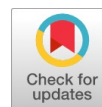


# A Deconstructionist View of Sylvia Plath's "Lady Lazarus" and Robert Frost's "Design"

Hussam Shamma



**Abstract:** Deconstructionism, which entails carefully examining a text and underscoring its inconsistencies, ambiguities, and paradoxes, is employed in this paper to evaluate Sylvia Plath and Robert Frost's poetry. Deconstructionists examine how a text opposes or challenges its own meaning rather than trying to come about a single, conclusive interpretation. They might look at how a text challenges prevailing idea, reveals the limitations of language or undermines the conventional distinctions between gender, race, and class. They could examine how the poem's themes are distorted or contradicted, as well as how it highlights the limitations of conventional binary oppositions like male/female, self/other, and nature/culture. The poetry of Sylvia Plath is frequently recognized for its great emotional depth and its examination of serious subject matters like loneliness, death, and mental illness. Plath frequently uses intricate metaphors and symbols in her poems, as well as startling and vivid imagery. For instance, "Lady Lazarus" is recognized as one of Plath's most known pieces and a haunting exploration of the themes of death, rebirth, and identity. On the other hand, Robert Frost is renowned for his bucolic and frequently sentimental images of rural life in New England. His poetry is known for its use of straightforward, simple language and often examines themes like nature, interpersonal relationships, and the passage of time. For instance, the poem "Design" prompts critical reflection on the nature of our existence and our place within such a complex universe.

**Keywords:** Deconstructionism - Meaning - Undecidability - Sylvia Plath - Robert Frost

## I. INTRODUCTION

Sylvia Plath and Robert Frost are two of the most well-known American poets of the 20th century. Both poets have had a huge influence on the literary canon, inspiring generations of readers and authors despite their differences in style and subject matter. We will look at how deconstructionist theory can be used to analyze Frost and Plath's poetry in this essay. Specifically, we will dismantle Plath's, perhaps, most famous poem "Lady Lazarus" and Frost's most enigmatic poem "Design". Deconstructionism is a critical approach that emphasizes the inherent instability of language and the provisional nature of meaning. By analyzing the linguistic, structural, and thematic elements of their poems, we can uncover the multiple meanings and contradictions that lie beneath the surface of their work.

We will begin by examining the linguistic elements of both

"Lady Lazarus" and "Design", including their use of language, syntax, and grammar. Then, we will talk about how they used form, meter, and rhyme, as well as other structural components, in their writing. Finally, we will look at how their poetry's imagery, symbolism, and metaphors relate to their themes. We want to learn more about the intricate and varied characteristics of Frost's and Plath's poetry through this analysis. We can better understand how their poetry challenges and subverts conventional literary conventions and how it speaks to the complexities of the human experience by exposing the hidden assumptions and power structures that underlie their work. This also highlights the limitless interpretations that a text can elicit.

## II. DECONSTRUCTIONISM AND LITERATURE

Believing in the existence of absolute, ultimate and unquestionable assumptions such as God, truth, reason, spirituality and so on, Western or European culture has provided an indispensable, ideological vehicle upon which thoughts, beliefs and actions are built up. The seminal thinkers and philosophers of the Western thought like Plato, Aristotle and many others had been searching for some unifying principles and ultimate source of meaning that would serve to operate as a center of truth according to which one single meaning is perceived. Plato, for example, stated that the spiritual world is the mansion where ultimate reality and therefore meaning resides, whereas the physical world that we apprehend is a mere reflection and a copy of what is real (spiritual) [1]. Moreover, it was Plato who banished the poets from his Republic, declaring that a "poet's craft is 'an inferior who marries an inferior and has inferior offspring'" [2]. Accordingly, the poet's products are two times removed from the essential nature of a thing (reality, which is the idea of a thing); a poet writes a poem about an object from the physical world which is already a mere faint replica of the real and the genuine: the idea or the concept of the thing. Plato did not only expel poets from his republic, but he also "set up reason as a guard against the false beguilements of rhetoric" [3]. Rhetoric for Plato is created by "non-rational inspiration" [3], hence it is an illusion that only reason, which by far superior, can protect us from.

Post-structuralism, the rebellious movement against the despotic rule of the classical assumptions, was the knight who defied the conventional laws of Western metaphysics from the time of Plato to the present, and indeed managed to heave out this tyranny's throne. For Saussure "in language there are only differences without any positive terms" [2]. It is this idea that meaning can be known by the differences among the language signs,

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That Jacques Derrida, the founding father of deconstruction, borrows from Saussure to be the key building block in establishing his 'strategic device' of dismantling literary texts. If structuralism divides the sign from the referent, Derrida seeks to divide the signifier from the signified. That is, he agrees with Saussure that "language is a system based on differences" [4] and that meaning of signifiers can be obtained only because of the differences and relationships among them; however, Derrida goes a step further applying this logic to the signified: we come about meaning of a signified because it differs from other signifieds. For example, checking the word house in the dictionary, several entries and different connotations appear in the word's list, such as (royal family, building, house etc...) and each one of these signifieds serves to be a signifier. This process goes on and on forever, as "the signifiers lead a chameleon-like existence, changing their colours with each new context" [4].

Deconstruction is labeled not as "a system or a settled body of ideas" [2] throughout Derrida's works. He himself reiterated that "his texts are not a store of ready-made concepts cut as an activity resistant to any such reductive ploy" [3]. It is rather a 'strategic device' which may appear to be a set of linear rules that one might follow to dismantle a text. Derrida, in his paper "Structure, Sign and Play", that he read in a conference at Johns Hopkins University in 1966 when he took the American audience by storm, states bravely his deliberate intention of turning Western metaphysics topsy-turvy and announces that the entire tradition of the classics is built upon a "fundamental error" [2]. The belief in an ultimate source that provides meaning is what Derrida clearly defies and dubs as a 'transcendental signified', which is a self-originating signified that needs not to be compared to other signifiers or signifieds [2]. He uses this term to refer to Western assumption of an ultimate, final and divine source of meaning. Moreover, this center of truth is beyond structural analysis, for the moment of dissecting it to its components, it would lose its ultimate being to another center [2]. Derrida claims that there is no existence for such a signified or center mainly because every signified becomes a signifier in the relentless chain of language. Centers, Derrida proceeds, are uniquely and typically the products of Western thought and culture, and by centers he means terms that would serve as the ultimate truth around which whole worldviews are built.

Derrida contends that a series of binary operations, such as God/Man, Man/woman, and Reason/Rhetoric, form the foundation of Western philosophy. These opposites create a hierarchy where one term is superior, and the other is inferior, or where one term is privileged and the other is unprivileged, to use Derrida's term [2]. To clarify, the first portion of the hierarchy's meaning is always seen as better and more privileged since the second part of the hierarchy is suppressed and undermined. That is, being good is always preferable to being bad. However, it is only because of the absence of light there is dark. Both sides of the polarity are equal provided that one can never dispense with darkness and because of darkness one can identify light and vice versa.

Writing has long been undermined and classified as a secondary form of speech by the classics as well as by Saussure. This is one of the violent hierarchies and logo-centric ideals, which Derrida wishes to dismantle. It is

noteworthy to recall the Aristotelian definition of writing and spoken language: "Spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words" [5]. Saussure also defines them as 'system of signs'; the second one (written discourse) exists for the sole purpose of representing the first (spoken language) [5]. Speaking is privileged and valued on the ground that one's voice implies existence and presence of the self, and meaning can be found crystal clear in the things spoken. However, meaning appears in writing as a wild animal which cannot be controlled; it is a thief who robs the speaker of their being. Accordingly, writing has been consistently vilified by Western thought as a "mere lifeless, pallid and alienated form of speech" which has been celebrated by the classics as the supreme living voice [6]. Once again there is another important hierarchy: speech versus writing binary which Derrida dubs 'Phonocentrism' [2]. Derrida defies such conventional thinking of writing, saying that "writing is in fact the precondition of language and must be conceived as prior to speech" [3]. Speech and writing, asserts Derrida, share the same semiotic characteristics: there is no natural link between the spoken word and what it represents, and thus language becomes a kind of writing which he calls 'arche-writing' where speech is no longer privileged over writing [4].

Nevertheless, such a reversal of the elements of the binary is legitimate and rather necessary whenever we recognize the binary operations at work. However, we should keep in mind that the reversal of any elements of a hierarchy might result in another logocentric thinking. Therefore, Derrida coins the word 'Supplement' to describe the for-ever problematic and unstable relationship between the elements of the newly created hierarchy: the binary opposition after the reversal. This supplement relationship can be thought of as a ship in the middle of the sea blown by two contrary strong winds and none of these winds is able to take over the other's center. Derrida's main purpose of showing the possibility of making such a reversal for all Western metaphysics' unimpeachable concepts is to expose the shaky and unstable foundations upon which such concepts have been built, and to open new horizon of ceaselessly possible interpretations hitherto unacknowledged by many critics and scholars of literature.

To support his argument of arch-writing and supplement, Derrida comes up with the term *différance*. This concept generates two meanings at the same time. First, it means to differ, like the difference between the two consonants 't' and 'd' in a word. Second, it refers to the process of deferring or postponing the definition of one signified, which necessarily and endlessly refers to other signifieds, and to "whole system of signifieds that constitutes language" [7]. Derrida says that this concept can be written down and read aloud, but it can never be heard (Bressler). He sheds light on the inability to differentiate the word *différance* from the word difference in spoken language, whereas in writing, it is very easy to mark the difference. [5]. Thus, knowledge, Derrida claims, becomes 'referential' [2];

one knows a piece of knowledge because it differs from other bits of knowledge and no longer there exists one ultimate meaning in language, but now all interpretations for textual analysis are “possible, probable, and legitimate” [2].

The main core of Derrida's philosophy is to free readers from the restraints and conventions that are deeply ingrained in their minds, which block them from looking at texts from different perspectives, which have been rejected and have been rather unnoticed by the general populace. Meaning now is like a “sprawling limitless web” [3] where no one definite, coherent and transcendental meaning exists. The undecidability and uncertainty of meaning controls and pervades the whole universe of textual analysis. Thus, deconstructionists espouse a multiplicity, heterogeneity, and difference in texts [2]. For them the indeterminacy and undecidability of a text is the essence of criticism. Thus, the word certainty should be expelled from dictionaries and encyclopedias as long as deconstruction is at work.

Post-structuralism, as mentioned earlier, challenges the shaky and logo-centric ground of Western thought and rejects the existence of absolute and coherent concepts that can exist outside language. It provides another way of apprehending discourse and even life, asking questions about the authority of ‘metaphysics of presence’. Deconstruction also provides radical changes in the history of literary theory and criticism which make a considerable disturbance in the academia. This theory offers new ways and techniques to interpret things up to the time of deconstruction unutilized by those who are restrained and confined by the strict regime of Western metaphysics. There must be an awareness of the presence of another element of the hierarchy that should not be overlooked, for both elements are of equal importance and need not to be separated.

### III. BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND OF THE POETS

Sylvia Plath's ingenious mind and her society were not on good terms at all. She could not adjust herself to her surroundings, nor could she find a diplomatic method to wear a mask that hides beneath it her contempt and anger of the societal and utterly male-dominant community that imposed on woman conventions and limitations that were not tolerated by her, and thus ended up dead by her own hands. Many feminist literary critics believe that Sylvia was killed by her male-dominant society that put off the talented fire of a female poet. A close examination of her poetry, especially the poetry before her suicide, categorizes Plath under poets of the confessional mode, which is a modern branch of poetry that deals with the personal affairs and private sentiments of the writer who resorts to such kind of poetry to convey and manifest exclusively her/his own images of despair, pain, anguish and ugliness of life and her/his inflaming desire for death [8]. It goes without saying, the confessional movement, led by Robert Lowell and defined and characterized by the critic M. L. Rosenthal as “autobiographical, therapeutic (‘soul's therapy’ and ‘self-therapeutic’) and unflinchingly truthful (featuring ‘uncompromising honesty’)” [9], had a great influence on Plath's writings. Plath was significantly influenced by Rosenthal in style, in subject matter and in her readiness to use mental illness as the inspiration for great art that utterly reflects the incidents and events of her personal

life honestly and fervently. Indeed, one can find a striking resemblance of the poet's private life, personal experiences, her mother, her husband, and of great influence on her work is her father. The acute feelings and anger of the speaker of her most poems seems to be Sylvia Plath herself moving her private life to the literary arena where she can freely express her visceral feelings towards her family and her life in general.

Robert Frost, on the other hand, is one of the most cherished American poets who was born on March 26, 1874, in San Francisco, California, contradictory to his origin, he was called the New England poet. Frost identified himself with the rustic scenes and rural farms of the New England countryside; trees, cows, rivers, brooks, woods and birches of New England were the main themes and subject matters for his simple-complex poetry. Frost's individuality partly stems from being not an advocate or follower of any of the conventional poetic dictions, and partly from his rejection of the free verse movement of Walt Whitman [10]. In lieu of the conventional poetic diction and versification he preferred to abide himself with meter and rhyme, a thing which contributed to his widely spread fame through the world. Frost, from the very beginning of his career as a poet, wanted his voice to be heard and understood by the majority, and not merely to achieve “a success with the critical few who are supposed to know . . . [He] want[ed] to be a poet for all sorts and kinds” [10]. And perhaps for this reason, all of his writings bear a courtesy call for humanity to go back to Mother Nature where all people are equal. Thus, he gave birth to a revolutionary, mixed poetry to convey the depth and sophistication of his highly philosophical notions of man, God, nature and the relationship between them through simple, plain and everyday English.

### IV. DECONSTRUCTIVE READING OF SYLVIA PLATH'S “LADY LAZARUS”

Death is one of the most recurrent themes in Sylvia Plath's life and work. The title itself, “Lady Lazarus” unfolds the story of uncertainty in language, for it contains the word “Lazarus” which is the name of a person whom Christ resurrected and brought to life long time ago [11]. Before even delving into the poem, the title underlies the two binary oppositions life versus death. Human beings are keen enough to preserve and protect their soul from leaving their body and traveling to the unknown world, and therefore life is privileged over death. But at sometimes death becomes the only relief of the agonies and sorrows found in the material world and perhaps this unknown world might be far better than the known world, and thus one can never know which is better than which. However, the speaker is convinced that “Dying/Is an art, like everything else. /I do it exceptionally well.”

As the title of the poem “Lady Lazarus” suggests, the speaker is a lady who, apparently, had attempted to die many times in her past life; “I have done it again. /One year in every ten/I manage it”. And the name Lazarus is, arbitrarily, associated with Christ who brought him back to life after death.

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Thus, according to deconstruction, the two binary oppositions Christ/Lazarus are at work. Once more appears the binary opposition man/woman, and it would be more accurate to combine both binaries to become Gentleman-Christ versus Lady Lazarus. Man, who is the tyrant and narcissist ruler who put limitations and restrictions on woman's life in general, is now a picture of Jesus Christ himself that, like a hero, snatches the speaker from the jaws of the inevitable death. The speaker is now a "walking miracle" whom was saved by her male partner, and that makes of man a good fellow who would help a lady in danger and no more the tyrant and devilish Satan that would persecute her. However, here the speaker is insinuating at the fact that without me (Lady Lazarus), this Gentleman-Christ would have no existence, for she is the "opus" of "Herr Doktor", his "valuable," and his "pure gold baby". Yet, the relationship between the two elements of the hierarchy can never be settled, for both elements complete and supplement each other, and each one of them exists at the expense of the other.

Nonetheless, the lady in the poem, is but the weaker side; she is "Lazarus," he is Christ, she is "the opus", he is a "Herr Doktor", she is a "valuable" object in the hand of her male owner, she is a "Jew" and he is a Nazi, he is "Herr Lucifer", and she is an angel, and he is even "Herr God", and she is a mere slave under his absolute sovereignty.

Everything related to man, deconstruction asserts, has been considered the mightier and more superior part of the hierarchy for ages, and therefore there must be a reversal of the elements of the binary oppositions. For instance, the speaker compares herself to that biblical figure that dies in a cave where Christ himself comes in to resurrect him from death [12] which indicates, again, his goodness and privileges. In a different line of argument, however, Christ, our savior and our sole passage to the entrance of heaven, is now but an evil male-spirit who stands between a little young girl and her father, and he is even grouped, by the speaker, with "Lucifer" in the same category, and this, definitely, indicates that the good intention of Christ contains some bad, because the speaker does not want to be saved and chained once again by the limitations of male-dominant society. Yet, the male-figure of Christ will never let her go from his fist, even when she resolves to die, he prevents her. Even though Gentleman-Christ's intention is good, that is, to save Lady Lazarus and resurrect her from death, still he, consciously or unconsciously, strips her off of her identity and prevents her to do anything without his approval and command [13].

The male figure is in charge here and in his hands is the key of the female man-made prison. The speaker is, naked now she lies, "peel[ed] off" of her "napkin" and cut up into pieces by her male-enemies. She is the main stripper-heroine whom the "The peanut-crunching crowd / Shoves in" to watch her naked body. She is but an actress whose job is to entertain her male-audience, yet she reminds the male-viewers of the "charge" they have to pay "For a word or a touch / Or a bit of blood / Or a piece of my hair or my clothes". The binary opposition male-viewer versus female-stripper are to be mentioned at this moment. She is but a sexual object in the eyes of her male audience. She is a mere entertainer "designed [only] to please or to appease her viewers more than to release herself" [14]. However, mentioning her naked body implies the weakness of her male-counterpart who is completely charmed and chained by the female body. Her body is her secret weapon by which she

can control men who are no longer more than animals driven by their own instincts and desires; thus, at the last stanza she becomes aware of her power and directly attacks her male-dominant society: "Out of the ash/I rise with my red hair/And I eat men like air". The speaker uses violent, cannibalistic language to describe herself, suggesting that she is both powerful and dangerous, and thus the weak part of the hierarchy is no more fragile and enslaved by the superior part; the roles are now reversed.

Yet, undoubtedly, the sentence "I eat men like air" connotes a number of readings. For, according to deconstruction, each single word can lead to a limitless number of signifieds and these signifieds in turn lead to others, generating a relentless web of legitimate interpretations. First, the fragile element (woman) of the hierarchy comes back from "the ash" with some sort of magical power that she uses to transform "men" into "air", and only then she can revenge herself on males. However, air cannot be eaten, and it rather can be breathed in or out but not eaten. Supposedly, the sentence means to defy man despotic society and to get back her stolen identity, but the action of eating air could also mean something else; it could mean that the speaker refers to the impossibility of the action which is eating air, and, in turn, it leads to the impossibility of finding her real identity and therefore still lost between her real and socially constructed selves.

The undecidability and indecisiveness of meaning draw the attention to the title of the poem which suggests a new different reading. The speaker is not totally a female speaker, for Lazarus, as previously mentioned, is a biblical, male name, and it refers back to Christ's friend whom he brings to life after death [11]. Yet, the word lady adds some feminine characteristics to the male figure, and even suggests her intentions on establishing a strong friendly relationship with her male figures. Here, there is a kind of supplement between the two elements of the hierarchy, and thus the persona's intention might not to attack the male figure for stripping her off of her identity. Instead, she is but admitting her desperate need to unite the two elements of the hierarchy. For now, the relationship between the two elements of the hierarchy is a friendly one: a doctor and a patient, Christ and Lazarus, and a performer and audience. All these elements are of equal importance and none is superior to the other.

In "Lady Lazarus", the opening tercet sets the tone for the rest of the poem with the repeated line "I have done it again". The second and third lines of the tercet are "One year in every ten / I manage it –which establishes the pattern of the repeating lines and the theme of the speaker's repeated attempts at suicide. Indeed, the repeated lines serve as a kind of refrain, emphasizing the speaker's sense of futility and the cyclical nature of her struggles. Contrastingly, the repetition of the personal pronoun "I" for 21 times indicate her self-assertiveness and building character. However, the two binary oppositions form versus content make it difficult to reach a decisive interpretation for the poem as well. The structure of the poem is confusing and leading the reader to ask a significant question about the seriousness of the theme tackled in the poem.

That is, in the form the poetess uses colloquial language and light verses that aimed to entertain children and not to discuss serious things like death, victims, tyrants, and misogynists. In her doing so, the poem becomes “partly effective because of the polar opposition between the terrible gaiety of its form and the fiercely uncompromising seriousness of its subject” [15]. Uncertainty almost governs everything in the artistic creations of the poetess. Nothing is settled or certain: death or life, joy or sorrow, and love or hate.

### V. DECONSTRUCTIVE READING OF ROBERT FROST'S POETRY

One morning in a rustic place in the country side, an observer was walking carelessly, throwing his legs in front of him indifferent to the place they would take him. Suddenly, his eyes had fallen on a white “dimpled spider,” fell on a white prunella and was holding an innocent white “moth”. This is one of the most vivid and colorful pictures that contains almost an assorted bag of various colors for an artist to paint esthetically an exquisite natural scene. A spider who is naturally black in color, the “heal-all” or prunella which is a blue flower that grows in spring and finally a beautiful butterfly with various colors [16]. All these together mixed up in a magical cauldron would produce one of the most spectacular pictorial scenes found in the country side in a green-like morning. Three essential characters introduced in the first three lines of the sonnet: a spider, a flower and a moth. These three characters have something in common which is the white color that gathers these three different things together.

The previous paragraph suggests the binary opposition whiteness versus darkness. Each color of the binary connotes a non-stopping series of signifieds and contradictory meanings. For example, the color white is sometimes linked to the coldness and paleness color of death's sword, but here in the octave whiteness indicates completely different thing; that is, innocence and purity can be found in the spider that holds no harm for the delicate moth; he is “holding up” this insect that is “a white piece of rigid satin cloth”, which is associated with a parental figure holding an infant, which is still in swaddling clothes, in his arms with an intensive care. Furthermore, all these “ingredients” are mixed up together in a pot in one “morning” of spring time, and of course spring and morning are emblems of new life and new creation, to produce the innocent and the pure offspring. Thus, the text here shows the hidden and unseen meanings of whiteness and coldness. Whereas in the sestet, there are words like “night,” and “darkness” which is exactly the opposite of the color pervading in the octave. The “spider” in the sestet is accused of “steep[ring] the white moth thither in the night”, and apparently night is a dangerous place that helps criminals and fierce beasts to do their foul deeds, hence the spider is likely preparing to have a light snack in the evening. Yet, there are several connotations related to night, other than foul deeds and dangerous animals; that is, night is the time of sleep and dreams and hence the spider is only “steering the white moth” here above the flower to make for it a comfortable crib to sleep in. Applying deconstruction to this text, a clear consensus between the two elements of the binary whiteness versus darkness presents itself. The white color is an emblem of light, purity, innocence and goodness, but here it walks

abreast with the color of foul deeds and criminal acts; dark. They unite together to produce death. Now death stands victorious with his loyal henchmen; the whiteness of snow and the darkness of the devil that manage to annihilate life.

The theme of color is a dominant theme in the sonnet where there are different colors of a butterfly and a flower, on one hand, and there are the white and dark colors of the spider, on the other hand. These different colors in the sonnet create another important binary opposition that could help widening the range of interpretations. The “blue” flower is considered to be a sustainer and a source of life to the colorful butterfly that cannot be seen detached from the “innocent heal-all”, but soon the source of life and security turns to be the altar of death. The “kindred spider” is aided by the white “innocent heal-all” by letting it spins its web on its surface so that when the colorful “moth” approaches the flower will be caught in his web of death. This spider turns into a murderer kills everything beautiful and colorful in the world. Both the flower and the spider share the same characteristic of being innocent and “kindred” creatures that hold no harm to the “moth”. However, the poor moth is deceived by the flower and hence becomes a scrumptious meal for the “dimpled spider”. It is absurd and ironic to be killed by the same thing that provides you the nourishment of life. The uncertainty and unpredictability of things govern the world of today and turn the safety and security of the flower to the source of annihilation and extinction.

Creation, of necessity, needs a creator to be created, and thus the title of the sonnet is another source of the element of instability and disorder in the poem, where there is the binary opposition creator versus creation. ‘Design’ is something created, invented, or discovered by a designer, a creator, or a discoverer. In the octet, there is a striking pun on the word “found”, for, on one hand, it is the past tense of the verb find and it means to discover or to get something you want, on the other hand, “found” means to establish and to bring into existence. The first two words of the sonnet are “I found” which means that the artist or the observer did not find but rather founds and establishes this “Design”. The “I” here has a meaning related to the power of the individual, which is a created object, and his capacity of turning things topsy-turvy. “In the horrible but inevitable logic of ‘design’ [the speaker] replaces God’s design with the artist’s” [17]. The once created object becomes a creator that creates objects. Now the relationship between God (creator) and the artist (created) is not stable and it turns to be God the ultimate creator versus the artist that is also a creator. But his “design [is of] darkness that appall[s]”, which adds another element of uncertainty to the mood, and it means two different things about the artist. Does the creation of such ominous and death abode tableau label the artist as the god of darkness and death or a God-artist whose creation amazes, “appall[s]” and confuses the reader; “Does it mean ‘to shock’? ‘To make white?’ ‘To kill?’ All of the preceding?” [18]. Is it a picture of innocence that contains different creations of contradictory attributes and features, and unite them in one place,

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or is it a horrifying anticipation of a dark future free of colorful creatures and only whiteness will be ruling the coming life?

In the sestet the speaker moves from the octave after stating his problem and, instead of solving the problem, he exacerbates things by asking about the ambiguous power that "brought the kindred spider to the height, /Then steered the white moth thither in the night", leaving things, once again, unsettled for the reader to decide [19]. Here in the sestet an important word embarks the stage: "steered". From this word stems the binary opposition the power of making choices versus the powerlessness of making choices. The speaker asks about the steering wheel that brings such different creatures of different colors and features together in such inappropriate timing of the night. Are they sent there by some mysterious power? Or do they normally meet to greet one another? Even though the "dimpled", "fat and white" spider is instinctively driven to eat the "white moth" upon the "heal-all", yet, "the kindred spider" is but a character brought to life by the artist that organizes and "steer[s]" the line of action in the poem. So, is it the artist that is responsible for the death of the "moth", or that "kindred spider", driven by instinct, is the one responsible for the death of the poor creature? This detailed description of death, freedom of choice or the lack of freedom of choice, the characters, and the artist that makes this chaotic and disordered violation of the natural order, draws the attention to think of the assumption that the tragedy and the characters, that have just been created, are creatures and need a creator or a producer, since it is a tragedy. Then, the speaker is trying to make a comparison between the things (including the characters of course) that have happened and existed in the sonnet and its creator, and the things (including human beings of course) that happened and existed, have happened and have existed and will happen and will exist and their creator (God), in order to say that any one of us is a victim like the spider or the moth brought to life and classified under different chords, colors, names and roles, and even born in different places in the world by some creator, designer or inventor. And hence the uncertainty of making choices and the lack of power of making choices remain unsettled and unapproached. Do human beings, creatures and created objects, have the complete freedom of making choices, and thus they are responsible for the consequences of their actions, or do they not have the freedom of choice, and thus irresponsible for the choices and decisions they make, like that of "the kindred spider" that took the life of the innocent "moth"?

In "Design", the sonnet form allows Frost to explore a complex set of ideas within a relatively short space. The poem's tight structure gives it a sense of inevitability, mirroring the themes of fate and predetermined outcomes that are central to the poem. The iambic pentameter rhythm of the poem also creates a sense of momentum, propelling the reader forward from line to line. Frost's use of the sonnet form also allows him to play with the traditional expectations of the genre. In spite of the fact that sonnets are frequently associated with passionate love, Frost defies traditional versification by utilizing the form of the sonnet to examine more grave subjects like death and life. The poem's impact is increased by the conflict between the form and the content, which underlines its main message by evoking a sense of

unease and dissonance.

Dealing with Robert Frost's different themes and subject matters, deconstruction asserts the complete freedom of the words from its organizer and designer, and their utter detachment of one single, ultimate interpretation. The relationship of the elements of the past binary oppositions clearly proves the independence and disorder of the words used in a certain text. It also brings the light to the endless connection of these binaries to a contingent web of binaries and these in turn leads to another one. The uncertainty of meaning in Frost's poetry means that the end is open-ended, and an endless number of connotations and approaches open the doors, welcoming new and novel ones that were neglected and devalued by many critics and scholars of literature. Robert Frost's enigmatic philosophy and his passion and fondness of nature and the wilderness were such appropriate elements for deconstruction to use its power and sovereignty in textual analysis, and by decentering the binary rivals exist in the works of Frost, deconstruction seems now less difficult and ambiguous than what many critics and students of literature claim it to be.

## VI. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The deconstructive analysis of Sylvia Plath's "Lady Lazarus" and Robert Frost's "Design" reveals several themes that are important to their poetic expression and the social and cultural setting in which they produced their poetic creation. Our examination uncovered a few significant deconstructive features in Frost's and Plath's poetry, such as the fragmentation of language, the challenging of conventional gender roles, the investigation of subjectivity and identity, the exploration of the relationship between language and meaning and the subversion of conventional poetic forms.

To begin with, Plath's use of fragmented language is evident in her poem "Lady Lazarus", in which she employs disjointed imagery and free-verse lyric [11] to convey the psychological trauma resulted from the oppressive patriarchal society in which she grew up. The poem is characterized by a fragmented structure, with the speaker's thoughts and emotions presented in a non-linear and disjointed manner [20]. This fragmentation serves to deconstruct the traditional linear narrative structure of poetry, shedding light on the unstable and fragmented nature of language itself.

Furthermore, by depicting women as dynamic, ingenious beings rather than as passive objects of male desire, "Lady Lazarus" challenges conventional gender stereotypes. In this poem, Plath depicts a woman who, by making herself into a sort of spectacle, reclaims control over her own body. The poem questions conventional gender stereotypes by showcasing a strong, independent female character who is strong enough to express her rage and suffering without fearing the consequences of her male master.

Themes of subjectivity and search for identity are also explored in Plath's poetry, particularly as they relate to the body and one's sense of herself.

For instance, Plath examines the connection between the self and the body in “Lady Lazarus” and makes the argument that the body may both be a source of pleasure and a place of worry and self-doubt. The poem challenges the notion of a unitary and stable self, arguing that the self is continuously changing and influenced by the social and cultural milieus. However, the speaker undermines the stability and coherence of the self by continually using the subjective pronoun “I” and the syntactic phrase “I am your”, and simultaneously establishes herself as a deictic center, proclaiming her identity and existence.

On the other hand, Frost’s “Design” investigates the connection between language and meaning by posing the topic of how language affects our worldview and beliefs [21]. The poem emphasizes the ways in which language may both disclose and conceal the truth while raising existential questions about the nature of reality and the boundaries of human understanding. The poem challenges the notion of a constant and unchanging reality by arguing that reality is influenced by our semiotic system of meaning-making (visual, auditory and verbal), and the way we interpret such a reality as that existing in “Design”.

Frost’s poetry also departs from traditional poetic patterns by addressing more sinister subjects related to death and life in general in a sonnet form, using everyday words and a vernacular voice. Frost’s choice of a direct, informal style in “Design” betrays the poem’s complex and philosophical ideas, which defy the conventional themes we anticipate a sonnet to express. By eschewing sophisticated rhetorical techniques and relying entirely on the straightforwardness of everyday speech and tackling existential and serious subject matters, the poem subverts the traditional poetry form and questions its orthodoxy.

In conclusion, the deconstructive examination of Frost’s “Design” and Plath’s “Lady Lazarus” reveals the complexity and variety of their respective works. Our approach focuses on how their poetry questions established literary structures, subverts gender roles, and investigates themes of subjectivity and identity. These results have significant ramifications for how we perceive not only Frost’s and Plath’s poetry, but also the whole literary canon. Overall, poetry analysis and interpretation, particularly when it comes to questions of language and meaning, the construction of social identities, and subjectivity, can benefit from the use of deconstruction as a ‘strategic device’ of reading and interpreting [2].

**VII. CONCLUSION**

Deconstruction, as clearly demonstrated in the above analysis, asserts that looking for an absolute logic and certainty in a world full of contradictions and binary oppositions that control meanings is fruitless, because the illogicality, uncertainty and unpredictability of language are now to be the logics of our time. A deconstructionist literary critic believes that language is inadequate and unable to express the true meaning of a literary work, for language is essentially unstable medium, and since literary works are made up completely of words, cannot possibly have one single fixed meaning to give, but rather a limitless number of meanings is given out. Deconstruction’s main task is not to focus on what is being said with the words, but to concentrate on the way the words are used in the text, the way the words

deviate from the text, and the infinite ways the words take in a work. Deconstructionists believe that the author cannot fully control and steer the wheeling mechanism of the text. Their aim is to shed light upon the elements of the hierarchy privileged by the Western culture and to show how all literary texts contain a limitless web of contradictory conceptual operations that exist within the same discourse. Deconstructionists do not believe in the objective nature of the text and its being an autonomous entity that provides its own meaning. They believe that there are no ultimate truths, and there is nothing in the world that is more important than another, but all the elements are equally important to achieve supplementary relationship.

The several past binary oppositions, of both Robert Frost’s and Sylvia Plath’s poems such as love versus hatred and life versus death, to name a few, assert the illogic and disorder that set free the enslaved meaning of a certain text and dispel the existence of one transcendental signified that exists outside language. In this study the previous two analyses tried to support the uncertainty and undecidability of meaning in Frost’s and Plath’s poetry. Hopefully, the findings of this study may open new horizons for a full appreciation of the poetic language of both poets. Beyond any shadow of doubt, both poets’ widely spread fame is already crossing the world of literature today. However, by unearthing the subterranean meanings lurking within their verses and dismantling the poetic texts of their artistic creations, deconstruction only makes the eruption of their volcanic literature reaches to a higher point. Applying Derrida’s revolutionary approach in textual analysis to the works of ones of the most popular and interested American poets in history, this study, hopefully, achieved the desired results.

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