

Unveiling Symbolic Layers: Analyzing Style in the Poetry of T. S. Eliot and Sylvia Plath

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Abstract—This research delves into T.S. Eliot's *Morning at the Window* and Sylvia Plath's *Edge*, employing stylistic analysis to explore how artistic influences and themes are articulated. It examines symbolism, imagery, themes, and tone, focusing on how these poetic tools deepen the thematic content. The research focuses explicitly on how symbolism enhances the thematic depth and impact of their work, revealing how their poetic techniques shape their expressions and contribute to the overall significance of their poetry. This research is qualitative descriptive research. This research adopts stylistic analysis using imagery, themes, symbolism, and tone to examine how artistic influences are formulated in the poems. The second part examines how themes are conveyed through the author's choice of words and sentence structure. This approach was applied to T.S. Eliot's poem *Morning at the Window* and Sylvia Plath's *Edge*, emphasizing the stylistic use of symbolism. This research contributes to understanding how T.S. Eliot and Sylvia Plath employ stylistic elements such as imagery, themes, symbolism, and tone to convey profound emotions and ideas in their poetry. By analyzing Eliot's *Morning at the Window* and Plath's *Edge*, the study elucidates how these poets use symbolic imagery and thematic content to enhance their poetic expression. Overall, this research enriches the appreciation of how Eliot and Plath shape their works' thematic and emotional impact through their distinctive stylistic choices.

Index Terms—T. S. Eliot, Sylvia Plath, *Edge*, *Morning at the Window*, Stylistic Symbolism

I. INTRODUCTION

Poetry is a literary genre that conveys the author's emotions, thoughts, and imagination through a deliberate choice of words, emphasizing rhythm, rhyme, and stylistic elements. It often serves as a medium for symbolizing beauty, expressing emotions, and exploring ideas (Suprpto et al., 2024). The art of poetry has been a timeless means through which humans have sought to express their thoughts, emotions, and observations about the world around them. One of the most exciting aspects of poetry is the use of symbolism, the practice of giving deeper meanings to words, phrases, and images that often go beyond their literal interpretations.

Thomas Stearns Eliot (September 26, 1888 – January 4, 1965) was an eminent essayist, publisher, playwright, literary and social critic, and one of the most significant poets of the twentieth century. Eliot was born in St. Louis, Missouri, to a powerful Boston Brahmin family, and at the age of twenty-five, moved to England in 1914, where he established his career and married. He gave up his American passport to become a British citizen in 1927. He composed and published a variety of famous poems after that, such as *The Waste Land* (1922). He made exceptional contributions to contemporary poetry, and for this, in 1948. Despite his fame, he remained reclusive and shied away from writing an autobiography or publishing his letters. Eliot's poems are known for their multi-layered complexity, inviting readers to explore their intricate depths (Khan et al., 2023).

Sylvia Plath (1932–1963) is considered one of the most famous and influential voices in Anglo-American culture and literature of the twentieth century. A variety of short stories, poems, memoirs, and letters published after her suicide have secured her position as a powerful feminist voice and have added engaging controversy to a life shrouded in mystery, even though she published only one collection of poetry, *The Colossus* and one novel *The Bell Jar* in her lifetime (Panelatti et al., 2021).

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze T. S. Eliot's poem *Morning at the Window* and Sylvia Plath's poem *Edge*. The stylistic analysis examines how artistic influences are formulated in the poems and how themes are conveyed through the author's choice of words and sentence structure. This approach was applied to T.S. Eliot's poem *Morning at the Window* and Sylvia Plath's *Edge*, emphasizing the stylistic use of symbolism. The research aims to investigate how these poets use symbolism to convey profound emotions, themes, and ideas and to reveal how their distinguishing techniques enhance their work's thematic depth and overall impact. This analysis can reveal in depth how the poetic devices used by Eliot and Plath can shape their poetic expressions and contribute to a profound and widespread impact (Saeed, 2024).

Edge, penned on October 11, 1962, shortly before Plath's tragic death in February of 1963, is one of her most profound and unnerving poems. It remains enigmatic, carrying a distinctly morbid tone among the poems she left behind. Interpretations of *Edge* vary widely, yet a recurring theme centers on the societal expectations placed on women, particularly around motherhood, a role traditionally seen as fulfilling in itself. This reflection is evident in her notebooks and recordings from that period, as she deals with questions about her maternal instincts and the pressures she faces. It may be the last piece of poetry she ever wrote. The *Edge* is an incredibly complex, fascinating, and multifaceted poem. This poem expresses feelings of pain, sadness, and longing, which were supposed to be part of Plath's last days. It explores themes of death, motherhood, and the treatment of women (Baldwin, 2024; Alhasan et al., 2024a).

Morning at the Window, written in 1914, just months after the outbreak of World War I, was later published in T.S. Eliot's debut poetry collection, *Prufrock and Other Observations*, in 1917. In this poem, Eliot poignantly portrays the themes of poverty, alienation, and despair, reflecting the harsh living conditions in urban areas during that era. The devastation of the world wars, which claimed an entire generation of youth, left many women to bear the burden of supporting their families. Through this poem, Eliot reveals the disastrous consequences of societal disintegration, revealing how people, isolated in a crumbling socio-cultural environment, become increasingly distrustful of each other (Meliani, 2023; Alhasan et al., 2024b). Although the poem is unrhymed, it follows the form of the Spenserian stanza. This means the poem consists of nine lines, ending with the Alexandrian letter. Edmund Spenser used this form to write *The Faerie Queene*, one of his most famous works in which heroic deeds are told in an idealized rural fantasy land. However, Eliot uses this form to convey impressions of a modern city, most likely London (Abella, 2024).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Review of Related Studies

Sylvia Plath's *Edge* and T.S. Eliot's *Morning at the Window* explore themes of despair and alienation through stark Imagery and fragmented structures. This review analyzes existing literature on these poems, highlighting their thematic depth, stylistic innovations, and cultural impact.

A. *Edge*

Sylvia Plath's poem *Edge* is analyzed through language features to uncover deeper meanings. Stylistic analysis examines phonological elements (like alliteration, assonance, and consonance) and semantic features (including simile, personification, metaphor, Imagery, hyperbole, and symbolism). A pragmatic approach interprets how these features contribute to the meaning of each stanza. *Edge*, written shortly before Plath's suicide, is noted for its stark and somber portrayal of profound depression and death. The poem conveys a sense of hopelessness, yet the use of the word (perfect) suggests a complex view of suicide as an act of courage rather than cowardice. The reference to *the Greek illusion of necessity* adds a historical dimension, suggesting that suicide was sometimes viewed as honorable. Additionally, the poem hints at a sense of accomplishment in death, possibly relating to Plath's demise or metaphorically to bringing her children with her. This irony highlights the poem's complex themes and deviation from conventional reality, reflecting the poet's struggle with her role as a mother and her existential concerns (Astuti & Chalesti, 2022; Alkhaldi et al., 2024).

Sylvia Plath's poem *Edge* examines the theme of perfection in death, particularly about the female body. It explores how Plath's depiction of a dead woman, with her two dead infants (coiled) like (white serpents) at her breasts, is an aestheticization of death. The poem suggests that the woman's body has reached a state of (accomplishment or perfection) in death. This idea is linked to early modern anatomical illustrations, where dead specimens are posed in ways that make them appear alive and meaningful. The poem juxtaposes the (perfected) body in death with the aestheticization of death found in such anatomical images. The poem's Imagery, including the metaphor of the dead infants as petals, contributes to this aestheticization of death, drawing connections to classical and medical representations of the female body in death (Ciobanu, 2024; Hawamdeh et al., 2024).

In *Edge*, Sylvia Plath uses fragmented couplets and enjambments to convey a sense of disorder and imbalance, reflecting the narrator's troubled state. Various figures of speech, including metaphors, personification, and irony, add depth to the poem. The tension between the calmness of death and disturbing Imagery, like bleeding flowers, is central.

The poem critiques the idea that women achieve perfection only in death, revealing the despair of living under oppressive societal expectations (Mistry & Joseph, 2020; Huwari et al., 2024).

B. *Morning at the Window*

Morning at the Window depicts the harsh realities of urban poverty in modern London, focusing on domestic workers. Eliot portrays their lives with detachment, highlighting the city's grim atmosphere and the social and economic divisions that create a fragmented, disconnected environment. Stylistically, Eliot employs personification and metaphor to evoke the domestic workers' deteriorating mental and physical states, emphasizing their despair and the oppressive urban setting using vivid Imagery to illustrate their hardships. Thematically, it explores poverty, depression, and alienation experienced by the lower classes in industrialized cities, offering a bleak critique of modern urban life (Meliani, 2023; Saeed, 2024).

T.S. Eliot's poem *Morning at the Window* vividly portrays a dismal morning scene that reflects the bleak lives of the working class observed from a window. The speaker, acting as a detached observer, uses rich Imagery and metaphors like (damp souls) sprouting despondently at area gates and (brown waves of fog) to evoke a sense of despair and despondency. The street outside is shrouded in fog, a metaphor for pervasive despair, with twisted faces, a crying passerby, and an aimless smile that vanishes—a hopeless gesture in a grim setting. Eliot employs hyperbolic metaphors and personification, such as the fog bringing sadness to the observer and people (twisted faces), to heighten the emotional impact and create an oppressive atmosphere. Enjambment emphasizes the ongoing struggles of the characters, while the Imagery of dirtiness and depression serves as objective correlatives for poverty, making it the poem's central theme. The use of paradox and ambiguity, particularly in phrases like an aimless smile, deepens the poem's complexity, ultimately capturing the despair and hopelessness of those trapped in a cycle of poverty (Wazir & Lodhi, 2020; Hutami & Adrian, 2021).

T.S. Eliot's *Morning at the Window* uses literary devices to depict the harsh realities of poverty, focusing on the working class. The poem contrasts the expected tranquility of Morning with scenes of sorrow and despair, symbolizing the emotional and physical toll of poverty. Eliot employs metaphors, ambiguity, and enjambment to create a bleak atmosphere, highlighting the continuous struggles and multifaceted hardships, including financial deprivation, isolation, and powerlessness. The poem offers a powerful commentary on the societal structures that perpetuate human suffering (Amrullah et al., 2022).

In *Morning at the Window*, T.S. Eliot uses a lyrical perspective to reveal the harsh realities faced by the working class and housemaids. The poem opens with a depiction of the daily struggles of the poor, who live in squalid conditions and must rush through their mornings in basement kitchens. This setting emphasizes their impoverished state and the physical hardships associated with it. As these individuals navigate the trampled streets on their way to work, Eliot highlights their pervasive sadness and despair. The Imagery of fog and twisted faces underscores the oppressive atmosphere they endure, further amplified by their dirty, worn clothing and the futile, aimless smiles they attempt to wear. Overall, Eliot portrays a bleak picture of human suffering and the lack of empathy or support from society, aiming to awaken a sense of compassion and social responsibility in his readers (Abdallah, 2021).

III. METHODOLOGY

Understanding research methods allows researchers to be more specific about the study they are discussing and ensures that research sources are reliable and have been collected and processed correctly (Greener, 2008). The approach used in each study is determined by the primary research objective and questions (Srivastava & Thomson, 2009). This study was conducted using qualitative descriptive research methods (Annamalai et al., 2024; Madanat et al., 2024), as descriptive research focuses on describing situations and circumstances in order to describe them in a study report and aims to document the condition of a group or phenomenon systematically and accurately, resulting in measurable and accurate results that are usually presented in detailed research reports (Dari, 2021).

Qualitative research explores the meanings individuals or groups assign to social or human issues (Thanh & Thanh, 2015; Alqaryouti, 2024b; Annamalai et al., 2023). It uses various data collection methods such as interviews, group discussions, observational studies, and analysis of textual and narrative sources like reports, diaries, poems, and films (Creswell, 2012; Bowling & Ebrahim, 2005). This research analyzes words or visual images to investigate central phenomena, often resulting in detailed descriptions and broader themes (Sunarto et al., 2021; Alqaryouti, 2024a).

As the cornerstone of any evaluation or research, data must be current, relevant, trustworthy, accurate, and conceptually sound (Rabianski, 2003). Primary research and data analysis is the collection of data that the researcher has obtained for the specific objective or study under consideration (Boslaugh, 2007), while secondary data involves reanalyzing existing data that was initially collected for a different purpose. They can be a valuable source for addressing research questions. They include raw data and published summaries, payroll records, correspondence, meeting minutes, sales data, newspaper reports of takeover bids and stock prices, official survey data, and demographic and economic topics (Saunders et al., 2009).

This study is qualitative and focused on describing the subject matter. This study uses stylistic analysis to explore how artistic influences are reflected in poems through Imagery, themes, symbolism, and tone, as well as how themes are expressed through the author's word choice and sentence structure. This method was used to analyze T.S. Eliot's *Morning at the Window* and Sylvia Plath's *Edge*, focusing specifically on the stylistic use of symbolism. The study explores how these poets utilize symbolism to express deep emotions, themes, and ideas and demonstrates how their unique techniques

enrich their thematic complexity and overall effectiveness. This examination can uncover in detail how the literary devices selected by Eliot and Plath influenced their poetic styles and had a significant and far-reaching influence.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This analysis aims to reveal how these elements interact to explore how Sylvia Plath and T. S. Eliot use symbolism to convey profound emotions, themes, and ideas in their works.

A. Imagery

Imagery in Plath's *Edge* and Eliot's *Morning at the Window* vividly depict themes of despair, poverty, and alienation. Plath's stark images of death contrast with Eliot's fragmented depictions of urban poverty and isolation, highlighting profound psychological and existential issues.

(a). *Edge*

In *Edge*, Sylvia Plath uses visual Imagery to powerfully evoke a sense of suffering, death, and emotional desolation. The lines *OF a rose close when the garden / Stiffens and odors bleed / From the sweet, deep throats of the night flower* vividly depict life as a fragile night flower, its scent seeping out and causing the garden to stiffen. This Imagery symbolizes the painful and often harsh realities of life, which the woman is attempting to protect her children from, much like a rose shields its delicate petals. The rose, typically a symbol of beauty and love, symbolizes the mother's desire to shield her children from life's suffering. As the flower's life fades, the garden becomes rigid and devoid of vitality, mirroring the woman's emotional and psychological state.

In contrast, the moon, described as *having nothing to be sad about, / Staring from her hood of bone*, reinforces the poem's chilling tone. The moon's indifferent gaze reflects the world's emotional detachment from the woman's pain. While the moon remains cold and unaffected, the woman experiences an emotional intensity that ultimately leads to her death, suggesting that the outside world is unaware or indifferent to her inner torment.

Plath further deepens the emotional gravity of the poem with organic Imagery that emphasizes death and exhaustion. The *dead child coiled, a white serpent" and the "empty Pitcher of milk* conjure haunting images of death and depletion. The white serpents symbolize the poisonous, inevitable end that awaits the woman and her children. Their cold, lifeless form contrasts sharply with the warmth of motherhood, highlighting the unnaturalness and devastation of the woman's actions. The empty Pitcher, traditionally associated with nurturing and motherhood, symbolizes the woman's exhaustion and emptiness after fulfilling her maternal duties. The act of motherhood has drained her, leaving her physically and emotionally depleted. The Imagery of the *empty Pitcher of milk* reinforces the idea of maternal fatigue, with the empty vessel symbolizing not just the end of motherhood but also a deeper sense of emotional and psychological depletion. The image of the woman's children, dead and entwined like serpents, underscores the destructive side of her protective instincts, suggesting that she is trying to shield them from a world she deems too harsh, even if it means taking their lives along with her own.

Olfactory Imagery in the poem adds another layer of intensity to the emotional landscape. The phrase *odors bleed* uses the sense of smell to convey the suffering that permeates the scene. The scent of the night flower, which *bleeds*, symbolizes the pain seeping into every part of life. The bleeding odors suggest an inescapable, pervasive suffering, much like how the woman's mental anguish is bleeding into the very fabric of her existence. This sense of sensory overload enhances the feeling of being overwhelmed by life's hardships. The Imagery of suffering is not just visual but also visceral, where the essence of life's struggles is tangible and unbearable.

Finally, tactile Imagery is woven into the poem through the line *Her blacks crackle and drag*, which evokes the feeling of heaviness and inevitability. The image of "crackling" fabric conveys a physical sensation of darkness and decay while *dragging* suggests the burden of sorrow and despair weighing the woman down. This tactile Imagery implies that the woman's life is saturated with grief, and the weight of this grief is pulling her closer to death. The darkness associated with her *blacks* symbolizes the psychological state of deep, morbid depression, where life has become unbearably heavy, and death feels like the only release. The sensation of dragging evokes the exhaustion that comes from enduring an existence filled with emotional and mental torment. This Imagery not only represents the woman's emotional state but also suggests the physical toll such despair can have on the human body and spirit.

Together, these elements of visual, organic, olfactory, and tactile Imagery create a rich, layered portrayal of a woman who has reached the breaking point, trapped in a world of pain, fatigue, and emotional emptiness. Each type of Imagery reinforces the overwhelming despair that leads to her ultimate escape through death, suggesting that her suffering is not just a mental or emotional struggle but a complete, all-encompassing experience.

(b). *Morning at the Window*

In *Morning at the Window*, T.S. Eliot employs a variety of Imagery that vividly depicts the harsh realities of poverty and the daily suffering of the urban poor, particularly through the experiences of housemaids. This Imagery reflects the themes of alienation, emotional exhaustion, and societal neglect, providing readers with a powerful sensory experience that captures the bleakness of the urban environment.

Visual Imagery plays a crucial role in painting vivid and unsettling pictures of poverty and struggle. Eliot uses

descriptive language to evoke the grim conditions of the poor, such as *breakfast plates in basement kitchens* and *trampled edges of the street*. The Imagery of the *breakfast plates in basement kitchens* places the reader in a cramped, dingy environment, symbolizing the low status of the housemaids who begin their day in these confined spaces. The *trampled edges of the street* reflect the physical wear and tear on the streets and the people who walk them, suggesting a constant erosion of dignity and spirit. Additionally, phrases like *brown waves of fog* and *twisted faces from the bottom of the street* enhance the sense of suffocation and distortion, where the fog serves as a metaphor for the confusion and hopelessness that the poor face.

In contrast, the *twisted faces* emphasize the emotional and physical toll of living in such conditions. The image of *muddy skirts* reinforces the image of grime and dirt, both literal and metaphorical, highlighting the ongoing struggle of these individuals. The *aimless smile* that *vanishes along the level of the roofs* captures the fleeting, empty nature of joy in an oppressive environment, where even a smile is temporary and ultimately disappears into the bleakness of the cityscape.

Auditory Imagery complements the visual Imagery, emphasizing urban life's constant noise and hustle. The line *They are rattling breakfast plates* is a powerful auditory detail that draws attention to the daily routine of the housemaids. The *rattling* sound suggests the clamor of dishes and their work's relentless, almost mechanical nature. It highlights the noise and busyness of the environment, where the housemaids' lives are marked by repetitive tasks that provide little relief from the pressures of their existence. This auditory Imagery also evokes a sense of chaos and fatigue, suggesting that the housemaids, though engaged in seemingly mundane chores, are caught in a whirlwind of exhausting labor and social invisibility.

Kinesthetic Imagery in the poem captures the physical movement and actions of the individuals within this environment. The housemaids are described as *sprouting despondently at area gates*, which conveys a sense of sluggishness and resignation. The verb *sprouting* is surprising, typically suggesting growth or vitality. However, it is paired with *despondency*, emphasizing the contrast between the potential for life and the overwhelming despair that permeates their existence. This phrase not only captures the physical movement of the housemaids but also symbolizes the weariness that comes with their routines.

Similarly, the fleeting *aimless smile* that *vanishes along the level of the roofs* evokes a transient moment of emotion that cannot endure in the oppressive conditions of their environment. The Imagery of the *trampled edges* symbolizes the physical, emotional, and social wear and tear on the housemaids. These *edges* represent the frayed and eroded parts of their lives, worn down by constant physical labor, emotional exhaustion, and the demands of a society that offers little respite or recognition.

Organic Imagery in the poem further conveys the internal and emotional states of the characters, highlighting the toll that poverty takes on the psyche. Phrases like *sprouting despondently at area gates* and *an aimless smile* depict the internal emotional landscape of the housemaids, capturing their despair, loneliness, and sense of futility. The organic Imagery creates a rich sensory experience that underscores the melancholic atmosphere of the poem. The *aimless smile* is particularly poignant, as it suggests an attempt to express some form of joy or hope, yet it is ultimately empty and fleeting, vanishing as quickly as it appears. This fleeting moment of joy symbolizes the fragility of happiness for people experiencing poverty, who are caught in a cycle of survival without the luxury of sustained emotional fulfillment. The organic Imagery of despondency and weariness reinforces the overarching themes of poverty, routine, and societal neglect, where the internal lives of these individuals are shaped and constrained by the harshness of their circumstances.

In sum, T.S. Eliot's *Morning at the Window* uses a variety of Imagery—visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and organic—to vividly portray the suffering experienced by the urban poor. These sensory images convey the physical realities of poverty and the emotional and psychological toll on individuals, emphasizing themes of exhaustion, alienation, and the erosion of hope. Through this rich Imagery, Eliot offers a poignant commentary on the dehumanizing effects of poverty on modern urban life.

B. Theme

Themes of death and despair in Sylvia Plath's *Edge* are explored through stark Imagery of a woman's finality and the burdens of motherhood, presenting suicide as both an achievement and a release. In contrast, T.S. Eliot's *Morning at the Window* examines poverty and urban suffering, using vivid Imagery to portray the harsh realities and emotional toll the impoverished face.

(a). *Edge*

Sylvia Plath's poem *Edge* examines death and suicide through a chilling and nuanced perspective. It portrays a serene yet unsettling scene of a dead woman with her deceased children, suggesting she views her death as an achievement: *The woman is perfected / Her dead / Body wears the smile of accomplishment* and as a relief from life's burdens: *Her bare / Feet seem to be saying: / We have come so far, it is over*. This *perfection* may symbolize the peace she finds in death. The poem reveals more profound layers of conflict and suffering, as reflected in the line: *She is used to this sort of thing*. The woman's suicide is tied to exhaustion, the burdens of motherhood, and the world's indifference, represented by the moon that remains Staring: *The moon has nothing to be sad about / Staring from her hood of bone*. This underscores the complex emotions and reasons that led her to end her life. The reference to *Greek necessity* links the woman's act to the ancient Greek view of suicide as an honorable and necessary choice; presenting her death as an achievement from multiple perspectives is consistent with the ancient Greeks.

The poem also delves into maternal love and the challenges of womanhood and motherhood themes, portraying them as exhaustingly tricky, if not fatal. It discusses infanticide by comparing the dead children to *white serpents coiled around her*, suggesting that the woman may have killed them to protect them from life's harms and keep them with her, even in death, similar to how a rose pulls its petals back to shield its seeds *She has folded/Them back into her body as petals/Of a rose close when the garden/Stiffens and odors bleed/From the sweet, deep throats of the night flower*. The *empty pitchers* symbolize post-nursing breasts devoid of the poisoned milk they once held, illustrating infanticide as a form of poisoned protection.

(b). *Morning at the Window*

Poverty as a theme is powerfully portrayed in the poem through a series of vivid images that convey the harsh realities of the lives of the poor. Eliot highlights the struggles of female workers, especially maids. This can be seen in the opening of the poem. Many negative expressions portray the daily hardships, suffering, and struggles the workers, especially maids, should face, such as *trampled edges*, *damp souls*, and *sprouting despondently*, to highlight and draw attention to the devastating effects of poverty and destitution.

These profound expressions immerse the reader in the characters' feelings of depression, misery, disappointment, and squalor, which are considered the main result of poverty. The "*damp souls*" of housemaids, *twisted faces*, *tears in a girl's eyes*, and the *aimless smile* of a passerby all symbolize the profound sadness and frustration linked to poverty. The Imagery suggests that unhappiness and despair are pervasive and severe in this urban setting. Housemaids' *damp* souls symbolize their lack of passion for life, reflecting their oppressive conditions. The clatter of breakfast plates in the early Morning symbolizes the poor's commitment to working long hours, regardless of the weather, and portrays them as *desperate* and hopeless.

The speaker continues to observe and describe scenes that reflect and express poverty sincerely, such as *muddy skirts* and the *aimless smile that hovers in the air*, which conveys someone's attempt to smile. These images create a poignant portrayal of the suffering of the poor, where happiness is elusive in a society steeped in hard work and poverty. The images of *brown waves*, *fog*, and *muddy skirts* also illustrate the poor, polluted environment, and *twisted faces* and *tears* vividly depict the suffering of the city's poor.

C. Tone

Sylvia Plath's *The Edge* tone is resigned and melancholy, reflecting despair and exhaustion, while T. S. Eliot's *Morning at the Window* evokes compassion and empathy, vividly depicting urban poverty and suffering. Both poems offer profound insights into human suffering and social issues through their distinct emotional perspectives.

(a). *Edge*

The opening lines of Sylvia Plath's *Edge* present a striking image of the woman as *perfect*, with *her dead body / and a smile of achievement*. This paradoxical notion of *perfection* achieved only in death introduces the idea of death as an accomplishment rather than a tragedy or failure. The smile of *achievement* suggests a sense of completion, a finality to her decision, and a release from the burdens of life. In this context, death is not depicted as an escape from failure but as a peaceful resolution, a fulfillment of sorts. The woman's death, far from being a loss, is portrayed as her ultimate triumph—a peaceful release from the overwhelming demands of life. This framing contrasts with the societal view of success, which often ties it to the roles one plays, particularly as a mother or wife. Here, death becomes her last act of achievement, marking her departure from the world on her terms, suggesting that it is her final act of control in a life where she perhaps had none.

In the next lines, Plath evokes the complexity of the woman's maternal instincts through symbolic Imagery. The *dead child coiled, a white serpent* is a haunting image, where the serpents symbolize both death and the woman's fierce desire to protect her children. The serpents' coldness and danger reflect the inevitability of death, yet their position *at each little / Pitcher of milk, now empty*, suggests the depletion of the woman's maternal capacity. The empty Pitcher symbolizes the exhaustion that motherhood has left her with—the cessation of nurturing and the end of her ability to give life. In death, however, the woman attempts to preserve a final act of motherhood. Folding her children *back into her body as petals / Of a rose close* is a powerful and tragic metaphor for her need to protect them, even from the harsh realities of life. The fragile petals of a rose, which typically protect the core of the flower, here symbolize the woman's attempt to shield her children from pain, even in death. This Imagery reveals a deep and complex attachment to her children, transcending life itself as she yearns to maintain that bond beyond death.

Plath's exploration of pain and hardship is vividly illustrated through lines like *garden / Stiffens and odors bleed*, which intensify physical and emotional suffering. The garden, a traditional symbol of life and growth, here *stiffens*, signifying a stagnation or death of vitality. This mirrors the woman's life, which has lost its vitality, as she becomes overwhelmed by her emotional weight. The phrase *odors bleed* further evokes a sense of decay, as though the very essence of life is being drained away, leaving behind nothing but remnants of suffering. This decay ties life to an unrelenting cycle of pain, suggesting that physical and emotional suffering is an intrinsic part of the human experience. The image of the moon, *staring from her hood of bone*, is another example of the cold detachment that permeates the poem. The moon, often a symbol of calmness and reflection, is described as indifferent, *having nothing to be sad about*. This external, unemotional presence of the moon contrasts sharply with the woman's internal anguish, underscoring her isolation in her suffering.

The moon's detachment emphasizes the woman's sense of being abandoned by the world, with her pain unnoticed by the indifferent cosmos.

Edge's tone is marked by deep resignation, sorrow, and overwhelming fatigue. Phrases like *She is used to this sort of thing* and *Her blacks crackle and drag* suggest a life burdened by recurring sorrow and emotional numbness. The woman has grown accustomed to her pain, which has become a constant, inescapable part of her existence. This resignation is further emphasized in the image of her *black crackle and drag*, which suggests a life weighed down by the unrelenting accumulation of grief and hardship. The *blacks* symbolize her mourning, and the *crackling* and *dragging* evoke a sense of movement devoid of energy or grace. It illustrates how her burdens have become so heavy that even her attempts to move forward are marked by exhaustion and futility. The image of dragging, in particular, conveys the toll that ongoing emotional suffering takes on the body and spirit.

The Imagery of whiteness, blankness, and coldness that recurs throughout the poem heightens the sense of emptiness and emotional detachment. Words like *bare*, white serpents, *milk*, and *hood of bone* all suggest a lifelessness and a void that extends beyond the physical death of the woman. The white serpents, symbolizing death, are cold and devoid of warmth, reflecting the woman's emotional numbness. The empty milk pitcher is another symbol of depletion, indicating the cessation of motherhood and the end of nurturing. The *hood of the bone* of the moon adds to this chilling atmosphere, evoking a sense of sterility and lifelessness. These images reinforce the emotional desolation the woman feels, as if she has been drained of vitality and connection, leaving only an emptiness that mirrors her physical death.

Ultimately, the poem's tone suggests that the woman's suffering is not an isolated event but a continuous, ingrained part of her existence. Her pain has become so familiar that it has shaped every aspect of her being, leading her to the conclusion that death is the only way to escape it. The poem's detached and resigned mood invites readers to reflect on the nature of suffering and whether, for this woman, death represents a final release from a life weighed down by sorrow and fatigue. Plath's use of stark and haunting Imagery throughout the poem underscores the bleakness of the woman's emotional landscape, offering a chilling reflection on the toll that prolonged suffering can take on the mind and body. The woman's death, framed not as a tragedy but as an achievement, becomes a poignant symbol of the exhaustion and resignation that can accompany a life marred by continuous pain.

(b). *Morning at the Window*

The poet evokes pity and sympathy without stating it directly, and he emphasizes that he is aware of their suffering, which is evident in their *twisted faces*, *muddy skirts*, *aimless smiles*, and *tears*, allowing the reader to feel the emotional weight of these impressions.

D. Symbolism

In *Morning at the Window*, T.S. Eliot subtly evokes pity and sympathy through his poignant portrayal of the suffering urban poor without explicitly stating it. Through vivid Imagery, the poet allows the reader to feel the emotional weight of the characters' lives, making their struggles palpable without directly addressing them. The *twisted face* description immediately captures poverty's physical and emotional toll on the people. These *twisted faces* evoke a sense of discomfort and distortion, suggesting that the individuals' emotional states have manifested physically. The image implies that their hardships are so overwhelming that they have left visible marks on their appearance. The twisted expressions indicate physical strain and symbolize the internal suffering—the anxiety, frustration, and hopelessness—the people endure daily.

The *muddy skirts* further emphasize the dehumanizing effects of poverty, not only on the body but also on the dignity of the individuals. The skirts, which are usually symbols of femininity and domesticity, here are associated with dirt and filth, underscoring the harsh, unclean environment the women are forced to live and work in. This image is powerful because it evokes a sense of degradation and loss of identity. The women are no longer pristine or untouched by the world but are instead marked by the very conditions that oppress them. The *muddy skirts* also symbolize the inescapable nature of their circumstances; no matter how hard they try, they are stained by the weight of their environment and social position. Eliot does not need to state that these women are suffering explicitly—he allows the reader to infer this from the symbolic images of dirt and filth that cling to them.

Similarly, the *aimless smiles* evoke a deep sense of futility. The smile, typically associated with joy or contentment, here is described as *aimless*, suggesting that it lacks meaning or purpose. This smile does not reflect genuine happiness or relief but is merely an empty gesture—perhaps an attempt to maintain some semblance of normalcy in a life otherwise devoid of hope. The phrase *aimless smile* implies that even the fleeting moments of happiness these individuals might experience are short-lived and insignificant in the face of their overwhelming hardships. The reader feels the weight of this emptiness as the smile symbolizes survival in a world that offers little respite from suffering.

Finally, the reference to *tears* reinforces the emotional gravity of the situation. Tears, typically associated with sadness or catharsis, starkly contrast with the *aimless smile* and "twisted faces." The tears directly express the emotional turmoil the characters endure but also reflect the quiet desperation of those trapped in their conditions. They are not tears of release or resolution but tears that flow without real hope of alleviating the pain. Tears highlight the futility of their emotional expression in a world where suffering seems endless, and there is no promise of change or improvement.

Through these images—*twisted faces*, *muddy skirts*, *aimless smiles*, and *tears*—Eliot allows the reader to feel the weight of the characters' emotional suffering without overtly stating it. These vivid impressions allow the reader to empathize with the poverty-stricken individuals, deeply connecting with their pain and emotional exhaustion. The

Imagery invites the reader to sense the disillusionment, the physical and emotional exhaustion, and the sense of hopelessness that pervades their lives. Eliot masterfully uses these symbolic details to convey the depth of their suffering, making it felt in the reader's emotional response. Through this technique, Eliot subtly and powerfully evokes pity and sympathy, drawing the reader into the harsh world he describes without paying attention to it directly.

(a). *Edge*

In Sylvia Plath's *Edge*, symbols vividly illustrate the themes of death and exhaustion. *Bare feet* symbolize the end of a long and arduous journey, while *white serpents* represent death's cold and poisonous nature. The *Pitcher of milk* reflects the aftermath of motherhood, with *empty* pitchers symbolizing the mother's exhausted and depleted state. The act of folding the children *back into her body as petals / Of a rose close* signifies a maternal instinct to protect and keep her children close, even in death. The *night flower* represents life's painful, dark aspects, and the *garden / Stiffens and odors bleed*, conveying the suffering and emotional chill surrounding the woman. With *nothing to be sad about and staring from her hood of bone*, the moon symbolizes a cold, unfeeling observer of the woman's tragedy. Finally, *her black crackle and drag* symbolize the constant despair and weariness in the woman's life, emphasizing the gloomy and dark tone of the poem.

(b). *Morning at the Window*

Many symbols combine in the poem to form a complete image representing poverty in its various dimensions that affect the poor and workers psychologically, physically, and externally. For example, the *basement* symbolizes the lower class living in poverty, the *fog* symbolizes confusion and lack of clarity about their future, and the *twisted faces, wet souls*, and *aimless smiles* symbolize frustration, emptiness, loss of passion, and depression in city life.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the qualitative descriptive analysis of Sylvia Plath's *Edge* and T.S. Eliot's *Morning at the Window*, it is clear that both poets skillfully employ rich Imagery, symbolism, and tone to explore profound and often unsettling themes. Plath's *Edge* delves into the harrowing concepts of death, maternal instinct, and existential despair. Through stark and haunting Imagery, such as *white serpents* and *empty pitchers*, Plath uses symbolism to convey the intricate and painful complexities of life and death. Her tone, marked by resigned despair and bleak detachment, further underscores the poem's protagonist's emotional and existential struggles, offering a chilling reflection on the burdens of motherhood and the desire for escape. In contrast, Eliot's *Morning at the Window* addresses poverty and urban struggle, vividly portrayed through visual and auditory Imagery. The poem's tone, which evokes pity and sympathy, captures the harsh realities of the urban poor. Symbols like *trampled edges*, *muddy skirts*, and *aimless smiles* highlight the physical and emotional toll of poverty, painting a poignant picture of societal neglect and individual hardship. Both poets exhibit a profound mastery of symbolism to enhance thematic depth and convey deep emotions. Plath's exploration of death and maternal sacrifice contrasts sharply with Eliot's depiction of urban poverty and societal indifference. Both poets offer profound insights into the human condition through their distinctive stylistic choices. They illustrate poetry's decisive role in exploring complex themes and emotions, making their work resonate across different contexts and eras.

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