

Abstract

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Self-Reflexivity in Anne Sexton's Early Poetry

The main aim of this analytic study is to show that female poetry reflects self-awareness of its language to assert its identity and to investigate the major role of the mirror in man's realization of the relationship between his/her individual body and sense of self. It explains that the mirror image highlights the conflict between Ego and body, image and reality. The paper also explains the theory of self-reflexivity textual narcissism where focus is on how art is created not on what is created. It explores how narcissistic texts help readers to draw upon their own linguistic, objective and subjective knowledge to relate to their own experiences in an active involvement process. It proves that the narcissistic text is a multi-faceted mirror within which the reader is trapped, but finally led through. The paper goes on to explain the theory of self-reflexivity in some of the early poems of the American poet, Anne Sexton (1928-1974). Theory of Self-reflexivity and narcissistic narrative are identified and the role of the mirror stage/image is highlighted based on critic Linda Hutcheon's *Narcissist Narrative: the Metafictional Paradox* (1980) and French theorist Jacques Lacan's "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience" (1949). Three of Sexton's poems are discussed: "The Double Image" (1958), "For John, Who Begs Me Not to Enquire Further" (1959) and "An Obsessive Combination of Ontological Inscape, Trickery and Love" (1958) in an attempt at illustrating the role of the mirror and reflective surfaces in identifying the self in relation to the other. Interaction between composing the poem and reading it and the textual nature of this narcissism is highlighted. Finally, it became clear that through her reflexive poetry, Sexton emphasizes the relationship between the subject and the object world and the role of the reader/other in determining the meaning of the narcissistic text. Thus, Sexton's poetry is self-reflexive and auto-representational. It reflects the mimetic and expressive theories of art since it is concerned with both the inside (self) and the outside (reader).