



Foregrounding Modalities and Manifestations of Rhetorical Representations of Shadows in the Poetry of Sylvia Plath and Louise Glück: A Critique

 **Pratap Kumar Dash**

Rajendra University, Balangir, India

Corresponding Author: Pratap Kumar Dash

E-mail: pratapkumardash18@yahoo.com

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ABSTRACT

Shadow has been an invaluable element inciting thought adorning philosophical and literary creations. There are hosts of authors across the world that use shadow with multiple meanings. This includes many connotative, denotative and ambiguous reflections attuned to varieties of emotional outbursts. Shadow has been an archetypal symbol. Coincidentally, shadow is foregrounded in many of the poems of both Sylvia Plath and Louise Glück. Plath deals with the rituals associated with shadow; shadow embroiders her pastoral narratives full of suspense in shadowy chambers. Mystery of shadows in the elevated chambers, shadowy memories and moving objects such as birds abound the poetic testimony. She associates the magic of surrealism with shadow including the mysterious hollow of shadow; the widening blurs of shadow; the shadows left unnoticed; and shadows in hallucination. Similarly, Glück heralds the arrival and departure of seasons with shadow; hills and valleys with the sport of shadow; and the romantic feeling aroused looking at the merger of shadows of children with the shadows of flowers. Shadows get assimilated in darkness and at times help hiding faces from light as an attempt of preclusion. The poet heralds the relationship of shadow with the protracted lights of both the sun and the moon. It is clearly evident from the analysis of the poems of both Plath and Glück that they remain unaffected by the experiments of modernity as well as postmodernity by clinging to the aesthetic value of natural beauty and philosophy of poetic perceptions of the life in their surroundings.

Keywords: shadow, philosophical, foregrounded, surrealism, aesthetic value

Introduction

"Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing." — *Macbeth*, William Shakespeare

The metaphor of shadow has been immortalized by the eminent authors like William Shakespeare. Nonetheless, shadows variously represent secrets, deceit, uncertainty, and dark magic. They are usually associated with darkness and therefore given negative traits. But there are also some positive meanings we can ascribe to shadows, particularly when it's you and not monsters who use shadows as a refuge to escape the limelight. Harnsberger says, 'In numerous books of fantasy, writers employ the duality of light and darkness to emphasize the presence of a shadow and similar dark forces. A shadow itself represents the blocking out of light and, therefore, implies the existence of some lurking darkness or source of evil.' (2004). Overall, shadows symbolize: Secrets, Protection, Deceit, Dark Magic, Sadness, Social Exclusion, Following and Stalking, Mirroring and Copying, Illegality, Uncertainty, Suspense and Foreboding, and Shame. (<https://symbolismandmetaphor.com/shadow-symbolism-meaning/>)

In reality, shadow is a dark image projected onto a surface where light is blocked by the shade of an object. It can be variously interpreted as gloomy, obscurity, etc. Shadow is noticed when an area is protected by an obstacle from the sunlight. In our daily expressions, it is used connotatively to mean an inseparable companion. In other contexts, it is interpreted as a ghost or spirit.

The shadow is an archetype that consists of the sex and life instincts. The shadow exists as part of the unconscious mind and is composed of repressed ideas, weaknesses, desires, instincts, and shortcomings. The shadow forms out of our attempts to adapt to cultural norms and expectations. (Jung)

Freud used the shadow as a metaphor of the object's descent into melancholia. Partially obscured by the object and in the darkness of its own projection, the ego is transformed: "The shadow of the object fell upon the ego" (Freud, 1917, p. 158).

It is the dark side on an object not facing the light that reveals the form and mass of the shape. The very darkest point within the Form Shadow is called the Form Shadow Core. It falls under the Shadow Line (or Terminator) on the dark side and is where there is no light hitting the surface.

2. Foregrounding Shadow in Sylvia Plath

Sylvia Plath (1932 – 1963) is an American poet, novelist, and short story writer. She is credited with advancing the genre of confessional poetry. Her early poems exhibit what became her typical imagery, using personal and nature-based depictions featuring, for example, the moon, blood, hospitals, fetuses, and skulls. They were mostly imitation exercises of poets she admired such as Dylan Thomas, W. B. Yeats and Marianne Moore. Late in 1959, when she and Hughes were at the Yaddo writers' colony in New York State, she wrote the seven-part "Poem for a Birthday", echoing Theodore Roethke's Lost Son sequence, though its theme is her own traumatic breakdown and suicide attempt at 20. After 1960 her work moved into a more surreal landscape darkened by a sense of imprisonment and looming death.

Shadow has been foregrounded in many of the poems of her. Owing to shadow, the artistic height of Plath is often embroidered with a deep sense of tapestry of works or painting like the Pre-Raphaelites as she mentions in her "Tale of a Tub":

Just how guilty are we when the ceiling
reveals no cracks that can be decoded ? When washbowl
maintains it has no more holy calling
than physical ablution, and the towel
dryly disclaims that fierce troll faces lurk
in its explicit folds ? Or when the window,
blind with steam, will not admit the dark
which shrouds our prospects in ambiguous **shadow** ? (Tale of a Tub 24)

The poet gives an idea of a miraculous account of bathing in a tub associated with rituals. Her notion of getting blind with steam leads to confusion of the shadow which could be ambiguous. She says that when your vision is blurred, then everything makes you look indistinct, even the shadow.

The pastoral setting of 'dairy herds,' 'the meadow,' 'sheep drowsed,' and then switching over to the scenic beauty of the 'whole landscape' looks like an antique painting is immensely imaginative and the expressions of a poet who is deeply absorbed in the perception of beauty.

Guarded broods and litters
Behind shut doors; the dairy herds
Knelt in the meadow mute as boulders;
Sheep drowsed stoneward in their tussocks of wool, and birds,
Twig-sleeping, wore
Granite ruffs, their **shadows**
The guise of leaves. The whole landscape
Loomed absolute as the antique world was
Once, in its earliest sway of lymph and sap,
Unaltered by eyes, (Hard Castle Crags, 63)

While giving an epical narration of the Hard Castle Crags, she refers to the 'granite ruffs' drawing the imagery of tapestry of granite creating shadows making quite classic and miraculous in its look.

The picturesque portrayal of the setting of the 'whitewashed walls'; 'the furniture'; and reflections of the shadows of the 'footsteps' gives us a gloomy picture of some furniture and gesture of people; and makes it a close observation of an image-creator.

Against bare, whitewashed walls, the furniture
Anchored itself, griffin-legged and darkly grained.
Two of us in a place meant for ten more—

Our footsteps multiplied in the **shadowy** chambers,
 Our voices fathomed a profounder sound:
 The walnut banquet table, the twelve chairs
 Mirrored the intricate gestures of two others. (The Other Two, 68)

While moving in the villa brimful of echoes, she happens to walk along in blindfold suspense and this leads to feel her like multiplying her footsteps in the shadowy chambers as voices were getting profounder.

While looking at the mesmerizing dance of the schoolgirl, the poet lapses into imagination recollecting her childhood. Standing with the blinking flashlights, in the midst of the mystery of the twinkling dresses, he was noticed bestowed upon the responsibilities with the 'Godmothers' whose shadows cast aside, and the shadow gets elevated onto more of darkness yielding a mysterious feeling.

When on tiptoe the schoolgirls danced,
 Blinking flashlights like fireflies
 And singing the glowworm song, I could
 Not lift a foot in the twinkle-dress
 But, heavy-footed, stood aside
 In the **shadow** cast by my dismal-headed
 Godmothers, and you cried and cried:
 And the shadow stretched, the lights went out. (Godmothers, ...)

Time fleets as life flows. The shadows of the memory of birth still reverberate leading to remembrance of the kingdom of childhood where mother was the crowned queen. The muses are attuned to the echoing of the shadows full of silvery reminiscences.

Day now, night now, at head, side, feet,
 They stand their vigil in gowns of stone,
 Faces blank as the day I was born,
 Their **shadows** long in the setting sun
 That never brightens or goes down.
 And this is the kingdom you bore me to,
 Mother, mother. But no frown of mine
 Will betray the company I keep. (The Disquieting Muse, 75)

Remembering her mother, and recollecting her childhood pleasure by associating memories where shadow forms a memory too. The shadow in the setting sun although never brightens, never goes away from her.

The notion of beauty of the poet knows no bound. She can keenly notice the sport of flowers with light and shadows lulling to 'kindle' blazoning yet picturesque invocations leading to the end of a day.

These stones guard a dark repose
 And keep their shapes intact while sun
 Alters **shadows** of rose and iris —
 Long, short, long—in the lit garden
 And kindles a day's-end blaze. (Child's Park Stones, 101)

In the child's park stones, there are varieties of materials of different sizes and shapes available to provide pleasure to children. They also amuse the poet as she finds the alteration of shadows of rose and iris and the garden that is lighted, a kind of delicate observation.

The shadow of a moving flight is often interesting. It is a momentary sight that roars and makes the surrounding windy by making the flowers jerk and birds' low cow-cow and just like the moving flight of a huge bird that goes up and soon becomes invisible in the midst of bulged sky.

And periwinkles, shrunk to common
 Size. The cries of scavenging gulls sound **thin**
In the traffic of planes
 From Logan Airport opposite.
 Gulls circle gray under **shadow** of a steelier flight.
 Loss cancels profit. (Green Rock, Winthrop Bay, 105)

This is also a memory of the Green rock at Winthrop Bay that she recollects after fifteen years more specifically at the Logan airport, the gulls circle leaving shadow of their stable fights which is quite sportive. The adjective 'steelier' gives an effective imagery by giving a strong and shining feeling to the tone of the poem.

The poet refers to the Goatsucker myth which is called chupacabra in Spanish. It is legendary creature in the folklore of parts of the Americas. The name comes from the animal's reported vampirism that is chupacabra is said to attack and drink the blood of livestock, including goats.

So fables say the Goatsucker moves, masked **from men's sight**

In an ebony air, on wings of witch cloth,

Well-named, ill-famed a knavish fly-by-night,

Yet it never milked any goat, nor dealt cow death

And **shadows** only—cave-mouth bristle beset—

Cockchafer and the wan, green luna moth. (Goatsucker, 111)

The poet gives a strange account of a goatsucker in a pastoral setting moving all along as a stranger; not seen anywhere physically but rumor spreads that he moves secretly wearing mask. However, he has neither sucked a goat nor killed a cow. It is only a doubt of a shadow at different places moving amidst the cockchafer or the wan or the green moth. Thus, it carries the notion of certain beliefs which has been represented as shadows of human mind metaphorically.

The wavy emotion of the poet turns her to be a surrealist transcending the beauty in its artistic height in which waves become mounting ice cakes leading to the formation of bluish shadow.

Farther out, the waves will be mouthing ice cakes—

A poor month for park-sleepers and lovers.

Even our **shadows** are blue with cold.

We wanted to see the sun come up

And are met, instead, by this ice-ribbed ship, (A Winter Ship, 113)

The indomitable spirit of sailing in the sea makes the poet come across unimaginable incidents and objects leading to poetic imagination in line with Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. While the fishermen are busy uploading barrels of crabs, the poet feels as if all around them water slips and talks in its 'loose vernacular'; the poet 'smells of dead and cold tar'; there are huge waves looking alive as if 'mouthing ice-cakes'; she can find their shadows look blue with cold- a unique experience of getting frozen in the 'ice-ribbed ship' and they want the sun very much.

It refers to *The Triumph of Death* by Pieter Brueghel which shows a panorama of an army of skeletons havoc across a blackened, desolate landscape. Fires burn in the distance and the sea is littered with shipwrecks. A few leafless trees stud hills otherwise bare of vegetation; fish lie rotting on the shores of a corpse-choked pond.

In Brueghel's panorama of smoke and slaughter

Two people only are blind to the carrion army:

He, afloat in the sea of her blue satin

Skirts, sings in the direction

Of her bare shoulder, while she bends,

Fingering a leaflet of music, over him,

Both of them deaf to the fiddle in the hands

Of the death's-head **shadowing** their song.

These Flemish lovers flourish; not for long. (Two Views of a Cadaver Room, 114)

It seems that two people sailing across the sea those who are both blind and deaf and heading towards death and thus their song does not bear artistic testimony. These are the portraits of the Flemish lovers those who cannot flourish for a long time in their love.

Egg rock is an outcrop of Silurian Straw Hollow Diorite at the confluence of the Assabet and Sudbury rivers, where they form the Concord River in Concord, Massachusetts. The poet apparently dives into forming a miraculous image of events associated with sense perceptions as 'hot dogs split,' followed by a series of activities which lead to an odd feeling so that she expresses her desire to crawl into 'pit of **shadow.**'

Behind him the hotdogs split and drizzled

On the public grills, and the ochreous salt flats,

Gas tanks, factory stacks—that landscape

Of imperfections his bowels were part of—

Rippled and pulsed in the glassy updraught.

Sun struck the water like damnation.

No pit of **shadow** to crawl into,

And his blood beating the old tattoo

I am, I am, I am. Children

Were squealing where combers broke and the spindrift

Raveled wind-ripped from the crest of the wave.

A mongrel working his legs to a gallop

Hustled a gull flock to flap off the sandspit. (Suicide off Egg Rock, 115)

The surfing of water; the drizzling; and the ripples in the sun create an unavoidable sport leading to the 'squealing' of children and the movement of mongrel to create complexity of mind.

Animal and bird imageries happen to take very effective role in the poems of Plath. Not only dog, the role of fish, pig, crow and bees constitute the intelligence of humans in some forms or the other.

You move through the era of fishes,

The smug centuries of the pig—

Head, toe and finger

Come clear of the **shadow**. History

Nourishes these broken flutings,

These crowns of acanthus,

And the crow settles her garments.

You inherit white heather, a bee's wing, (The Manor Garden, 125)

The poet becomes flooded with the orange, red and pink colours and since she is bolstered with shadowed modalities of creative faculties, she is unable to perceive the magic of the colour variation of the exhibited sunset.

Counting the red stars and those of plum-color.

The sun rises under the pillar of your tongue.

My hours are married to **shadow**.

No longer do I listen for the scrape of a keel

On the blank stones of the landing. (The Colossus, 130)

The meaning of shadow varies as the poet very often lapses into artistic bent of mind through timely and situational changes.

Mother, you are the one mouth

I would be a tongue to. Mother of otherness

Eat me. Wastebasket gaper, **shadow** of doorway.

I said: I must remember this, being small.

There were such enormous flowers,

Purple and red mouths, utterly lovely. (Poem for a Birthday, 132)

Here, she seems to be quite devoted to her mother by saying that she would pose to be the flavor of the life of her mother adorned amidst the varieties of flowers clearly marked from the 'shadow of doorway.'

The complexity of the interpretation of shadow continues to draw the attention of the reader as she recognizes himself as a 'wax image,' 'a dartboard,' a spirit like element roving here and there.

In the marketplace they are piling the dry sticks.

A thicket of **shadows** is a poor coat. I inhabit

The wax image of myself, a doll's body.

Sickness begins here: I am a dartboard for witches.

Only the devil can eat the devil out.

In the month of red leaves I climb to a bed of fire.

As a ritual of witch burning, the poet becomes nostalgic with the spirit of celebration of the festival aiming at a benevolent notion for the humanity at large. Still she wants to be a part of the activities in which dust gets shrouded in the mysterious darkness. At times, lights sparkle and make her completely immersed.

Give me back my shape. I am ready to construe the days

I coupled with dust in the **shadow** of a stone.

My ankles brighten. Brightness ascends my thighs.

I am lost, I am lost, in the robes of all this light. (Witch Burning, 135)

The artistic sense of her gets strengthened as she happens to absorb himself in the art of the stones—the stone craft takes her to the artistic height making her promise to be fresh and fine.

Love is the bone and sinew of my curse.

The vase, reconstructed, houses

The elusive rose.

Ten fingers shape a bowl for **shadows**.

My mendings itch. There is nothing to do.

I shall be good as new. (The Stones, 137)

Mushrooms are symbolic of transformation which is visible in the creative imagination of the poet. They stand voiceless in the passages- all look uniform as if ready to ask you something; the entities of fresh personalities creating a sense of reason for asking questions.

Perfectly voiceless,
Widen the crannies,
Shoulder through holes. We
Diet on water,
On crumbs of **shadow**,
Bland-mannered, asking
Little or nothing.
So many of us!
So many of us! (Mushrooms, 139)

The real experience of a desert is immense. The poet makes a detail observation of the desert which is in California uniquely known as a xeric desert in the rain shadow of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The appearance of the lizards from their shadowy crevices makes the situation full of suspense. The creatures like the toad, snake and bird look tired and as if all of them are waiting for a change. In the meantime, the tiresome feelings of the poet add to the meaning in the context of the 'firedogs in the wind,' that is they look like the faded effigies stood distinctly reflecting on the history.

I think of the lizards airing their tongues
In the crevice of an extremely small **shadow**
And the toad guarding his heart's droplet.
The desert is white as a blind man's eye,
Comfortless as salt. Snake and bird
Doze behind the old masks of fury.
We swelter like firedogs in the wind. (Sleep in the Mojave Desert, 144)

It is not only the miracle of the shadows in its various forms but also its absence makes the poet feel looking for it as she becomes more and more creative, more artistic reaching at the height of the cloud expanding her arm and leg all through.

Tree and stone glittered, without **shadows**.
My finger-length grew lucent as glass.
I started to bud like a March twig:
An arm and a leg, an arm, a leg.
From stone to cloud, so I ascended. (Love Letter, 147)

The inquisitive eyes of the creative artists no doubt perceive things in an extraordinary way. The keenness of observation flavoured with delicate artistic thoughts give rise to tapestry of thoughts.

A whole family of prominent objects
Simply to plumb the deeps of an eye
In its hollow of **shadows**, its fringe of reeds,
And the owner past thirty, no beauty at all.
Daylight would be more judicious,

xxxxxx

Giving everybody a fair hearing.

xxxxxx

I watch their spilt tears cloud and dull to pearls.

How shall I tell anything at all

To this infant still in a birth-drowse ?

Tonight, like a shawl, the mild light enfolds her,

The **shadows** stoop over like guests at a christening. (Candles, 149)

The 'hollow of shadows' in between the objects plays the hide and seek of darkness and light. This might be like don and dusk; day and night; the 'enfolding of light' along with its shadow patches look like giving a potential life to shadow in the pious act of 'christening.'

She not only elevates the thoughts relating to the foregrounded features of shadow but also portrays at times some events or images which are bit crazy.

A woman is dragging her **shadow** in a circle
About a bald, hospital saucer.
It resembles the moon, or a sheet of blank paper
And appears to have suffered a sort of private blitzkrieg.

She lives quietly. (A Life, 150)

The woman looks bit crazy as a matter of fact maybe as a victim of something offensive and therefore 'dragging her shadow' in a circle by being inattentive of the attention of others at her.

The spirit of the earth moves all along with the spirit of the poet as she makes it feel the omnipresence amidst the lap of nature—it may be a leaf or a bird or may it be the 'dark-boughed cypresses' create an illusory image.

The tumulus, even at noon, guards its **black shadow**:

You know me less constant,

Ghost of a leaf, ghost of a bird.

I circle the writhen trees. I am too happy.

These faithful dark-boughed cypresses. (Parliament Hill Fields, 152)

The lovely natural elements in miniature creates a deep romantic notion as the poet finds the lovely tulips talk to her; watch at her; and feel like attached to her in providing soothing solace. They look mysterious in the widening shadow that blurs between the glaring sun and shining tulips.

Nobody watched me before, now I am watched.

The tulips turn to me, and the window behind me

Where once a day the light slowly widens and slowly thins,

And I see myself, flat, ridiculous, a cut-paper **shadow**

Between the eye of the sun and the eyes of the tulips,

And I have no face, I have wanted to efface myself.

The vivid tulips eat my oxygen. (Tulips, 161)

Like a moving image of a zoetrope, there is a sport that goes on between darkness and light near the window which makes a mysterious setting all around leading to the change of the perception between the sun and the tulip by which the shadow gets noticed. This provides it solace for getting identified.

Widow is considered a meaningless being with some echo and only a shadow left unnoticed just like 'the panel in the wall' and it is surrounded by meaningless memories and a passage which goes nowhere. It is considered closed as if the life of the a destitute, a helpless and a being with nothing.

Widow. The dead syllable, with its **shadow**

Of an echo, exposes the panel in the wall

Behind which the secret passage lies—stale air,

Fusty remembrances, the coiled-spring stair

That opens at the top onto nothing at all. . . .

The word widow is surrounded by loneliness and mourning. Here, the trees as the great beings of nature come alive in the 'green landscape,' an unacceptable status yet felt like a 'shadow-thing' near the window.

Widow, the compassionate trees bend in,

The trees of loneliness, the trees of mourning.

They stand like **shadows** about the green landscape—

Or even like black holes cut out of it.

A widow resembles them, a shadow-thing, (Widow, 164)

The poet develops dialogism to represent the feminine attributes as solitary as grass reflecting the power of a sprig of grass as envisaged by Walt Whitman in his *Leaves of Grass*.

THIRD VOICE:

Hot noon in the meadows. The buttercups

Swelter and melt, and the lovers

Pass by, pass by.

They are black and flat as **shadows**.

It is so beautiful to have no attachments!

I am solitary as grass. What is it I miss?

Shall I ever find it, whatever it is?

The solitary sprig of grass asks a rhetorical question that if it misses something beautiful, something memorable, whether it would find it out or not which ultimately asserts that it would definitely find out. There is ray of hope in its forbearance.

The streets may turn to paper suddenly, but I recover

From the long fall, and find myself in bed,

Safe on the mattress, hands braced, as for a fall.

I find myself again. I am no **shadow**

Though there is a shadow starting from my feet. I am a wife.

The city waits and aches. The little grasses

Crack through stone, and they are green with life.

(Three women: A Poem for Three Voices, 186)

The fresh and alive spirit of grasses is manifested in her as she recognizes her as 'a wife' in a dignified manner. Although shadows are there even at her feet, she would never be influenced by replicate it all the way. Her identity thus remains intact.

In the process of plying from one place to the other at the port, it seems as if the 'keel's shadow' leading to an effect of sailing in and out and leaving an impression of refurbishing and remaining busy.

Your stooges

Plying their wild cells in my keel's **shadow**,

Pushing by like hearts,

Red stigmata at the very center,

Riding the rip tide to the nearest point of departure, (Medusa, 225)

The Greek mythological character Medusa, described as human females with living venomous females in place of hair is an allusion referring to a terrifying person who freezes someone. In some cases, it refers to fatal beauty or a ready image for superimposing. Here, Medusa takes the role of an active agent instead of weak stand.

I imagine him

Impotent as distant thunder,

In whose **shadow** I have eaten my ghost **ration**.

I wish him dead or away.

That, it seems, is the impossibility. (The Jailor, 227)

The poet remembers how she had undergone a hallucination and expected him to perish, but it never happens. Still it is there with its remnants echoed all the way.

This is the fluid in which we meet each other,

This haloey radiance that seems to breathe

And lets our **shadows** wither

Only to blow

Them huge again, violent giants on the wall.

One match scratch makes you real. (By Candlelight, 236)

Thalidomide is a medication used to treat a number of cancers, graft-versus-host disease, and a number of skin conditions including complication of leprosy. Here, the poet refers to the shadow of fear of the fatal suffering happening to many.

What leatheriness

Has protected

Me from that **shadow**—

The indelible buds,

Knuckles at shoulder-blades, the

Faces that

Shove into being, dragging

The lopped

Blood-caul of absences. (Thalidomide, 252)

3. The Poetic Effects of Shadow in Louise Glück

Louise Elisabeth Glück (1943-) is an American poet and essayist. She won the 2020 Nobel Prize in Literature, whose judges praised "her unmistakable poetic voice that with austere beauty makes individual existence universal."

While Glück's work is thematically diverse, her poetry can be said to focus on trauma, as she has written throughout her career about death, loss, suffering, failed relationships, and attempts at healing and renewal. Another of Glück's common themes is desire. Glück has written directly about many forms of desire—for example, the desire for love or insight—but her approach is marked by ambivalence. Morris argues that Glück's poems, which often adopt contradictory points of view, reflect "her own ambivalent relationship to status, power, morality, gender, and, most of all, language". The author Robert Boyer has characterized Glück's ambivalence as a result of "strenuous self-interrogation". He argues that "Glück's poems at their best have always moved between recoil and affirmation, sensuous immediacy and reflection ... for a poet who can often seem earthbound and defiantly unillusioned, she has been powerfully responsive to the lure of the daily miracle and the sudden upsurge of overmastering emotion". Another of Glück's preoccupations is *nature*, the

setting for many of her poems. In *The Wild Iris*, the poems take place in a garden where flowers have intelligent, emotive voices. However, Morris points out that *The House on Marshland* is also concerned with nature and can be read as a revision of the Romantic tradition of nature poetry. Glück's poetry is also notable for what it avoids. Morris argues that "Glück's writing most often evades ethnic identification, religious classification, or gendered affiliation. In fact, her poetry often negates critical assessments that affirm identity politics as criteria for literary evaluation. She resists canonization as a hyphenated poet (that is, as a "Jewish-American" poet, or a "feminist" poet, or a "nature" poet), preferring instead to retain an aura of iconoclasm, or in-betweenness".

Shadow is a recurrent occurrence in the poems of both Plath and Glück. It has taken multiple modalities and meanings in the mostly quoted poems of both the poets. Talking about Glück, she interprets the presence of shadow from physical to the metaphysical and from mythological to the philosophical levels.

Glück starts with a mythological context of passion of Hades which overcomes his control over himself so that he uses his power to bring shadow naturally but untimely:

Everything the same, including sunlight,
because it would be hard on a young girl
to go so quickly from bright light to utter darkness
Gradually, he thought, he'd introduce the night,
First as **the shadows** of fluttering leaves.
Then moon, then stars. Then no moon, no stars.
Let Persephone get used to it slowly.
In the end, he thought, she'd find it comforting. (A Myth of Devotion, 5)

According to mythology, Hades, god of the Underworld, fell in love with beautiful Persephone when he saw her picking flowers one day in a meadow. The god then carried her off in his chariot to live with him in the dark Underworld. Creation of a new world refers to the sense of transformation subtly associated with poetic emotion by associating the slow introduction of the 'shadows of fluttering leaves.' The romantic notion is emphasized here.

As a keen observer of the natural movements, the poet gives an artistic shape to shadow in this poem as the shadows of the children merges with the shadows of the roses leading to a mystic feeling. She says that:

The sun moved lower in the sky, the shadows lengthened and darkened.
The more dust I removed, the more these **shadows** grew.
Summer arrived. The children
leaned over the rose border, their **shadows**
merging with the **shadows** of the roses.
A word came into my head, referring
to this shifting and changing, these erasures
that were now obvious—
it appeared, and as quickly vanished.
Was it blindness or darkness, peril, confusion? (A Summer Garden, 7)

Speaking of the reminiscence of mother as a caring child in the afternoon with the shadows gets enlivened to spread further and thus bringing about a delicate feeling of the arrival of summer season making an array of shadows of roses and children. The poet does not distinguish between children and roses as she notices the blissful and innocent beauty in both creations of nature.

The poet is a dreamer. Intermittently, she dreams of shadows of substances leading to multiple meanings.

As we had all been flesh together, now we were mist.
As we had been before objects with **shadows**,
now we were substance without form, like evaporated chemicals.
Neigh, neigh, said my heart,
or perhaps nay, nay—it was hard to know. (An Adventure, 17)

The spirit of adventure that reaches at a greater height in dream where the adventurers become 'substance without form,' a mysterious feeling and still the indistinct images of the fading memory gets reverberated as she mentions that as if it was a view from precipice.

Although in the poet remains in an emotional stage full of creative feelings, still then, the events around her makes her conscious of so many things leading to creative images as she says:

I read this, then I dreamed this:
can waking take back what happened to me?
Bells of San Miguel

ringing in the distance
 his hair in the **shadows** blond-white
 I dreamed this,
 does that mean it didn't happen?
 Does it have to happen in the world to be real? (Castile, 22)

Very often, the poet lapses into the realms of the dreamland in the form of pastorals, or mythological glimpses of even imaginary kingdoms of the medieval times. Thus, she experiences the events such as 'Bells of San Miguel' ringing; found a man with blond-white hair and many more things but still in doubt if they are real or unreal experiences.

The modality of shadow takes her to dream more in order to a state of profound preceptor of fields and lands, the pastoral feelings come alive purposefully as she says:

In a dream, I watched you ride the horse
 Over the dry fields and then
 Dismount: you two walked together;
 In the dark, you had no **shadows**.
 But I felt them coming toward me
 Since at night they go anywhere,
 They are their own masters. (Horse, 39)

An illusory experience of dream in which she experiences the riding of horse; dismounting and walking together having no shadows probably because it was utter darkness and she felt as if they were approaching at her. Otherwise, it symbolizes the vagrant mind or spirit moving freely.

The nostalgic casual experiences of daily life associated with pastime happen to form a beautiful image of a day coming to end:

And then the day faded. We were dreaming, waiting for night.
 Standing at the front door at twilight, watching the **shadows** lengthen.
 And a voice in the kitchen was always complaining about the heat,
 wanting the heat to break. (Midsummer, 49-50)

It highlights the beautiful memory of swimming in the quarry, walking all along the humid nights or occasionally sitting on the cool rocks smoking cigarettes; boys and girls pairing off; and finally walk back home through the fields; the day gradually fades; standing at the door watching the approaching of twilight and night with the spread of the shadow; later makes him mourn that he left something behind making her feel like coming back to look for it.

The poet takes the help of shadow to form more meaningful human dealings as she finds that shadow does not only make things invisible but also saves one by hiding face.

The lady hides her face, somewhat
 assisted by the **shadows**. She weeps
 for her past; when one has a secret life,
 one's tears are never explained. (Parable of Faith, 59)

This is a simple account of an incident related to the king and the queen. The king was generous enough to pardon the queen although she had kept some of her account of life secret from the king. The queen asked for excuse and hid her face with the help of shadow. Then, the king was generous enough to pardon her. Thus, the poet concluded that the 'world has sinned and the world must be pardoned.'

She feels that shadow has a profound influence on human personality. It makes one feel the taste of love and life; and life and death too.

she will withdraw into that private world of feeling
 women enter when they love. And living there, she will become
 like a person who casts no **shadow**, who is not present in the world;
 in that sense, so little use to him
 it hardly matters whether she lives or dies. (In the Plaza, 17)

It reflects on the delicate sense of the beginning of love between a young man and young woman. In the process of reciprocation of the best attributes to each other, 'she will withdraw into that private world of feeling' without casting shadow as it is her speciality as a woman. She would maintain her virtuosity at the cost of life.

The anecdotes of daily life experiences abound in her poem with shadow as the backdrop as she says that there is a mysterious feeling owing to the play of shadow and light. She takes it to be the parable of life that dawn leads to day followed by dusk and then night.

During the day at work, I forget about it.

I think about work: getting colored beads into plastic vials.
 When I get home at dusk, the room is **shadowy**—
 the **shadow** of the bureau covers the bare floor.
 It's telling me whoever lives here is doomed.
 There's no **shadows** now.
 Inside the room, it's dark; the night air is cool.
 In summer, you can smell the orange blossoms.
 If there's wind, one tree will do it—you don't need the whole orchard.
 I do what the hero does.

He opens the window. He has his reunion with earth. (Via Delle Ombre, 30)

The poet is attuned to the changes of the times of a day. She is highly grateful to the sun for making even her dark days lighted with hopes and aspirations. In the daily chore, she hardly gets a chance to introspect and thus, while coming back to her room from work in the dusk, she feels like being humiliated with lifelessness. But like Walt Whitman (1819-1892), A.E. Housman (1859-1936) and Robert Frost (1874-1963) she feels her intimate association with this darkness, 'the night cool air,' 'the orange blossoms,' and their spreading of fragrance enlivens her with a pleasant life.

The sky's light behind the mountain
 though the sun is gone—this light
 is like the sun's **shadow**, passing over the earth.
 Before, when the sun was high,
 you couldn't look at the sky or you'd go blind.
 That time of day, the men don't work.
 They lie in the shade, waiting, resting;
 their undershirts are stained with sweat.

This is the truth that the poet heralds as an extended metaphor that like the sun, human beings blaze in the height of youth or shower the cooling light of the full moon which in the course of time goes waxing and waning. In the evening, people get settled to their resting places trying to forget the tiresome day's sweating memories.

The poet is practical enough to deal with the realities of human life which is replete with varieties of choices. But as a matter of fact, supplying right kind of stuff that can fuel the body and mind can only make one run through shadows and lights of life.

To a man, they know when the hour's gone.
 The flask gets put away, the bread, if there's bread.
 The leaves darken a little, the **shadows** change.
 The sun's moving again, taking the men along,
 regardless of their preferences. (Threshing, 65)

The poet has a deep and commendable observation on the sun. The setting sun leaves the shadow of its light. As if the presence of the sun controls the movement of people of the earth, she finds that workers getting tired and take rest when the sun is high in the sky. The same patch of shadow takes a different shape with the movement of the sun and people on the earth follow suit.

'A Village Life' is an advocacy of simple and natural life. The poet acts as the representative of many having the same attitude to village life. So to say, she has philosophised village life relating to life and death in which shadow bears the testimony of evaluation of her amidst a peaceful and humble lifestyle.

The death and uncertainty that await me
 as they await all men, the **shadows** evaluating me
 because it can take time to destroy a human being,
 the element of suspense
 needs to be preserved—

On Sundays I walk my neighbor's dog
 so she can go to church to pray for her sick mother. (A Village Life, 67)

The poet feels how the mysterious incidents happen around her which may be a dream-like situation in which she feels as if she is dead and shadows of people move around her to see the reality. But, in the mean time, she feels the impulsive protractions of the rays of the moon near her window, tranquil and still; a different feeling, and the next moment it dawns.

4. Critical Comments and Conclusion

In Plath, shadow takes the forms of blurred vision; brings about miracles; but at times blindfolds suspense too. The feelings transcend her to mysterious states and silvery reminiscences. The picturesque

invocations; shadows of protracting flight; and the shadows of pits and crevices lift her to a world of fantasies of the unknown worlds. At times, she turns to be a dreamer whereas some other times an introspector; sometimes forming formless images and then try to give them concrete shapes thus leads to find the shadows of flowers and fruits to the shadow of trees and plants; and finally the countless shadows of the subconscious images and memories.

The poet develops a dignified sense of remaining dynamic all the way not getting affected by 'ambiguous shadow' (Tale of a Tub, 24); the beauty of nature as twigs sleep on the granite floor surrounded by the shadow of leaves (Hard Castle Crag, 63); reflects on a unique experience of watching reflections of shadow on wall getting multiplied (The Other Two, 68); at times personal feelings 'In the shadow cast by.... Dismal-headed God mothers...' and shadows of the 'gowns of stone' in the 'setting sun,' and the alteration of shadows of 'rose and iris' (Children Park Stones, 101); the illusory 'shadow of a street flight' at the Gulls Circle (Greek Rock, Winthrop Bay, 105) or the shadow of the 'Goat Sucker' (111); the 'mouthing of ice cakes' by the waves making the shadow feel indistinctly colourful; the story of the Flemish lover on whom 'the death's – head shadowing their song' (Two Views of a Cadaver Room, 114); 'the pit of shadow' that is unmoved amidst the industrial set-up, the call for moving ahead by clearing shadow of the past with a resolution to adapt with the new and the fresh (The Manor Garden, 125). The poet gets deeply absorbed in the notions of realizing microcosmic beauties and resolve to marry shadow (The Colossus, 130); finds it interesting to have 'Wastebasket Gaper' as the 'shadow of doorway' (Poem for a Birthday, 132); finds shadows form 'a poor coat' in the marketplace and think of the days experiencing 'dust in the shadow of a stone' (Witch Burning, 135); a detail observation of the 'crumbs of shadow' formed by mushrooms (Mushrooms, 139) or 'lizards airing their tongues in the crevice of an extremely small shadow' (Sleep in the Mojave Desert, 144); drawing the image of shadow to celebrate a quiet life (A Life, 150) or identifying self as a ghostly image (Parliament Hill Fields, 152); the image of a 'cut-paper shadow' that lies between the tulips and the sun (Tulip, 161); a poem of a different taste in which the shadow of a widow that echoes (Widow, 164) and the bend trees of compassion; the passing of lovers one by one which creates shadows, but she is not (Three Women: A Poem for the Three Voices, 186); and sailing across Keel's shadow (Medusa, 225).

Glück's dimensions of shadows ranges from the dynamics of myth to the merger of hues and colours with natural elements such as the sky, the sun and the moon. She has a mysterious feeling owing the illusions of shadow leading to blurred visions and at times getting absorbed in to the dreamland. Her intimate association has made her introspective and leads her to the height of imagination of the philosophy of life. She happens to equal the journey of her life as a shadow of blend of memories, experiences and anticipations. It is as if a travel through the overshadowed forest in search of an open valley where she would breathe and get relaxed, but it stands ironical. Reflection of humble rural life; the shadows of the setting sun and rising moon become revelatory moments for her to see the shadow of life in the multitudes of life of shadows.

Shadow of fluttering leaves (A Myth of Devotion, 1); mingling of shadows of the roses and children (A Summer Garden, 2); objects with shadows leading to substance without form (An Adventure, 5); shadows of blonde-white hair turns dreamy (Castle, 22); no shadow in darkness, but there seems to be something present (Horse, 39); in the summer, it is enjoyable to watch the shadows lengthen at the twilight (Midsummer, 49-50); shadow helps hiding face (Capable of Faith, 139) whereas tasting love and life, there remains no room for hiding one self and therefore no need to cast shadow (In the Plaza, 17); the close contact with the shadow at times and shadowlessness giving her unique feelings of change of time and situation (Via Delle Ombre, 30); the miraculous change of shadow in 'Threshing' (165); the philosophical realization that shadow seems to evaluate her.

Inherent to the poets, it is noticed that both Plath and Glück reflect on feminism and more prevalently on the issues of postmodern times. For example, her "Mushrooms" (Plath, "The Collected Poems," 139), is based on a strong theme of a protest against male oppression. It presages the unity and rise of women to form a strong voice. Similarly, in her poem "Ariel," she speaks of the loss of a father and women oppressed by men. Plath also uses imagery of the Holocaust in order to emphasize dehumanization of women when compared to Jewish prisoners in concentration camps. Thus, she is credited with the genre of confessional poetry. Similarly, Glück is often described as an autobiographical poet. Her works are known for their emotional intensity and for frequently drawing on mythology or nature imagery to meditate on personal experiences and modern life. Thematically, her poems have illuminated aspects of trauma, desire, and nature. She is one of the acclaimed poets strategizing the trend of revisionist mythmaking as a disruptive force to the inherently silenced women's voices. She presents an iconic overturn of the traditional gender roles which subdue women in the position of having always to stick on patriarchal norms in order to survive. But as it is evident textually, both the poets are much more than the themes with both of them are popularly identified with.

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