

## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves as the foundation for the whole thesis and introduces the issue of the research.

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Marriage is the legal union of two individuals intended to form a family and a long-term relationship based on mutual commitment. It generally serves as one of the factors, alongside parenting and other crucial factors, that shape one's worldview, ideology, life value, moral line, and social development. From a classical social anthropology perspective, Brown (1952) emphasized that the relationship—which he referred to as kinship in his book—is a social connection to generate a bond. This creates rights and obligations between the parties involved and plays an important role in the structure of society. In contrast, Giddens (1992) post-traditional social theory argues marriage tied to the pure relationship concept, guided by the principles of equality. The process of detraditionalization in matrimony reflects wider changes in society. Such shift shows the classic concept focused on fixed roles and clear expectations, while modern concept tends to emphasize flexibility and personal choice. However, the extent of that flexibility remains influenced by cultural traditions and social norms.

While marriage, as previously posited, stands as a social institution that can be broadly understood across cultures, its specific practices and meanings are intertwined with and vary significantly among different cultural contexts. Departing from the dichotomy between traditional and modern views, Bell (1997) argued that marriage remains shaped by social and economic forces, challenging the idea that it is matter of personal choice. The opposition of conventional and contemporary values exists in the contrast between Eastern and Western cultures. In many Eastern societies, the matrimony is influenced by collective beliefs and cultural continuity, whereas in Western societies, it is more commonly an individual



Therefore, undoubtedly, the roles of husband and wife have evolved over time due to broader social transformations. Factors such as mass media, historical events, and shifting gender norms have significantly influenced traditional marital concepts, leading to adjustments that reflect changing social and cultural values.

Although marriage is often linked to romantic images, beside the basic concepts explained above, it is far more complicated than the romanticized version portrayed by the media. For women, for instance, in many cultures there is an expectation to take on certain positions such as submissive wives, all-around mothers, and primary caregivers. This leading to the set aside women's personal identity or ambitions, gradually losing themselves for the sake of marriage. While discussions of domesticity have often been explored, the complexity and enduring nature of marriage issues today, particularly in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, demonstrate that many of these problems still persist. Parker, Durante, Hill, and Haselton (2022) stated the clash between traditional gender expectations and modern realities lead to initiation of divorce by female. This finding paradoxically demonstrates the separation can serve as a solution. Beyond the initial observations, a closer look at literary works reveals a pattern of marital issues used by writers in poetry, prose, and play. Notably, the women writers expose the dark, hidden truth of marriage.

Literature, as a medium of expression, often delves into the complexities of human issues, including marriage. Litterateurs have constructed works with marriage themes in various nuances, depending on the era, culture, genre, and perspective of the author. In the observation of numerous works across periods, the most common representations of marriage are marriage as idealism, marriage as social duty, and marriage in the satirical or tragic sense. Although literature is often seen as a personal expression of the author's feelings and experiences, literary works are also rooted in a larger aspect. They are shaped by broader social forces that influence the author's perspective and serve as tools for social commentary and cultural criticism. Within this broad literary genre, poetry efficiently explains the intensity of marriage through its brevity and precision of words. Poets have the capacity to convey complex marital issues with conciseness and depth. Poetry finds its etymological roots in the Greek word *ποίησις* (poiesis), which means production or the act of making. This term is closely related to two others: poem and poet, which must be clearly defined to avoid misconceptions. Poem is derived from the word *ποίημα* (poiēma), translated as "creation," while *ποιητής* (poiētēs), meaning "maker," et. In this sense, poetry is regarded as both imaginative invention and instruction. A poem refers to a specific, individual work of a poet. In the based conception has been linked to the use of language for communication. An examination of the messages conveyed in poems leads us to gain insight into the values, beliefs, and aspirations of a



society. Through this, it becomes clear poetry analysis does not lose sight of the raw truth of marriage, despite the poetic style in which it is served.

Sylvia Plath is one of the pioneers of confessional poetry. Hoffman (1978) asserted that this poetry combines an emphasis on individual experience with modern techniques of concealment, a significant development in poetic form. It indicates the technique reveals the most intimate aspects of the poet's life, the truths which resist straightforward expression. Therefore, despite the personalism existed in Plath's poetry, it cannot be denied that it continues to resonate with larger issues such as patriarchy, sexuality, and societal expectations. In a line with that, Plath shared a contemplation of her intention of writing during an interview with Peter Orr of the British Council 1962,

This is something I didn't do in my earlier poems. For example, my first book, *The Colossus*, I can't read any of the poems aloud now. I didn't write them to be read aloud. They, in fact, quite quite privately, bore me. These ones that I have just read, the ones that are very recent, I've got to say them, I speak them to myself, and I think that this in my own writing development is quite a new thing with me, and whatever lucidity they may have comes from the fact that I say them to myself, I say them aloud. Well, I feel that, I do feel that now and I feel that this development of recording poems, of speaking poems at readings, of having records of poets, I think this is a wonderful thing. I'm very excited by it. In a sense, there's a return, isn't there, to the old role of the poet, which was to speak to a group of people, to to come across. To sing to a group of people, exactly exactly (Plath, 1962/2023, 9:11)

Faced with both internal and external struggles in marriage, she appears not only to expose her personal wounds, but as a voice of her community. Through sharp and deliberate diction, her poems peel back the layers to reveal the harsh realities behind the idea of marriage. Plath gave voice to the anxieties and frustrations of women by sharing her own struggles. Her exploration of themes like mental illness, domesticity, and female identity has continued to challenge women to confront their vulnerabilities.



Plath created numerous works throughout her career, but one of her most notable works besides *The Bell Jar* is an anthology titled *Ariel*, which was first published by Faber and Faber in 1965 and later released as *the Restored Edition* in 2004. Given this context, Genetic Structuralism offers a valuable framework to explore not only the intrinsic structure of these poems as creative artifacts but also the social elements that predisposed the thematic concerns. While

many previous studies focus on feminism or psychology as primary perspectives, this research uses Lucien Goldmann's Genetic Structuralism approach to explore the emotional dimensions of Plath's portrayal of marriage and shows her deeply personal, confessional poetry, expresses worldview shaped by both individual experience and the social realities. Informed by both versions of *Ariel*, the following poems were chosen for analysis due to their thematic relevance: "The Applicant," "Daddy," "Ariel," "Lady Lazarus," and "The Munich Mannequins."

## 1.2 Identification of the Problem

A preliminary reading of the five chosen poems indicates the following key issues:

1. Sylvia Plath's confessional poems articulate a worldview of marriage that is connected to her personal experiences and societal context
2. Sylvia Plath's confessional poems present an intricate psychological landscape of her internal struggles and perceptions that are poetically constructed
3. Sylvia Plath's confessional poems show the frequent themes of grief and mourning as manifestations of her psyche
4. Sylvia Plath's confessional poems engage with fundamental existential concerns, including identity, meaninglessness, and alienation
5. Sylvia Plath's confessional poems offer her own narratives that are influenced by the war and liberation

## 1.3 Scope of the Problem

The scope of the problem sets the limitation for research. It is effectively ensuring a consistent and focused analysis. Guided by the stated problems above, this thesis will only articulate a worldview of marriage in the selected confessional poems that is connected to her personal experiences and societal context. Since Genetic Structuralism required a structural analysis, this research also limits the intrinsic analysis to figurative language, as it is the most representative element in Plath's poetry that carries the meaning beyond literal expression. Within the framework of



is language device is not only a poetic element, but also a structural have implicit meanings which lead to a deeper meaning and the poet.

#### 1.4 Research Questions

Based on the limitations above, the research questions are organized into two main questions:

1. What are the figurative languages in Plath's selected confessional poems?
2. How does the worldview of marriage reflected in those selected confessional poems?

#### 1.5 Research Objectives

Outlined below are the objectives that this research aims to address:

1. To find the figurative language in Plath's selected confessional poems
2. To discover the worldview of marriage reflected in those selected confessional poems

#### 1.6 Significance of the Study

This research offers both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, it contributes to the development of Goldmann's Genetic Structuralism theory and is expected to be a source for further research. Practically, the findings of this thesis serve as a reference for readers wanting to study Sylvia Plath and her works, specifically for English Literature students learning poetry analysis.

#### 1.7 Previous Studies

Previous research is a foundation for the future research. The number of relevant studies to this thesis, whether by the issue, the approach, or the author, contributes to the theoretical landscape. Furthermore, a focused review of each allows pinpointing gaps, limitations, and evolution of the theory used. This process guides the process whereby deeper analysis is warranted. The review encompassed four previous studies.

The first study by Basit, Niazi, and Hussain (2025) *A Psychological Analysis of Traumas and Intricate Relationships in Silvia Plath's Daddy*. This study aimed to investigate the unresolved trauma and the alleged existence of the Electra complex and the role of Plath's father in her life, expressed in the poem used on the hypothesis that the poet uses her poem as a catharsis of repressed emotion. The qualitative research applied the psychoanalytic theory of trauma, repression, and mourning by Sigmund Freud. The study indicated the poet's deep responses to the emotional liberation struggle



showed in the writing technique of unusual imagery and symbolism.

The second study by Sher and Riaz (2024) *A Madwoman or Crippled by Society? A Study of Disability and Depression in Plath's Poems*. The study attempted to disavow the image of Plath as a madwoman and propose a renewed perspective on her work. Through an analysis on "Tulips," "Edge," and "The Jailer," the study drew on sociological argument from disability studies experts, which argues that disabled people often face societal pressures restrict their participation, held back by an invisible barrier of 'abnormality' within the larger 'normal' community. This qualitative study used the Social Model of Disability based on Sociology as its theoretical framework. Data uncovered that Sylvia Plath's emotional breakdown and death were caused by the societal pressures and marital bond that confined her. "Tulips" captured her overwhelmed feeling as society tried to normalize her; "Edge" expressed failure to freedom; and "The Jailer" explored how societal standards acted as limitations to her self-expression that disabled her.

The third study by Abed and Pastor (2022) *Image of Love and its Different Implications in Sylvia Plath's Selected Poems*. This study objectified to analyze the images and meanings of love in Plath's poem, and its connection to her desire for the freedom of women. This close reading research, based on a feminist framework by examined Plath's life and her association with her father and husband. The data suggested the poet's poems often depict love as a complex theme, intrinsically linked to her arduous life and affected soul, as well as personal and taboo subjects. This is evidenced by the meanings within "Love Letter" and "Mad Girl's Love Song," which showcase both sweet and bitter aspects of love.

The fourth study by Stone (1990) *The Poet as Wife: Sylvia Plath's Marriage Poems*. This study aimed to reveal the way Plath expresses her feelings of oppression, rage, and desperation in her marriage in her poems titled "The Jailer," "Purdah," "The Applicant," and "Daddy." Stone employed close reading as the primary research method. Moreover, while a feminist approach is not explicitly articulated within the research, the scope as outlined in the journal of the College



ion's front matter serves as a clear indication that Stone's analysis from a feminist perspective. The findings showed those poems manifest a complex relationship with her husband, marked by both adoration and resentment. Various devices used.

Reviewed previous studies have extensively explored trauma,

pressure, love, and role, which put particular focus on depiction of Plath herself in her poems. These studies have contributed significantly to grasp the concept of matrimony. However, a preliminary analysis reveals a notable gap in the way the poet perceives matrimonial relationships, specifically, the worldview regarding marriage in her selected poems from late 1962 to early 1963. By employing the Genetic Structuralism approach, this study seeks to address the gap through detailed examination of figurative devices and social context

## 1.8 Theoretical Background

### 1.8.1 Genetic Structuralism

Structure etymologically derives from the Latin word *struere*, meaning "to build." Generally, structure is defined as the organization of parts that form something. The term "genetic," on the other hand, refers to development. The synthesis of these two concepts, representing both fundamental organization and evolutionary process, led to the formation of Genetic Structuralism. This theory was developed by the Romanian-French philosopher and sociologist Lucien Goldmann (1913–1970) as he began to frame it in his book titled *The Hidden God: A Study of Tragic Vision in the Pensees of Pascal and the Tragedies of Racine* (first published in 1964). Goldmann is influenced by the structuralism, but he criticized that pure structuralism tends to isolate the structure of a literary work from its social, cultural, and historical contexts. Goldmann also argued that literary work, under traditional structuralism, is seen as segregated signs detached from realities. Zimmerman (1975) examined Genetic Structuralism as a reformation that redefined how meaning is found in literature by shifting the focus from fixed structures to the process of their creation. This means that a literary work is not limited to itself or solely constructed by the litterateur but is also influenced and shaped by outside social systems. This idea was further elaborated in *Towards a Sociology of the Novel* (1974), where he demonstrated the modern work as the reflection of a society. As a result



critique of structuralism's limitations, Genetic Structuralism serves as a foundational theory that addresses the isolation of literary structures by integrating societal context and historical influences. Consequently, the work designed to connect Structuralism, Sociology, and Marxism to overcome the limitations of a connection between the structure of a creative

work and its other foundations.

Building upon the previous idea of connection to the outward part in Genetic Structuralism, it becomes evident that literature is connected to the place where it arises. A work of literature exists within and is determined by its surroundings. Thus, literary works reflect the collective consciousness of a social group, as texts embody the shared things of a community. Literature also has the power to influence and shape social realities. Beyond the reflection, it can contribute to shape and change the culture. This shows a two-way relationship between literature and its social context. In the context of this literature analysis, Genetic structuralism helps reveal how marriage themes in literature reflect the social values and beliefs, while also present the connection with them as they provide context behind it.

Despite its contributions, Genetic Structuralism has faced criticism from various intellectual perspectives, often regarded as unoriginal and ambiguous in its treatment of meaning. Huaco (1973, as cited in Mayrl, 1978) argued the causal since it is closer to a homology between the collective consciousness in a text and that of its social group than the text complexity. This absence of a clear causal link highlights the interpretative nature of the genetic approach, which contrasts with traditional causal models. In short, the limitation of this approach may generalize complex individual experiences by framing them solely within group consciousness, which can risk overlooking the personal depth and ambiguity present in literary works.

### 1.8.2 Figurative Language

Figurative language is one of the essential elements of poetry. Perrine (2013) stated figurative language—which he called figure of speech in his own book—is an alternative way to express things distinctively. It means the poet allowed to use extraordinary way to speak in the poetry.

Nevertheless, McLaughlin (1990) added a crucial argument that the intentional definition of this poetic device indicates contrast in the natural use of words as it relies on the context of use. Although it does stand above other poetic devices, figurative language serves as a tool because of the depth it provides in bringing the message closer to the reader.



Figurative language allows poets to move beyond a literal description of the world and create deeper, more vivid images and emotions for the reader. The use of devices help the poet to transform a simple idea into a powerful message. Instead of writing the plain statement, figurative language generates new mechanism with imaginative and broader way to enrich the poetry. This also gives poetry its unique ability to communicate complex feelings and ideas with both beauty and precision. In order to fully comprehend the nature and characteristics of figurative language there are twelve types according to Perrine in his book:

A. Simile

Simile is a comparison between two fundamentally different things to show their similarity, using comparative conjunctions such as “like,” “than,” “as,” or “similar to,” in order to create a stronger image of the meaning. Example: “*The image / Flees and aborts like dropped mercury*” (Plath, 2004, p.8). This simile is a direct parallel for a chaotic situation hidden inside, feels like a toxic metal.

B. Metaphor

Metaphor is a similar to simile. It is also a figure to compare one thing, but this uses a figurative term as the substitution, making the meaning appears implicitly. Example: “I’m a black ocean, leaping and wide, / Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.” (Angelou, 1994). This metaphor describes her identity as a Black woman who possesses an unstoppable and resilient strength.

C. Personification

Personification is a figure of speech that attributes human qualities, emotions, or actions to inanimate objects, abstract concepts, or non-human entities. This device is effectively used to make descriptions more vivid, expressive, and relatable to the reader. Example: “... At the word, the saw, / As if to prove saws knew what supper meant, / Leaped out at the boy’s hand, or seemed to leap—” (Frost, 1916). Frost uses the verb 'leap' as



personification for the saw. This gives the machine a sense of being conscious and deliberate, turning the tragic accident into a sudden, vivid, and intentional act.

#### D. Apostrophe

Apostrophe is a literary device in which a poet directly addresses an absent, deceased, or non-human entity as if it were present and capable of responding. This device is used as a tool to personify abstract concepts and add emotional emphasis. Example: "Oh starry starry night! This is how / I want to die:" (Sexton, 1981). Through apostrophe, Sexton addresses the night sky and its stars, a non-human entity, to express her intimate confession. By speaking directly to the sky, she gives voice to her private thoughts.

#### E. Metonymy

Metonymy is the substitution of something closely associated with a thing to represent it. It is used to provide a different term, thus avoiding repetition or a general term in a poetic work. Example: "He had a whim / That sunlight carried blessing." (Lowell, 1917). In this line, sunlight is not just light from the sun, but a metonym for peace and hope as positive concepts.

#### F. Symbol

A symbol is an object, character, or event that stands for something beyond its literal meaning. Symbols are used to enrich a text with layers of meaning and universal themes. Example: "Quoth the Raven 'Nevermore.'" (Poe, 1845). In this line, the raven serves as a symbol of grief and despair. The word "Nevermore" that it speaks functions as a final answer to the narrator's questions about his lost love, Lenore.



#### 3. Allegory

Allegory is a literary device in which a narrative or a description represents abstract concepts or moral qualities. Through the use

of sustained symbolism, the entire work serves to convey a deeper moral, spiritual, or political message. Example: “Tyger Tyger, burning bright, / In the forests of the night; / What immortal hand or eye, / Could frame thy fearful symmetry?” (Blake, 1789). These four lines are not a simple description of a tiger, instead they suggest a symbol of fearsome animal to express the humanity struggle.

#### H. Paradox

A paradox is a statement that is seemingly self-contradictory yet contains a deeper meaning or truth. Its function is to provoke a reader to think critically and challenge conventional wisdom. Example: "Apparently this is how heaven/ also works: a glimpse of it, / then toiling, so much of toiling, / then a brief darkness, then the rest / of our lives / trying to recoup the initial / beauty: the repetition, the rotation..." (Pamuntjak, 2016, p.80). This paradox is the cotradict of the conventional idea of heaven, as it presents the unusual statement about the afterlife.

#### I. Overstatement or Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a deliberate and extravagant overstatement made for rhetorical effect. Its purpose is to create a strong impression, to add emphasis to a feeling, or to provide a humorous tone. Example: “When all aloud the wind doth blow, / And coughing drowns the parson / saw,” (Shakespeare, 1598). The hyperbole with the over-top-image is an emphasize the interrupted moment during a winter.

#### J. Understatement

Understatement is a literary device that deliberately makes a situation seem less important than it is. It is used to create a sense of irony or modesty. Example: “Because I could not stop for Death / He kindly stopped for me—“ (Dickinson, 1999). Death that is often associated with something terrifying associated with good manners, something peaceful.



### K. Irony

Irony is a literary device defined by a contradiction between appearance and reality. This often takes the form of verbal irony, where a speaker uses language that signifies the opposite of its literal meaning to create a specific effect. Example: "Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky, / had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on." (Auden, 1979) The Icarus fall is an ironic tragedy in the Greek myth. There is a bitter irony to a failure as the world not arranged to the scene.

### L. Allusion

An allusion is a brief and indirect reference to a person, place, event, myth, or another literary work. Its purpose is to add deeper meaning to the text by drawing on well-known concepts, allowing for more complex interpretation in a short form. Example: "Ah! Wounds of Christ! They were living things, / Most terrible to see." (Wilde, 1898). In this phrase, Wilde connects the suffer theme to the universally recognized form of suffering, the crucifixion of Jesus to evoke a complex set of emotions.

## 1.8.3 The Concept of Worldview

One of the central concepts to Goldmann's theory and essential focus of this research is worldview (*vision du monde*). Goldmann believes this structure unites people with similar life conditions. Damono (1978) summarized worldview as a direct product of the major specific changes witnessed by cultural mediators from a segment of society or the subject collective. This means worldview is a coherent vision of reality in literary text. In this study, worldview is understood as Plath's vision of marriage articulated from the biography and societal details.

, figurative language functions as the entry point, while worldview is conceptual outcome interpreted through the framework of genetic textualism.

In addition, the definition of worldview often conflated with the concept of ideology. While an ideology is a system of beliefs from a



specific class (often with political or economic motives), a worldview is a more spontaneous collective understanding from a social interaction. Its focus is more concerned with a fundamental orientation toward life, moral, and sense of meaning within the world. Ultimately, worldview is shaped by the collective subject since it provides the space to share a worldview.

### 1.9 Sequence of the Study

The first chapter, Introduction, outlines the research with elaboration of the context in the Background of the Study. This study presents the issues through Identification and Scope of the Problem, and formulates the key issue in Research Questions and Research Objectives. Furthermore, Significance of the Study re-emphasizes the academic benefits. Then, Previous Studies highlights the gap and urgency, which differentiate previous works to this work. Theoretical Framework is placed after as it offers broader analytical lens. The chapter ends with Sequence of the Study, which shows the structure arrangement.

The second chapter, Research Methodology, clarifies the whole elements used by the researcher in conducting research. This begins with explanation of the applied method type in Research Method. Source of Data identifies the source of relevant data and then Instrument of Research describes the tools used to gather them. The chapter completes its part and outlines the steps taken to do the data collection process in Data Collection Procedures and concludes the models of interpretation in Data Analysis Procedures to become focused research.

The third chapter, Findings and Discussion, presents the research outcomes and analysis of it. The findings are clearly organized and supported by evidences from primary source to present the figurative language analysis. The discussion connects these findings to the extrinsic element as explained in the theoretical framework. The whole chapter maintains reflection of the central issues as answers to key questions.



The fourth chapter, Conclusion, summarizes the major results from the research. This part reinforces the core of Research Question in the first section, Suggestion, proposes potential aspects of analysis in based on the results and identified gaps.

## CHAPTER II

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides the design and certain methodological choices for constructing the thesis.

#### 2.1 Research Method

This thesis employs a qualitative method as the research method. The decision to use this method is mainly grounded in the emphasis on contextual exploration. In the analysis of figurative language in poems and the social context, qualitative methods offer a more effective approach, as such elements are better observed and interpreted through words rather than numbers. Most importantly, this method enables the researcher to uncover the Sylvia Plath's worldview, as reflected through the poem texts.

#### 2.2 Source of Data

In literary research, data are commonly classified into primary and secondary data. The primary data in this thesis consist of figurative languages found in selected poems from *Ariel* (1965) and *Ariel: The Restored Edition* (2004) by Sylvia Plath. The secondary data include biographical sources such as *Red Comet: The Short Life and Blazing Art of Sylvia Plath* by Heather Clark (2020) and *The Silent Woman: Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes* by Janet Malcolm (1994). This research also utilizes *Letters Home* (1975), a collection of Plath's letters, edited by Aurelia Schober Plath, as well as *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath* (2000). In addition to these personal documents, the thesis also engages with historical studies, scholarly articles, literary theory books, and other relevant academic sources that support the analysis.

#### 2.3 Instrument of Research

Research instruments refer to the tools used to analyze and interpret data. In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument to process the data from a personal perspective and critical judgment. In this undergraduate thesis, the researcher engages with the poems by closely examining their context, supported by personal letters and diaries, in an effort to uphold interpretive objectivity. Several supporting instruments are utilized. These include:



2. A document checklist
3. The analysis table of figurative language

## 2.4 Data Collection Procedures

The researcher uses is library research as method of collecting the data, which involves collecting academic sources in the form of books, theses, and journals in the college libraries or online databases. The following points summarize the data collection procedures.

1. Read *Ariel* (1965) and *Ariel The Restored Edition* (2004)
2. Collected poems with the themes related to marriage
3. Organized biographical and theoretical references trough library and database searches
4. Managed the materials digitally
5. Utilized the checklist to ensure only relevant sources were included

## 2.5 Data Analysis Procedures

The descriptive-qualitative method is selected to analyze the data as an effective analysis method to present the next chapter. This method allows the interpretation of poems meaning through detailed description. The procedures for data analysis are outlined below.

1. Conducted a close reading of "The Applicant," "Daddy," "Ariel," "Lady Lazarus," and "The Munnich Mannequins"
2. Carefully redacted the data
3. Identified and categorized figurative languages
4. Connected the meaning suggested by the figurative language analysis to brief biographical details of Plath and the social conditions
5. Interpreted the connection between textual elements and contextual background to reveal the worldview

