I argue that the liminal space between 'the self' and the living, breathing tulips become the symbol of a psychological alienation of the self. Putting it simply, 'the self' becomes estranged to the inherent nature and life of the tulips. It seems that 'the self' and the tulips subsist in different spheres of existence, where the life of one creates the death of the other "A dozen red lead sinkers round my neck" (25).

### Conclusion

In this thesis I have investigated how flowers and elements of nature creates a 'liminal space' between the subject ('the self') and the object (flowers etc.) thus creating a sense of psychological alienation. I have done this by looking at how Plath utilizes anthropomorphic

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symbolism, the notion of harm, suffocation and color to juxtapose how the objects in these poems become harmful to the psychological state of ‘the self’. To conclude this thesis, I would argue that it is clear that Plath’s poetry embodies a struggle towards self-identity. Like stated in my introduction, Plath scholars have argued that one cannot separate Plath’s own self from her poetry and that her work evidently showcases internal struggles. Through this thesis I have argued, with the help of Pedersen, Perloff, Rosenblatt and Gilbert, how self-identity manifests itself in Plath poetry. Pedersen and Perloff’s arguments on subject- object relations are like stated, different in how the object affects the subject. Pedersen argues that the object causes the subject harm and reconnects the subject with life, while Perloff argues in opposition that the subject and object cannot exist separately. To add on to these arguments, I have brought forward Rosenblatt and Gilbert with the intention of bringing depth to the argument of identity. Self-identity is explained by Gecas as “the concept the individual has of himself as a physical, social, and spiritual or moral being” (Gecas 3) and I argue that this idea is a tool to understand how ‘the self’s’ struggle with identity results in psychological alienation. In my thesis I utilized this concept when analyzing how self-identity might manifest in the poetry. As a result of this, I found that ‘the self’ in these poems struggle to identify with living ‘things’ as ‘the self’ lacks relatability with the objects and perhaps even finds themselves in a less-alive state in contrast. In other words, the tulips, poppies, branches, and sunsets seem to hurt ‘the self’ with how vividly alive they are. ‘The self’ view themselves in contrast to these objects, which ultimately creates a ‘liminal space’ between the subject (‘the self’) and the objects. A similarity and common tread within the discussions of these four scholars, is that they all touch on the idea that Plath’s poetry encompass a sense of struggle within the self. The idea of self-identity and the struggle this brings is depicted differently, however I find it important to depict a broad discussion on the topic. Regarding my own argument, I would agree with Pedersen in that the subject and object exists in different spheres, where one harms the other. And like stated earlier in this thesis, rather than Gilbert’s argument on the separation of self, the struggle with identity creates a ‘liminal space’. All in all, I conclude this thesis with restating my argument: Through the depiction of harm, suffocation, usage of color and anthropomorphic symbolism in “Elm”, “Tulips” and “Poppies in July” I argue that flowers and other elements of nature create a ‘liminal’ space between the subject and objects that results in psychological alienation.

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**Citations**

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