Review Article

Exploring Identity in Poetry: Love, Loss, and Belonging in Sylvia Plath and Elizabeth Bishop through the Lens of Social Identity Theory

Roseline Jesudas[1*], Sajeena Gayathrri[2]

[1,2]Department of Languages and Translation, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Northern Border University, ARAR, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

*Corresponding Author: Roseline Jesudas
Department of Languages and Translation, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Northern Border University, ARAR, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Abstract: This study leverages Social Identity Theory (SIT) to explore themes of identity, belonging, and relationships in Sylvia Plath's "Mad Girl's Love Song" and Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art." Using a comparative qualitative approach, the research examines how personal and social identities influence the speakers' experiences of love and loss. Plath's poem illustrates a crisis of social identity marked by the speaker's detachment and internal conflict, reflecting struggles with isolation and idealization. In contrast, Bishop portrays loss as a communal experience, highlighting an evolving identity characterized by resilience and acceptance. The findings reveal that while both poets illustrate identity transformations shaped by relationships and loss, they utilize different coping mechanisms—Plath through fantasy and Bishop through pragmatic acceptance. This analysis underscores the intricate relationship between social identity and emotional responses, enhancing our understanding of how societal contexts impact individual identity formation.

Keywords: Emotional responses, internal conflict, idealization, love, loss, internal reality, Social Identity Theory.

INTRODUCTION

In today's interconnected world, shaped by globalization and cultural exchange, discussions on identity and selfhood have become central in modern literary analysis. This discourse is particularly resonant in the realm of poetry, where language and form play crucial roles in the exploration of personal and collective identities. Sylvia Plath and Elizabeth Bishop's writings offer deep perspectives on love, loss, and belonging, serving as significant examples in literature. Through their nuanced portrayals of self, these poets engage with a multitude of identities shaped by race, gender, cultural context, and emotional experience.

Literature serves as a vital tool for understanding individual identities, prompting readers to reflect on their subjective realities, as noted by Jonathan Culler (2005). Vygotsky (1978) underscores that interpersonal interactions and cultural influences shape identity, highlighting its transformative nature. Baldwin (2004) further illustrates that engaging with the external world facilitates self-exploration, indicating that social and emotional experiences significantly shape identity development. Various disciplines, including political science and psychology, recognize the critical role of identity in individual and group dynamics, supporting this concept. Social identity theory posits that self-categorization allows individuals to situate themselves within larger social frameworks (Stets & Burke, 2000). Additionally, the works of Plath and Bishop explore themes of love and loss, elucidating the relationship between personal identity and societal perceptions.

Social Identify

Social identity is a key aspect of an individual's self-concept, shaped by perceived membership in social groups. Erik Erikson introduced the idea of "identity crisis" in 1964, emphasizing that overcoming challenges with support from social networks helps forge a strong identity. George Herbert Mead further developed this concept, distinguishing between

the "I," the subjective self, and the "Me," the social self shaped by others' perceptions. He argued that identities and societal norms influence each other in a reciprocal manner. Professor Derek Lader, in *Social and Personal Identity*, asserts that identity is a synthesis of social and psychological factors, highlighting that while society significantly influences individuals, each person retains unique qualities that drive their personal responses to life.

Study Corpus

This study focuses on the corpus of Sylvia Plath's works, highlighting her impact on the confessional poetry movement of the 20th century. Notable for seminal pieces such as *The Colossus and Other Poems*, *Ariel*, and *The Bell Jar*, Plath's poem "Mad Girl's Love Song," written during her time at Smith College, exemplifies her exploration of memory and madness. Published in Mademoiselle in 1953, the poem's structure as a villanelle enhances its emotional depth through its specific rhyme scheme and refrains.

The second part of the study examines Elizabeth Bishop's poem "One Art," published in *The New Yorker* in 1976 and included in her collection *Geography III*. Regarded as a quintessential example of the villanelle form, "One Art" features a complex structure and iambic pentameter, reflecting Bishop's mastery in this genre. Bishop, an esteemed poet and former consultant in poetry to the Library of Congress, garnered numerous awards throughout her career, including the Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award. The study highlights the significant contributions of both Plath and Bishop to the landscape of confessional poetry.

Social Identify Theoretical framework

Social Identity Theory (SIT), developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s and 1980s, provides a framework for understanding group behavior, intergroup relations, and the formation of identity. The theory suggests that individuals derive their self-concept from their associations with social groups, which can lead to diverse group dynamics.

A key component of SIT is the distinction between ingroups and outgroups. In-groups are groups people identify with, while out-organizations are those they don't. This categorization frequently leads to favoritism toward in-groups and can foster prejudice against out-groups. Tajfel & Turner, 1979.

Social categorization, where people categorize themselves and others based on characteristics like race, ethnicity, and gender, is the foundation of SIT. Various contextual factors simplify social interactions (Tajfel, 1981).

Furthermore, social comparison plays a significant role in SIT. Individuals assess their in-group against out-groups, which can either bolster self-esteem and group pride or lead to insecurity and attempts to enhance the in-group's standing. Tajfel & Turner (1979).

The theory also examines how group identity affects behavior, particularly in competitive scenarios. Individuals tend to act in ways that favor their in-group, often at the expense of out-groups, leading to behaviors such as exclusion, stereotyping, and aggression. (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987).

Importantly, SIT asserts that social identities are fluid and may change depending on social contexts and situations. Individuals may identify more strongly with specific groups at different times, illustrating that identity formation is sensitive to various social cues. Overall, SIT underscores the psychological foundations of group behavior, highlighting processes of categorization, comparison, and contextual sensitivity in identity formation.

Rationale for Using Social Identity Theory to Analyze Sylvia Plath's "Mad Girl's Love Song" and Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art"

Social identity theory (SIT) is a crucial tool in understanding the emotional and psychological themes in Sylvia Plath's "Mad Girl's Love Song" and Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art." Both poems explore the impact of societal constructs on individual identity, with Plath's speaker experiencing alienation and internal conflict due to the tension between a marginalized community and a mainstream one. Bishop's poem highlights the speaker's struggle with societal expectations surrounding grief, revealing a desire for acceptance but also fear of judgment. Both poets highlight how social comparisons shape identity, with Plath's speaker feeling inadequacy due to romantic ideals and Bishop's composure reflecting internal turmoil in grief. Applying SIT provides a deeper understanding of the characters' emotional struggles and relationships with various social groups, revealing the societal pressures that shape their identities.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In their 2014 study, Zohreh Ramin and Nazila Yadollahi explore identity formation, focusing on Social Identity Theory by Henry Tajfel, which distinguishes personal from social identity and emphasizes the role of social interactions in self-perception. They utilize Toni Morrison's novel "Sula" to illustrate how oppressive conditions, particularly racism and sexism, influence identity construction. The study analyzes the protagonist's identity development in a challenging

environment, applying Tajfel's theory and Morrison's literary insights to deepen the understanding of identity dynamics within marginalized communities.

Recent educational research has highlighted identity construction among specific groups. Mohammad M. Assiri's 2022 study focuses on the social identity of Saudi college students who identify as gamers, filling a literature gap on this demographic in Saudi Arabia. Using a grounded theory framework inspired by Tajfel's social identity principles and semi-structured interviews, Assiri examines self-identification, group characteristics, and language use among Saudi gamers, revealing emotional ties to belonging and alienation. His findings emphasize the need for inclusive educational practices for these individuals and provide a base for further research.

Additionally, Mohammed Al Marebi, Muhammed Salim, and Bedoor Sharf Al Deen's analysis of Muhammed Abdul-Wali's novella in 2022 employs Social Identity Theory to explore the complexities and relationships of Yemeni characters, highlighting in-group dynamics and cultural belonging in diasporic literature.

Research Gap

The application of Social Identity Theory (SIT) has enhanced the understanding of identity formation across various disciplines, yet its exploration in literary contexts, especially in poetry, remains underdeveloped. While studies have focused on prose and narratives, there is little research applying SIT to contemporary poetry, particularly regarding themes of love, loss, and belonging. Furthermore, comparative analyses of identity in the works of poets like Sylvia Plath and Elizabeth Bishop—who use differing coping strategies (fantasy vs. pragmatic acceptance)—are lacking. This highlights an opportunity for future research to bridge literary studies and social psychology, shedding light on how poetic expressions shape and reflect identity formation amidst shared human experiences of isolation and resilience.

Significance of the study

The study "Exploring Identity in Poetry: Love, Loss, and Belonging in Sylvia Plath and Elizabeth Bishop through the Lens of Social Identity Theory" is significant for its innovative application of Social Identity Theory (SIT) to poetry, contrasting with the traditional focus on prose. It addresses the influence of personal experiences, such as love and loss, on social identities and identifies distinct coping mechanisms through a comparative analysis of Plath and Bishop. The research reveals how emotional processing and societal context contribute to identity formation, highlighting its fluidity. By expanding the application of SIT in contemporary poetry, the study paves the way for future research on poetry's role in identity exploration and community engagement, thereby enriching literary analysis and enhancing our understanding of complex identities shaped by emotional and social factors.

OBJECTIVES

This analysis examines the connection between individual experiences and social influences on identity in literature, focusing on the poetry of Sylvia Plath and Elizabeth Bishop. Their works, "Mad Girl's Love Song" and "One Art," reveal how love and grief shape personal and communal identities. The following analysis explores the complexities of identity formation, using social identity theory to uncover emotional dynamics and coping strategies that affect identity development in the face of life's challenges.

1. To explore how Sylvia Plath's "Mad Girl's Love Song" and Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art" illustrate the development and metamorphosis of personal and social identities in reaction to love and loss, applying Social Identity Theory as a crucial framework.
2. To contrast the unique coping strategies used by the poets in Plath's and Bishop's poetry—fantasy and idealization versus practical acceptance—and show how these strategies impact their identity formation and emotional processing.
3. To investigate the interplay between themes of isolation and belonging in each poem, examining how societal contexts shape the speakers' identities and their emotional reactions to loss.
4. To utilize social identity theory in modern poetry analysis to bridge the gaps in existing research. This will improve our understanding of identity formation through literary expressions and broaden the application of Social Identity Theory in literary contexts.
5. To identify avenues for future research that may further explore the intersection of poetry, identity, and social dynamics, thereby encouraging a broader discourse on the role of literary forms in shaping personal and collective identities.
6. To emphasize the emotional dynamics of identity formation through poetry, aiming to enhance our comprehension of how poetic language articulates intricate emotional experiences and their effects on social identity.

Research Questions

This research investigates issues of identity in the poetry of Sylvia Plath and Elizabeth Bishop, focusing on themes of love, grief, and belonging. Utilizing Social Identity Theory, it aims to analyze how individuals shape their identities

based on their social contexts. The study includes specific questions to delve into the poets' personal experiences and cultural backgrounds, ultimately seeking to reveal broader insights into identity within a social framework.

1. How do Sylvia Plath's "Mad Girl's Love Song" and Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art" illustrate the development and transformation of personal and social identities in relation to themes of love and loss?
2. In what ways do the coping strategies employed by Plath and Bishop—fantasy and idealization versus pragmatic acceptance—affect their identity formation and emotional processing as reflected in their poetry?
3. How do the themes of isolation and belonging manifest in each poem, and how do societal contexts shape the identities and emotional responses of the speakers to their experiences of loss?
4. How can we systematically apply Social Identity Theory to contemporary poetry to enhance our understanding of identity formation and fill existing research gaps within literary studies?
5. What opportunities exist for future research to further explore the relationship between poetry, identity, and social dynamics, and how can this contribute to a broader discourse on the role of literature in shaping personal and collective identities?
6. What implications does this have for our understanding of the emotional dynamics of identity formation through poetry, and how do Plath and Bishop articulate complex emotional experiences using poetic language?

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses comparative qualitative analysis to examine themes of identity, belonging, and interpersonal relationships in Sylvia Plath's "Mad Girl's Love Song" and Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art," applying Social Identity Theory as a framework. This methodological approach looks for similarities and differences across the two texts, allowing researchers to identify patterns and interconnections that enhance understanding of these complex themes. This methodological approach is based on the work of Ragin (1997), Bazell (2013), and Miles *et al.,* (2014).

Data Collection
Materials for Study:
The deliberate selection of materials, or corpus, is a critical aspect of comparative qualitative analysis. This research investigates two distinct compositions by distinct poets: Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art" and Sylvia Plath's "Mad Girl's Love Song." The research question's significant differences and similarities, such as environmental impacts, identity development, social comparison, and in-groups and out-groups, drive this selection. This strategic method improves the results and facilitates significant comparisons. By conducting an analysis of the selected poetry and engaging with the participants, the researcher aims to acquire a comprehensive understanding of their perspectives and life experiences.

Analysis
This study employs Social Identity Theory (SIT) as its primary analytical framework to investigate the complex themes of identity, belonging, and interpersonal relationships in the poems "Mad Girl's Love Song" by Sylvia Plath and "One Art" by Elizabeth Bishop. Membership in social groups significantly influences an individual's behaviors, emotions, and interactions in social contexts, according to SIT. The examination of how the poets' personal and social identities influence their depictions of love and loss begins with this viewpoint. The analysis centers on the negotiation of personal and social identities in the poets' depictions of love and loss within society, building on this perspective. The subsequent analysis explores the extent to which these identities intersect and influence the poets' perspectives on relationships.

Analysis: 1. Analyse how Sylvia Plath's "Mad Girl's Love Song" and Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art" illustrate the development and transformation of personal and social identities through themes of love and loss, this study uses Henri Tajfel's social identity theory.

The subsequent analysis from both poems to illustrate their thematic commonalities as well as their differences, particularly in the contexts of personal turmoil and coping mechanisms.

Sylvia Plath's "Mad Girl's Love Song"
"I shut my eyes and all the world drops dead; / I lift my lids and all is born again."
The opening lines depict a cyclical pattern of despair and renewal, using the act of shutting and opening eyes to symbolize a troubled mental state and fragmented perception of reality. This imagery reflects the poet's struggle with identity, navigating the complexities of her relationship between madness and clarity.

"I think I made you up inside my head."
This line reflects the speaker's struggle with personal identity, questioning the reality of their beloved. The theme of creation indicates deep emotional investment while highlighting the speaker's self-doubt and instability within the relationship. This intertwining of personal and social identities underscores a sense of isolation often felt in intense relationships with unattainable ideals.

"I fancied you'd return the way you said, / But I grow old and I forget your name."

The speaker explores the pain of unfulfilled expectations and the impact of time on relationships, illustrating how love transforms identities yet can lead to loss. Forgetting represents the gradual erosion of connection and self, emphasizing love's dual power to both create and dismantle identity.

"I should have loved a thunderbird instead; / At least when spring comes they roar back again."

The thunderbird symbolizes permanence and the return of lost love. By contrasting it with her ephemeral relationship, Plath hints at longing for stability in identity through relationships that do not cause pain. This regret reflects the poet's struggle with her own identity as she grapples with loss amidst her turbulent emotions.

Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art"

1. **"The art of losing isn't hard to master; / so many things seem filled with the intent / to be lost that their loss is no disaster."**

Bishop opens with an assertion of acceptance regarding loss, suggesting a learned resilience. The direct address to the reader creates a communal identity that encompasses shared experiences of loss, denoting a connection with broader societal perspectives on grief and change.

2. **"Lose something every day. Accept the fluster / of lost door keys, the hour badly spent."**

These lines reveal a pragmatic attitude towards the quotidian losses we face in life. The speaker's acknowledgment of minor losses implies a broader acceptance of fluctuations in personal identity, suggesting that encountering loss influences not just individual identity but also social interaction.

3. **"I lost my mother's watch. And look! my last, or / next-to-last, of three loved houses went."**

The reference to significant personal mementos captures the emotional weight of loss, serving as markers of identity. The watch and the houses represent connections to heritage and personal history, indicating that as these tangible symbols disappear, identity and memory become fraught with ambiguity.

4. **"Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture / I love) I shan't have lied."**

This poignant acknowledgment of losing a loved one introduces a layer of intimacy and familiarity. The speaker's ability to potentially "not lie" about the loss reflects the complexity of personal identity, where the understanding of relationships is deeply intertwined with the act of loss and acceptance. It represents a more resigned response to grief compared to Plath's turmoil.

Both "Mad Girl's Love Song" by Sylvia Plath and "One Art" by Elizabeth Bishop explore the impact of love and loss on identity, albeit in contrasting ways. Plath's poem presents an intense inner struggle marked by emotional chaos, whereas Bishop's work reflects a serene acceptance of loss as an intrinsic aspect of life. Together, they illustrate how love can simultaneously enrich and challenge one's sense of self, highlighting the complex and personal nature of these universal experiences.

Analysis: 2. Through the lens of Social Identity Theory, the following analysis shows how the coping strategies of fantasy and idealization versus pragmatic acceptance, respectively, influence identity formation and emotional processing in the poems "Mad Girl's Love Song" by Sylvia Plath and "One Art" by Elizabeth Bishop.
Fantasy and idealization in "Mad Girl's Love Song"
"I shut my eyes and all the world drops dead; / I lift my lids and all is born again."

Plath uses the act of shutting her eyes as a metaphor for escaping reality, representing her desire to retreat into a personal, constructed world. This serves as a coping mechanism to regain control over her emotional turmoil, allowing her to envision an idealized version of love that protects her from the pain of loss and grief.

"(I think I made you up inside my head.)"

The repeated notion of having "made you up" highlights the theme of self-deception and the consequences of idealization. Her fantasies, which may not align with reality, influence her identity, creating a tension between her internal world and her external experiences.

"I fancied you'd return the way you said, / But I grow old and I forget your name."

As the speaker confronts the passage of time and the fading of memories, we see the struggle between idealization and the stark reality of loss. The interplay between fantasy and memory impacts her identity; as she loses touch with these constructed ideals, her self-conception may also begin to dissolve.

Pragmatic Acceptance in "One Art"
"The art of losing isn't hard to master; / so many things seem filled with the intent / to be lost that their loss is no disaster."
Analysis: Bishop adopts a pragmatic acceptance of loss, framing it as a natural and even trivial aspect of life. By presenting loss in this manner, she cultivates an identity grounded in resilience and adaptability, suggesting a broader social acceptance of impermanence.

"Lose something every day."
This line emphasizes loss practice and normalization, arguing that it is intrinsic to the human experience.
By integrating these losses into her identity, Bishop reflects a mature understanding of her own emotions and experiences, defining herself through her responses to loss rather than being defined by it.

"I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster, / some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent."
In her reflection, Bishop expresses a profound sense of loss while exhibiting emotional detachment. This balance between her deep appreciation for her past and her acceptance of change enables her to define herself as both nostalgic and adaptable in the face of loss.

Coping Strategies and Their Impact on Identity Formation: Both poets exhibit distinct coping strategies that shape their identity formation.
Plath's Fantasy and Idealization: Plath's reliance on fantasy serves as both an emotional refuge and a source of conflict. By idealizing love and connection, she constructs an identity that grapples with the tension between reality and imagination, ultimately leading to emotional instability.
Bishop's Pragmatic Acceptance: Bishop's acceptance of loss fosters a more resilient identity. Her approach portrays the inevitability of change and loss as formative experiences, enabling her to integrate these aspects into her self-concept without succumbing to sorrow.

Plath and Bishop adopt contrasting strategies to navigate their emotional landscapes and identity formation. Plath uses fantasy and idealization to express her unresolved longings and fragmented self-concept, while Bishop embraces pragmatic acceptance of loss as an inherent part of life. These differing approaches not only influence their artistic expressions but also shape their individual narratives.

Analysis: 3. The following analysis examines the themes of isolation and belonging in Sylvia Plath's "Mad Girl's Love Song" and Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art" through the lens of social identity theory, which focuses on how individuals derive their self-concept and emotional responses from their perceived belonging to social groups.
"Mad Girl's Love Song" by Sylvia Plath
Isolation: "I shut my eyes and all the world drops dead."
The act of closing her eyes represents a wish to escape reality, highlighting the speaker's battle with mental illness and profound loneliness. This self-isolation shows how her internal conflicts sever her connections with the world around her, leading to a sense of disconnection from societal relationships.

"I think I made you up inside my head."
This line suggests a profound sense of isolation, where the speaker questions the reality of her connection to another person. It highlights the fragility of her identity and relationships, suggesting that she may be creating imaginary connections due to her loneliness.

Belonging: **"I fancied you'd return the way you said,"**
This line denotes a longing for belonging and connection. The speaker's expectation of the person's return illustrates her desire to reclaim a lost connection that defines her identity. The absence of this connection amplifies her feelings of isolation and loss.

Societal contexts and emotional responses
Plath's societal background, characterized by strict gender roles, contributes to the speaker's emotional turmoil and isolation as she navigates her mental health struggles in a dismissive environment. The pressures of societal expectations regarding love and connection deepen her despair, underscoring the conflict between her internal experiences and societal norms about relationships.

Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art."
Isolation: "Lose something every day. Accept the fluster"

This line suggests a routine acceptance of loss that can lead to a sense of isolation. While the speaker acknowledges losing things frequently, the repetition of loss creates an emotional distance because it implies a continuous cycle of detachment from people and places, leading to a somewhat resigned solitude.

"I lost two cities, lovely ones."

The acknowledgment of losing entire cities highlights the profound loss that can lead to a feeling of isolation from one's roots and heritage. This remembrance of lost places evokes feelings of dislocation and the emotional weight of identity tied to physical spaces.

Belonging: "Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture I love)"
This line demonstrates a profound emotional bond with the referenced individual, highlighting the theme of belonging. The speaker's acknowledgment of the lost relationship conveys a sense of unease regarding the absence of meaningful connections, underscoring the struggle between the desire for belonging and the inevitability of loss.

Societal contexts and emotional responses

Bishop's poem explores a societal context that normalizes loss, leading the speaker to navigate it with a sense of resignation. While the tone suggests acceptance, it also reveals an undercurrent of sadness related to the isolation stemming from losing loved ones and cherished places. The poem highlights the universal yet isolating nature of loss, reflecting a societal expectation for stoic acceptance instead of emotional crisis. In contrast, Plath's work delves into identity shaped by mental illness and cultural pressures. Both poems address themes of loss, solitude, and belonging, illustrating the complex relationship between personal identity and cultural expectations. Social identity theory demonstrates how each speaker's experiences of loss intertwine with their emotional dimensions of belonging and isolation.

Analysis: 4. The application of Social Identity Theory (SIT) in the works of Sylvia Plath and Elizabeth Bishop reveals how individuals define themselves and others through group membership, social categories, and intergroup relations.
Group Membership and Individual Identity
"Mad Girl's Love Song": "I shut my eyes and all the world drops dead; / I lift my lids and all is born again."

Here, the act of shutting one's eyes symbolizes a retreat from the external world, suggesting a profound individual struggle within the internal (and perhaps chaotic) landscape of identity. The oscillation between "the world drops dead" and "all is born again" highlights an identity formation process influenced by the internalization and rejection of societal expectations. This mirrors the personal crisis that can arise when one's identity is at odds with social norms, particularly relevant to the psychological distress often experienced in marginalized identities.

"One Art": "**The art of losing isn't hard to master.**"

This opening line introduces loss as a common human experience that shapes identity. By acknowledging loss as a collective reality, Bishop allows readers to find solidarity in shared experiences. This embodies the core of SIT, where the affiliation with collective experiences shapes individual identities. The acknowledgment of loss marks a transition that can pave the way for resilience in the face of societal changes.

Intergroup Relations and Emotional Responses
"Mad Girl's Love Song": "I dreamed that you bewitched me into bed / And sung me moon-struck, kissed me quite insane."

The imagery of enchantment and insanity suggests an intense relationship that serves as a potential catalyst for both personal and social identity exploration. The speaker's dependence on the other person, framed by emotional vulnerability, hints at how relationships can create or fracture social identities, allowing us to examine how certain dynamics can either reinforce or challenge a person's belonging to various social groups.

"One Art": "I **lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster, / some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent.**"

By referencing specific places, Bishop immortalizes personal memories linked to broader cultural contexts. We can interpret the loss of "cities" as a metaphor for the loss of identity components shaped by the social landscape. The reference to geography is consistent with SIT, emphasizing the importance of physical spaces and groups in shaping individual identity.

Negotiating Identity through Loss and Memory
"Mad Girl's Love Song": "I fancied you'd return the way you said, / But I grow old and I forget your name."

This line embodies the tension between memory and identity. Forgetting a name serves as a metaphor for the erosion of ties to past identities and relationships. It emphasizes how loss can lead to identity reconstruction, illustrating the need for constant self-negotiation within social frameworks, reflecting the SIT concept that identities are fluid and affected by various socio-emotional interactions.

"One Art": "Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture / I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident"

The personal aspect of loss here suggests an emotional connection deeply rooted in identity. Our understanding of self within social contexts inextricably links to how we relate to those we lose, underscoring the importance of interpersonal relationships in identity formation as outlined in SIT.

Filling Research Gaps within Literary Studies
By applying SIT to the analysis of these poems, we can fill research gaps by:
- Examining how individual identities in poetry reflect broader social dynamics.
- Investigating how emotional experiences of loss shape collective and personal identities.
- Exploring the tension between personal and cultural identities as expressed in contemporary poetry.
- Highlighting the significance of relationships in understanding identity contexts across different literary forms.

By applying Social Identity Theory to contemporary poetry allows for a nuanced understanding of identity formation, revealing the intricate ways that individual and collective identities interact, evolve, and inform each other against the backdrop of emotional experiences and social constructs.

Analysis: 5. Analysing how these poems reflect and relate to aspects of identity and social belonging.
"Mad Girl's Love Song" by Sylvia Plath
"I shut my eyes and all the world drops dead;"
Identity Exploration: This line suggests a retreat into one's inner world, reflecting a possible dissociation from social identity in favor of a more personal, perhaps imagined, connection (illustrating the tension between personal and social identities).

"(I think I made you up inside my head.)"
Social Dynamics: The line explores how perceived connections with others and the social environments they navigate impact one's identity, indicating self-doubt and questioning the validity of relationships.

"I dreamed that you bewitched me into bed"
Relations: Suggests that relationships can be influenced by fantasy versus reality, hinting at identity's construction through social relationships and expectations in society.

"God topples from the sky, hell's fires fade:"
Collective Identity: This represents a significant existential crisis, moving beyond personal issues to challenge collective beliefs and cultural narratives, ultimately affecting community identity.

"I fancied you'd return the way you said,"
Connection: Explores betrayal and the ensuing loss of identity that can occur when social bonds break, revealing vulnerabilities embedded in social connections.
Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art."

"The art of losing isn't hard to master;"
Identity & Loss introduces the concept that loss is integral to identity, suggesting that experiences shape how individuals define themselves within broader social contexts.

"So many things seem filled with the intent"
Social Dynamics: This implies that our surroundings contribute to our identities; how society frames loss can influence personal reactions and identities.

"Lose something every day."
Coping: acknowledges the normalization of loss, hinting at resilience and adaptation, key aspects of maintaining one's identity amidst social changes.

"I lost my mother's watch."
Personal Connections: The loss of significant personal items serves as a metaphor for losing ties to personal and social identity.

"Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture I love)"
- **Human Connections:** highlights the emotional complexity of personal relationships and their crucial role in shaping identity through social interactions.

Opportunities for Future Research:
Identity Formation and Literature: Research could explore how readings of poetry contribute to the construction of personal and social identities. What roles do literary identity and character development play in writing and reading poetry as forms of social expression?
Collective vs. individual trauma: Comparative studies could analyze how collective trauma reflected in poetry influences personal identity formation within various communities. How do poets express cultural or generational loss?
Poetry's intersectionality: Future research could look at how poetry expresses intersecting social identities (race, gender, and sexuality) and how these intersections affect the dynamics of loss, belonging, and identity.
Poetry's Role in Empathy and Understanding: Investigating how reading poetry can foster empathy across different social identities may illuminate literature's role in promoting social cohesion and understanding in diverse communities.
Digital identity and contemporary poetry: Research could focus on how digital mediums alter identity construction and expression in poetry. How does social media influence poetic voices and identity perception?
Contributions to Broader Discourse: Exploring poetry through the lens of social identity theory can deepen our understanding of how literature shapes individual and collective identities. Studying these relationships can highlight the nuances of personal experience against the backdrop of social dynamics, contributing to wider conversations about the role of art and literature in fostering identity, resilience, and social connection in a fragmented world.

Analysis: 6. To analyze the poems "Mad Girl's Love Song" by Sylvia Plath and "One Art" by Elizabeth Bishop through the lens of social identity theory and examine the implications for understanding emotional dynamics related to identity formation, this study explores specific lines from each poem and analyze their significance.

Social Identity Theory Overview
According to social identity theory, group memberships (social categories) and experiences shape an individual's sense of self. Personal relationships, societal expectations, and cultural contexts can influence identity formation. Poetry often serves as a medium for expressing complex emotional experiences related to identity, showcasing how individuals grapple with their feelings in relation to others.

Analysis of Plath's "Mad Girl's Love Song"
"I shut my eyes and all the world drops dead; / I lift my lids and all is born again."
Implicit Meaning: These opening lines depict a profound struggle between creation and annihilation. The act of shutting one's eyes suggests withdrawal from reality, a common coping mechanism when faced with emotional turmoil. This speaks to emotional identity, where the speaker's internal world is at odds with external existence. The duality of "drops dead" and "born again" illustrates the complexities of identity that can emerge during phases of intense emotional experiences.
Social Identity Dynamics: The speaker's state reflects a form of social isolation that may arise from the tumultuous nature of a romantic relationship—where love can feel both life-giving and suffocating. The question of whether the beloved exists outside her imagination ("I think I made you up inside my head") complicates the identity formation process by intertwining self-perception with external validation.

"I fancied you'd return the way you said, / But I grow old and I forget your name."
Implicit Meaning: These lines convey the fragility of romantic promises and the passage of time. The fading memory of the beloved highlights the transient nature of relationships and identity: as memories fade, so does a part of the self tied to that relationship.
Social Identity Dynamics: The speaker's identity seems deeply connected to the presence of the loved one. Their absence leads to feelings of disorientation and loss, a reflection of how relationships not only shape identity but also how the loss of those relationships can lead to a fragmented sense of self.

Analysis of Bishop's "One Art"
"The art of losing isn't hard to master; / so many things seem filled with the intent / to be lost that their loss is no disaster."
Implicit Meaning: Bishop starts with a resignation to loss, suggesting that loss is an inevitable part of life. The repeated insistence that it isn't disastrous indicates a societal expectation to accept loss—a control mechanism that can affect individual and collective identity.
Social Identity Dynamics: This perspective on loss reflects how societal norms dictate responses to personal grief. Bishop's articulation of loss appeals to shared human experience, aligning individual identity with a broader group narrative of resilience and acceptance of fate.

"Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture / I love) I shan't have lied."
Implicit Meaning: These lines highlight intimate connection and the impact of losing someone close. The acknowledgment of love despite loss underlines a complex emotional reality—loving someone creates a part of one's identity while their absence simultaneously brings pain and transformation.

Social Identity Dynamics: The speaker navigates their identity, affected by the presence and absence of loved ones, underscoring how intimate relationships are pivotal in shaping emotional landscapes. Not only does the loss represent individual grief, but it also disrupts communal belonging until a new equilibrium emerges.

Implications for Identity Formation's Emotional Dynamics

The poetry of Sylvia Plath and Elizabeth Bishop encapsulates the intricate relationship between identity formation and emotional experiences. Through various poetic devices—such as imagery, repetition, and contrasting themes of presence and absence—both poets articulate the psychological turmoil tied to personal relationships, evoking resonance emotions related to loss, nostalgia, and identity crises.

Complex Emotional Experiences: Both poets reflect on the emotional weight of love, loss, and memory, arguing that these themes are significant in shaping personal identities.

Coping Mechanisms: The different responses to love and loss (Plath's despair versus Bishop's acceptance) provide insight into varied coping mechanisms influenced by social identity frameworks.

Collective Resonance: The artworks reveal that while individual experiences can feel isolating, they also resonate with broader societal behaviors and attitudes toward loss, suggesting that poetry can serve as a communal space for shared emotional understanding.

Through their respective styles, Plath and Bishop articulate complex emotional experiences that illustrate the nuanced dynamics of identity formation. Their work reminds readers of the profound impact relationships have on our self-concept and the emotional landscape we navigate throughout life.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of Sylvia Plath's "Mad Girl's Love Song" and Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art" through the prism of social identity theory demonstrates a profound examination of the ways in which love and loss influence personal and social identities. Plath's portrayal of tumult and despair reveals a fragmented self that is the result of the burden of unfulfilled aspirations and relationships in the midst of a tempestuous conflict between fantasy and reality. Conversely, Bishop's pragmatic acceptance of loss fosters resilience and demonstrates how identity can accurately represent a community that is united by its shared experiences of mourning and adaptation.

These two compositions showcase the emotive landscapes shaped by personal experiences and their impact on wider social contexts. Both poets explore the balance between isolation and belonging, showing how their coping mechanisms shape their emotional responses and shape their identities. These works provide significant insights into the complex shaping of one's self-perception and human connection through the various approaches to loss.

REFERENCES

- Baldwin, T. (2004). *Content and scope of the mind.* In *Philosophy of mind: A contemporary introduction* (pp. 32-56). Routledge.
- Burke, Peter J. ed. "Social Identity Theory." Contemporary Social Psychological Theories. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 2006.111-118. Print.
- Bazeley, P. (2013). Qualitative Data Analysis: Practical Strategies. SAGE Publications
- Culler, Jonathan. *The Literary in Theory*. Harvard University Press, 2005.
- Erikson, E.H. (1964). Childhood and Society. New York: Norton. Erikson, E.H. (1964). Identity, Youth, and Crisis. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Erikson, E.H. (1956). The Problem of Ego Identity. Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association, 4 (1), 56-121.
- Fearon, J. D. (1999). What is identity (as we now use the word)? In *Discourses in Society* (pp. 1-20).
- Hogg, M. A., Terry, D. J., & White, K. M. (1995). A tale of two theories: A critical comparison of identity theory with social identity theory. *Social psychology quarterly*, 255-269.
- Hogg, M. A., & Abrams, D. (1988). In J. P. Forgas & K. D. Williams (Eds.), *Social Identity Processes: Trends in Theory and Research* (pp. 1-12). New York: Psychology Press
- Islam, Gazi. Social identity theory. Encyclopedia of critical psychology. Ed. Thomas Te. New York: Springer, 2014.1781-1783. Print.
- Layder, D. (2004). Social and Personal Identity: Understanding Yourself. London: Sage Publications.
- Mead, G.H. (1934). Mind, Self, and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook. SAGE Publications.
- Mohammad M. Assiri,2022, https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/educ_llss_etds/
- Mohammed Al Marebi, Muhammed Salim, and Bedoor Sharf Al Deen, 2022, IJRAR, Volume 9, Issue 2 (E-ISSN 2348-1269, P- ISSN 2349-5138

- Morrison, T. (1974). Sula. New York: Knopf.
- Ragin, C. C. (1987). The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies. University of California Press.
- Stets, J. E., & Burke, P. J. (2000). Identity theory and social identity theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 63(3), 224-237. https://doi.org/10.2307/2695870
- Tajfel, H., Billig, M. G., Bundy, R. P., & Flament, C. (1971). Social categorization and intergroup behaviour. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 1*(2), 149-178. doi: 10.1002/ejsp.2420010202
- Tajfel, Henri, ed. The achievement of inter-group differentiation. Differentiation between social groups. London: Academic Press, 1978. 77–100. Print
- Tajfel, Henri and John Turner. 1979, "An integrative theory of intergroup conflict". The social psychology of intergroup relations. Eds. Stephen Worchel and William G. Austin. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1979. 33-47. Print
- Tajfel, H. (1981). Human groups and social categories: Studies in social psychology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tajfel, H. (1982). Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations. *Annual Review of Psychology, 33*(1), 1-39. doi: 10.1146/annurev.ps.33.020182.000245
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of inter-group behavior. In S. Worchel & L. W. Austin (Eds.), Psychology of Intergroup Relations (pp. 7-24). Chigago: Nelson-Hall.
- Turner, J. C., Hogg, M. A., Oakes, P. J., Reicher, S. D., & Wetherell, M. S. (1987). Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory. New York: Blackwell.
- Van Dijk, Teun A. Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach. London: Sage, 1998. Print.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, & E. Souberman (Eds.). Harvard University Press.
- Zohreh Ramin & Nazila Yadollahi, 2014 International Journal of Women's Research, Volume 3, Issue 1.

Corpus Source
- https://allpoetry.com/mad-girl's-love-song
- Elizabeth Bishop, 1976, The New Yorker
- Sylvia path, 1953, The New Yorker