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A PSYCHOLOGICAL-COGNITIVE MODEL OF IDENTITY IN PLATH'S TWO SISTERS OF PERSEPHONE

NAWAR HUSSEIN RDHAIWI AL-MARSUMI

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND GERMAN PHILOLOGY, FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY AND LETTERS, UNIVERSITY OF CORDOBA, SPAIN, EMAIL: z02rualn@uoc.es,

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to develop a psychological-cognitive model of identity on the basis of the poem written by Sylvia Plath in 1956 entitled Two Sisters of Persephone, following the framework of Conceptual Blending Theory (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002), as well as Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The cognitive mapping of identity as a dual system of incompatible selves, one rational, enclosed, and sterile; the other sensual, fertile, and in touch with cycles of nature, is exposed in the analysis. The poem externalizes internal psychological states through the creation of carefully structured conceptual blending and metaphoric suggestions that root internal psychological phenomena within bodily, spatial, and environmental imagery. The results indicate that Plath modelled the representation of identity as dynamically emergent, culturally informed, and embodied. This strategy brings into focus the cognitive processes by which poetic language codes psychological conflict and creates the potential of using cognitive linguistics to the study of psychology in literature.
Keywords: conceptual metaphor, conceptual blending, identity, psychology, cognitive poetics

1. INTRODUCTION

In Two Sisters of Persephone (1956) by Sylvia Plath, a divided identity is a psychologically charged vision in which the two contrasting female figures exist in opposite existential realms: one in sterile intellect, the other in embodied fertility. Although the poem can be viewed through the lens of psychology or feminism, in this study we will take a closer look into the interdisciplinary field of cognitive linguistics and applied psychology. Particularly, it uses Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) and Conceptual Blending Theory (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002) to describe the poetic archetypes that Plath uses to encode internal psychological struggle into poetic form. The theories provide effective instruments to attribute abstract mental and emotional conditions to concrete images that enable a discrete analysis of the poem as a cognitively and culturally constructed process of identity.

The binary aspect of the poem can be described as a mixed cognitive model since conceptual metaphors and blending processes work together to create emergent meaning that is not explicitly represented in the text. The language of Plath provokes the reader to find psychological depth behind the surface framework of poetic imagery, especially in the case of spatial contrasts, bodily experiences, and naturalized scenes of rituals. The blending also enables the two sisters to serve not only as literary figures but also as theoretical extensions of the two selves, one determined by repression and dry intellect, the other in tune with the organic processes and emotional synthesis.

The purpose of this paper is to show how identity in Two Sisters of Persephone is not fixed but a psychological product of cognitive mapping, which emerges through narrative. This paper is an analysis of conceptual metaphors that are central in poetry as well as a modeling of their integration based on conceptual blending, and this makes this paper both a contribution to cognitive poetics and applied psychological analysis. It demonstrates how literary language may perform complex mental processes and how mental models can explain how literature works psychologically. The paper attempts to answer these questions:
1. In what ways does Two Sisters of Persephone by Sylvia Plath build psychological identity with the use of conceptual metaphor?
2. How does conceptual blending produce emergent structures of identity that extend beyond the literal narrative of the two sisters?

2. METHODOLOGY

The approach used in this study focuses on qualitative, text-based research in the framework of cognitive linguistics and the use of this concept in psychological literary study. It uses the three individual theories, which are connected with each other: Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), and Conceptual Blending Theory (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002) but, in combination, allow one to review and discuss the perceptions of identity representations in Two Sisters of Persephone (1956) by Sylvia Plath in a multi-level approach.

The analysis is based on a poem by Sylvia Plath, Two Sisters of Persephone, written in 1956, that is a short, symbolically rich text with an example of identity conflict metaphorical encoding. The analysis was carried out in several steps. The poem was divided into seven stanzas, which were considered distinct cognitive scenes. In every stanza, the evoking phrases were found according to their conceptual salience and role in metaphorical or

blended cognitive mapping. Frames and metaphors were then categorized by conceptual domain and evaluated to find out the source-target relationships. Close attention was given to the way that spatial, mechanical, organic, and ritual imagery metaphorically build alternative models of competing identity.

The study ultimately used Conceptual Blending Theory to determine blended spaces that are a result of two or more input spaces interacting (e.g., intellect and confinement, fertility and ritual). The input spaces, generic space, blended space, and emergent structure of each blend were recorded, and where possible, diagrammed. This last stratum of analysis allowed modeling identity as an emergent process of the mind and not as a theme.

The methodology used a combination of these theoretical tools to demonstrate how the poem constructs identity as a psychologically dynamic phenomenon encoded in metaphor and conceptual integration. This strategy is aligned with the greater goal of showing how cognitive linguistics can be applied to psychological textual analysis in literature.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The overlap of cognitive linguistics and psychological literary analysis has received a lot of attention over the last few decades, providing an alternative set of conceptual frameworks through which literature can be construed as a locus of cognitive modeling and emotional expression. Lakoff and Johnson (1980), in Metaphors We Live By, suggested that metaphors are not only poetic tools but also the core of human thinking that enables people to interpret abstract experiences in the language of a more concrete domain. This formed the basis of further implementations of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) to literature, such as the modeling of emotions, identity, and psychological states (Gibbs, 1994; Kövecses, 2000).

At the same time, Conceptual Blending Theory (CBT), presented by Fauconnier and Turner (2002), further developed the theory of metaphors by focusing on the meaning that is generated when different mental spaces are combined. Blending theory describes the fact that meaning is not a transfer between two domains but a dynamic construction in mental integration. This view has been especially useful in the interpretation of complicated literary works, where symbols and pictures tend to engage non-linearly to form emergent topics (Brandt & Brandt, 2005). Freeman (1997) and Semino (2008), literary scholars, have demonstrated how blending enables the reader to encounter the stratified subjectivities and psychological dualities in literature as simulations in the mind.

The conceptual metaphor and blending are regarded as the main cognitive processes reflecting the psychological make-up of the poem under discussion. Such structures explain how abstract levels of identity and emotion are built using cross-domain mappings and the integration of mental spaces. Metaphor and blending, specifically in poetry like that of Plath, are used to transform inner psychological conditions into physical, spatial, and natural images.

Within the field of literary psychology, Sylvia Plath poems have been studied over the years in terms of their portrayals of psychological conflict, female subjectivity, and self-fragmentation. Gilbert and Gubar (1979) and Perloff (1985) have interpreted her work as a feminist psychoanalysis and existential modernism with a focus on her themes of repression, death, and creativity. The more recent cognitive poetic readings (Tsur, 2003; Stockwell, 2009) have started to describe the embodied language in which Plath encoded mental conflict and selfhood in the poetic form, but little work has attempted to systematically model her poetry in the full cognitive linguistic framework.

Specifically, Two Sisters of Persephone (1956) has not been subject to much extended study in terms of cognitive psychology, although it has a very well-developed metaphorical structure. Although it has been noted by some feminist and mythopoetic interpretations (e.g., Ostriker, 1986) that there is a dualism of rational and fertile female characters, there is still a lack of a systematic cognitive framework that can describe the emergent identity structures in the poem in terms of mental simulations using metaphor and blending.

This paper addresses that gap to apply a triangulated cognitive framework to model identity in Two Sisters of Persephone and extend thematic reading to cognitive structure and process. It shows how the language of poetry can serve as the means of psychological modeling, where the self is modeled by using spatial, mechanical, and organic metaphors and synthesized by conceptual blends that imitate internal conflict and change.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Analysis of Plath's Two Sisters of Persephone (1956)
"Two girls there are: within the house
One sits; the other, without.
Daylong a duet of shade and light
Plays between these.

5   In her dark wainscoted room The first works problems on A mathematical machine. Dry ticks mark time

As she calculates each sum. 10   At this barren enterprise Rat-shrewd go her squint eyes, Root-pale her meager frame.

Bronzed as earth, the second lies, Hearing ticks blown gold 15   Like pollen on bright air. Lulled Near a bed of poppies,

She sees how their red silk flare Of petaled blood Burns open to sun's blade.20   On that green altar

Freely become sun's bride, the latter Grows quick with seed. Grass-couched in her labor's pride, She bears a king. Turned bitter

25   And sallow as any lemon, The other, wry virgin to the last, Goes graveward with flesh laid waste, Worm-husbanded, yet no woman." (Plath, 1980, pp. 31-32)

Two Sisters of Persephone (1956) by Sylvia Plath is a brief and complex work that questions the binary nature of the female experience, the division of the self, and the contradiction between reproductive and intellectual labour. The poem brings two contrasting females: one is rigid, rational, and barren; the other is juicy, fertile, and instinctive. This conflict between life and death, mind and body, and submission and agency is rooted in the fact that Plath refers to the Greek goddess Persephone, who represents both spring and the underworld.

In a cognitive-linguistic context, the considered poem is full of conceptual oppositions and metaphoric mappings that project internal identity conflicts outward. The opposition between the two sisters serves as a figurative extension of the split selves, which is conceived in terms of source domains including mathematics, machinery, and sterility, on the one hand, and nature, fertility, and sacrifice, on the other. These domains are not merely antagonistic but are blended together to bring about emergent meanings, which the poet does not explicitly state but makes the reader understand through the structured contrasts.

4.1.1 Exploring Frames in Two Sisters of Persephone
1. Duality of Female Identity
In stanza 1, line 1:
"Two girls there are: within the house"
The metaphorical division spatialized in the phrase two sisters, one at home, one out is conceptual. The cognitive frame, the internal versus external identity, is elicited by the locative word home. These two girls are not simply two characters; they symbolize two female identities, intellectual and sensual. Utilization of physical place triggers a psychological or social geography: inner (controlled, domestic, rational) vs. outer (free, natural, embodied).
In stanza 1, line 2:
"One sits; the other, without"
The phrase intensifies the contrast, as the two sisters are clearly divided into two spheres: one inside the closed, unchanging interior world ("sits"), and the other outside and the moving world on the outside ("without"). The physical contradiction adds to the intellectual division between the socially acceptable, constrained femininity and the uncontrolled and natural femininity.
In stanza 1, line 3:
"Daylong a duet of shade and light"
The term extends the spatial conceptualization of identity to the time and dynamic scale. In the metaphor of the "duet," the two sides of identity are not opposites that stay defined in one way or another but ever-changing and interacting forces, such as shade and light. It creates a dynamic mental contradiction by opposing forces in the female subject, implying that the cultivating of identity is a dynamic, rather than a fixed, process.
2. Intellect as Mechanical Labor
In stanza 2, line 7:
"A mathematical machine"
Intellectual activity here is viewed in terms of machinery; thinking is not fluid and organic but rigid and mechanical. The cognitive process is objectified in this mapping since it is the kind of mindless, dehumanized, regular, and tedious work leading to a desensitized, sterile form of identity.
3. Sterility as Physical Decay
In stanza 3, line 12:
"Root-pale her meager frame"
The physical description suggests the effect of sterilized intellectuality—weakness of the body and death. Root-pale implies the lack of life, and sterility is interpreted as a deficiency in the reproductive process, or even more literally, physical decay is presented in personified form.
4. Fertility as a Union with Nature
In stanza 4, line 13:
"Bronzed as earth"
The second sister is linguistically inseparable from the earth, positioning her identity as naturally related to the cycles of nature. Her bronzed body is indicative of vitality and fertility rooted in the natural world, contrasting with the sterility of her sister's nature.
In stanza 4, line 16:
"Near a bed of poppies"

The surrounding places the sister in harmony with the icons of fertility, sensuality, and sleep. The organic symbolism of poppies creates the suggestion of wealth, the procreation of her identity, and the contrast to her sterile sister.

5. Sexual Awakening as Sacrificial Offering

In stanza 5, line 19:

"Burns open to sun's blade"

The sexual awakening is conceived of as a subjection to a violent outside agent ("blade of the sun"). This evokes the images of vulnerability and ritual offering, implying that fertility is not only giving but also a process of change.

In stanza 5, line 20:

"On that green altar"

Sexuality is conceptualized in the metaphor of ritualized sacrifice; the fertility is constrained by cultural-religious codes of an altar. The so-called green altar hints that this sacrifice belongs to the natural cycles but also has a cultural value.

6. Fertility as Creative Power

In stanza 6, line 24:

"She bears a king"

Fertility is made out of great creative force, not only the creation of life but royal life. It raises the reproductive role to a place of power and agency and emphasizes the generative power of the embodied femininity.

7. Virginity as Death and Decay

In stanza 7, line 28:

"Worm-husbanded, yet no woman"

The metaphoric identification of virginity with death is embodied in the image of worms as partners. The expression creates the impression that avoiding sex life leads to corruption instead of morality, establishing sexual suppression as an avenue towards somatic and human downsizing.

The metaphoric structures of identity that are used to build a layered cognitive model in the poem Two Sisters of Persephone are multiple and overlapping. At the center of this is the overriding metaphor of Duality of Female Identity, in which the self is presented as a duality of internal/external, rational/sensual, and sterile/fertile. The internal conflict between the opposites of being is supported by spatial and dynamic imagery, including such terms as "within," "without," and "duet of shade and light." This polarity is intensified with such metaphors as Intellect as Mechanical Labor and Sterility as Physical Decay, which associate rational detachment with lifelessness and emotional fatigue. The opposite is true in fertility, where a series of metaphors evolve out of Union with Nature to Sacrificial Awakening and on to Creative Power, raising embodiment to symbolic and generative power. The metaphor of Virginity as Death and Decay is the dramatic final of the cognitive opposition, the sexual repression as the erasure of existence. These metaphoric developments allow Plath to model identity as a location of inner struggle that is influenced by cultural, bodily, and emotional forces.

4.1.2 Analysis of Conceptual Metaphor in Two Sisters of Persephone

The conceptual metaphors that construct Sylvia Plath's Two Sisters of Persephone are deeply embedded in the poem and influence the way the poem represents identity, sexuality, and bodily experience. Based on the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), the given section determines the metaphorical basis of abstract concepts like identity, intellect, fertility, and repression on more tangible ones, especially those related to space, nature, machinery, and decay. All these metaphorical constructions enable Plath to express the psychological and social tensions implicitly, and this gives the reader the freedom to create complicated meanings out of embodied and culturally relevant images. The next part of the analysis will focus on the major conceptual metaphors in the poem, showing how each of them helps develop the image of female identity in struggle.

IDENTITY IS SPATIAL DIVISION

Source Domain: Physical Space (interior vs. exterior)

Target Domain: Feminine Identity (intellectual/ repressed vs. sensual/ embodied)

Evoking Phrase: "Two girls there are: within the house" (stanza 1, line 1)

Cognitive Mapping: The house interior is projected onto the inward, controlled, intellectual side of identity. The spatial context of being inside the house triggers the cultural connotation of confinement, privacy, and emotional restraint.

Linguistic Function: This metaphor places the poem within the dual context of female identity as conceptually divided into two opposite sides, both spatially and psychologically.

Evoking Phrase: "One sits; the other, without" (stanza 1, line 2)

Cognitive Mapping: The contrast of passivity/repression and activity/freedom is mapped with the definitions of sitting (stillness inside) and without (outside space). Physical position and place indicate internalized states of identity.

Linguistic Function: The metaphor is employed to strengthen the contrast between restricted rationality and extended sensuality by the use of embodied imagery of space.

Evoking Phrase: "Daylong a duet of shade and light" (stanza 1, line 3)

Cognitive Mapping: The metaphorical use of the shade and light is the interaction of two identity poles, which are variable. The concept of temporal continuity in the phrase daylong implies that there is not a fixed identity but a dynamic one.

Linguistic Function: The spatial metaphor is supplied with temporal and visual imagery, a layer of ongoing inner struggle, and interaction of modes of identity.

In this metaphor, identity is defined as an ordered duality through the physical space; the two sisters are in different physical positions (inside vs. outside), which is metaphorically described in the internalized roles: rational confinement vs. sensual freedom. This metaphor defines the main tension in the poem.

THINKING IS MECHANICAL LABOR

Source Domain: Mechanical Process

Target Domain: Thinking/ Cognitive work

Evoking Phrase: "A mathematical machine" (stanza 2, line 7)

Cognitive Mapping: The intellectual process is projected onto the mechanical process using the metaphor of a mathematical machine: rigid, repetitive, and unemotional. The cognitive process is conceptualized as mechanical without creativity or vitality.

Linguistic Function: Makes cognition dehumanized and objectified by making it out of the domain of personal experience. It contextualizes the intellectual labor of the sister as sterile, mechanical, and unrelated to natural life, establishing a negative evaluation of purely rational identity.

This metaphor dehumanizes intellectual activity and maps it onto the use of a machine. The process of thinking itself is depersonalized, devoid of emotion, spontaneity, or creativity, and is depicted as stiff, calculative, and dead. It adds to the image of the intellectual sister as barren and without organic experience.

STERILITY IS PHYSICAL DECAY

Source Domain: Bodily Frailty and Decline

Target Domain: Intellectual and Emotional Sterility

Evoking Phrase: "Root-pale her meager frame" (stanza 3, line 12)

Cognitive Mapping: The abstract state of emotional and reproductive sterility is transferred onto the physical look of the sister: she is described as being root-pale and meager. Mental loneliness is the cause of physical debilitation and deadness.

Linguistic Function: Incorporates the effects of a sterile mind into the body of the sister. It enables the reader to visualize sterility by presenting embodied images of weakness and decomposition, which further justifies the low evaluation of disembodied, repressed identity.

This metaphor links emotional and reproductive sterility with the deterioration of the body. The intellectual detachment of the rational sister is seen through the pale and weak body of the woman, which implies that the repression is not only psychologically barren but also clearly physically degrading.

FERTILITY IS UNION WITH NATURE

Source Domain: Natural Environment and Organic Vitality

Target Domain: Female Fertility and Sensual Identity

Evoking Phrase: "Bronzed as earth" (stanza 4, line 13)

Cognitive Mapping: The skin of the sister is metaphorically merged with the earth. Her body is mapped onto the natural landscape, implying organic life and fertility.

Linguistic Function: Positions female sexuality as natural and makes fertility a sort of embodied, life-affirming nature rather than the sterility of rational isolation.

Evoking Phrase: "Near a bed of poppies" (Stanza 4, line 16)

Cognitive Mapping: Cognitive Mapping: The closeness to poppies—flowers of sensuality, sleep, and fertility—continues to map the identity of the sister onto the reproductive rhythms of nature.

Linguistic Function: Strengthens the natural sensual aspect of fertility. The flower imagery surrounds the sister with a world of organic reproductive possibility and complements the life-asserting contrast with her sterile sister**.**

The fertile sister is a conceptualization of the natural world in this metaphor. Her body and the environment are merged with the earth, flora, and organic materials so that fertility is shown as an instinct, which sustains life and is in balance with the natural moods of nature.

SEXUAL AWAKENING IS SACRIFICIAL

Source Domain: Religious Sacrifice

Target Domain: Sexual Fertility

Evoking Phrase: "Burns open to sun's blade" (stanza 5, line 19)

Cognitive Mapping: Opening of the flower is transferred to the opening of female sexuality, which is treated as an act of exposure and yielding to an external power (sun blade).

Linguistic Function: Sexual awakening is framed as powerful and vulnerable. The ritual offering language implies that this is the time of cultural meaning, change, and danger, not just biological drive.

Evoking Phrase: "On that green altar" (stanza 5, line 20)

Cognitive Mapping: The natural environment is transformed into an altar, which is the mapping of the sexual act to ritual sacrifice and ritual submissiveness.

Linguistic Function: Enhances the sexual experience even further to the cultural level, symbolically a special event. Fertility is no longer simply natural but significant in a larger context, ritualistic.

This metaphor conceptualizes sexual awakening as a powerful yet exposed act, which is compared to ritual sacrifice. The sensual experience of the fertile sister is projected not only as a pleasure but as the submission to a greater force, either natural, divine, or social, and focuses on the aspect of power and loss.

FERTILITY IS CREATIVE POWER

Source Domain: Creation of Social Power

Target Domain: Female Fertility

Evoking Phrase: "She bears a king" (stanza 6, line 24)

Cognitive Mapping: The giving birth is mapped onto the creation of royal life, a symbol of social power and importance. Fertility is not only associated with reproduction but also with the generation of desired and powerful results.

Linguistic Function: Raises female fertility to the status of active, creative power. It describes fertility as a socially significant act and agent of empowerment and pride, in comparison to the sterile sister who lacks a generative power.

This metaphor shows fertility as a dynamic creative power rather than a reproductive one. The biological role of the sister is upgraded to the role of influence and legacy by giving birth to a king. Fertility is a representation of power, pride, and contribution to social or symbolic order.

VIRGINITY IS DEATH AND DECAY

Source Domain: Death and Physical Corruption

Target Domain: Virginity/ Sexual Repression

Evoking Phrase: "Worm-husbanded, yet no woman" (stanza 7, line 28)

Cognitive Mapping: The absence of sexual experience (virginity) is mapped onto burial and putrefaction. Worm-husbanded suggests the body to be associated with decay, and yet no woman refutes the completion of identity.

Linguistic Function: Virginity is not constructed as moral or sacred but as a kind of existential failure, as a dead, unfulfilled identity. It concludes the sterility of the sister as death-bound and identity-negating.

This metaphor identifies sexual repression as a physical and existential decline. The virgin sister, whose sexual and emotional satisfaction is denied, gets metaphorically wedded to death ("worm-husbanded"). Her identity that cannot be fulfilled does not lead to purity but to erasure, degeneration, and unused capabilities.

4.1.2.1 The Extended Metaphor in the Poem

In this poem, Plath builds a continued metaphorical structure throughout the poem. This system works within two opposite but related identity models, which were constructed in seven stanzas. The extended metaphor is built in form and meaning; it builds a cognitive continuum between sterility and fertility, repression and expression, and death and life, all of which are represented in metaphors.

These characters are not separate specific personalities in a literary sense but metaphorical extensions of the same female psyche that is divided according to mutually incompatible paradigms of existence: one of rational, sterile intellectuality and the other of corporeal, fertile sensuality. This conflict is initially presented as a spatial one, with one sister being in the house and the other out, and this spatial opposition forms the basis of the metaphor **IDENTITY IS SPATIAL DIVISION**. Location, posture, and access to the natural world thus organize metaphoric binaries of the body, the mind, and the self.

The extended metaphor grows in theme and structure as the poem goes on and strengthens and expounds this central cognitive divide. The rational sister is identified with lifeless, mechanical labour: she is engaged in working on a mathematical machine, a phrase that sets the metaphor: **THINKING IS MECHANICAL LABOUR**. She has no intuitive, emotional thought control but precision and abstraction. This comparison turns the cognition into an objectified form, making it repetitive and disembodied. Her intellectual sterility is then physically echoed in her physical decay, root-pale her meager frame, which sets in motion a third metaphor; **STERILITY IS PHYSICAL DECAY**. The inability to participate in the sensual or reproductive life is projected on the visual decay of her body.

In contrast, the interaction of the second sister with the natural world introduces a similar metaphorical frame. Her body is bronzed as earth; she is lying "near a bed of poppies," a vivid image that builds **FERTILITY IS UNION WITH NATURE**. Fertility in this thread of the extended metaphor is not only corporeal but existential: it is based in harmony with nature, in sensual openness, and in cycles of the seasons. It is not just that she is in nature, but as her character arc develops, there is a change. The image of her burning open to the blade of sun on that green altar brings out the metaphor, **SEXUAL AWAKENING IS SACRIFICIAL**. In this context, the sexuality is presented as a submission and a ritualized action, and the sister is both a subject and a sacrifice, indicating that the sexual awakening implies exposure, alteration, and cultural marking.

The metaphorical direction continues towards the act of creation. The fertile sister "bears a king" and fulfills her journey with the metaphor **FERTILITY IS CREATIVE POWER**. Fertility is turned into a productive power that generates meaning, rather than children. That phrase takes her reproductive role to the level of symbolic power; she not only creates life but also legacy and authority. In this way, Plath creates an embodied and powerful model of femininity, which is also connected to organic forces but at the same time able to influence the social reality.

The extended metaphor of the poem ends with the sterile sister. Her virginity has not been preserved, but has moldered her. The metaphor **VIRGINITY IS DEATH AND DECAY** is materialized by the last line: "worm-husbanded, but no woman." In this case, her denial or failure to participate in the sensual, reproductive life does

not result in purity and transcendence but in putrefaction and denial of identity. The worm, which is the symbol of death and burial, substitutes the missing lover or child. The metaphor provides the conceptual full circle by revealing that to deny embodied existence is, within the cognitive world of the poem, to deny identity.

In the poem, Plath creates an interrelated web of metaphors to investigate identity as a mental and thematic contradiction between the mind and the body, sterility and fertility, and control and submission. In her use of spatial, organic, and ritualized images, she is posing an internal conflict, which echoes the intercultural tensions about female agency, sexuality, and creative power.

The poem by Plath forms a consistent system of metaphors in the seven stanzas, with the first stanza setting up the prevailing metaphor of IDENTITY IS SPATIAL DIVISION to provide the duality at the center of the poem. The following stanzas (2, 3, 5, 6) evolve in a linear order, with each of them bringing metaphors that further enhance the cognitive model of identity. Specifically, THINKING IS MECHANICAL LABOR (Stanza 2) and STERILITY IS PHYSICAL DECAY (Stanza 3) run in parallel to further the rational identity as emotionally and physically draining, to further the costs of intellectual isolation.

On the contrary, Stanzas 4-6 are focused on the fertile sister, whose identity is built around the rich sensory metaphors that transform into the natural union and then ritual sacrifice and creative power. The metaphoric phrases and descriptions are used very often and vividly in Stanzas 4 and 5 and they show her embodied, transformative experience, making fertility both personally satisfying and socially significant.

Stanza 7 gives a very strong ending in the metaphor: VIRGINITY IS DEATH AND DECAY. Though it has a single phrase that evokes it, its effect is enhanced by its arrangement as a final judgment on the sterile way. The last metaphor redefines the concept of virginity not as virtue but as ontological loss, which proves that in the system of concepts of the poem, fertility means living and being, and sterility means erasing and rotting.

4.1.3 Integrating Mental Spaces: Conceptual Blending of Two Sisters of Persephone

In Two Sisters of Persephone, Plath uses conceptual blending to integrate such input spaces as rational labor, nature, fertility, death, and social roles to build stratified models of female identity. These blends are not confined to isolated metaphors but combine physical, emotional, and symbolic levels in an attempt to create a sense of the complicated interaction of opposite cognitive models, which eventually creates new and integrated meanings of self.

1. Blend: Intellectual Sterility as Mechanical Lifelessness

Input Space 1: Mathematical machine (calculation, wainscoted room, dry ticks, squint eyes and meager frame).
Input Space 2: Emotional sterility (isolation, intellectual detachment, unproductive labor, psychological rigidity).
Generic Space: Non-organic systems (repetitive, non-reproductive, predictable, closed, impersonal processes)
Blended Space: The sterile intellectual life of the woman is framed as a mechanical system. Her rationality, her physical being, and her feelings are conceived as products of an inanimate machine. The room turns into a closed mechanical system.
Emergent Structure: Thinking turns out to be emotionally and reproductively sterile. The imagination of the mind is thought of as a machine that comes up with no actual product. Identity is made into mechanical survival. The machine becomes pale, dry, and weakened, and so does the body.

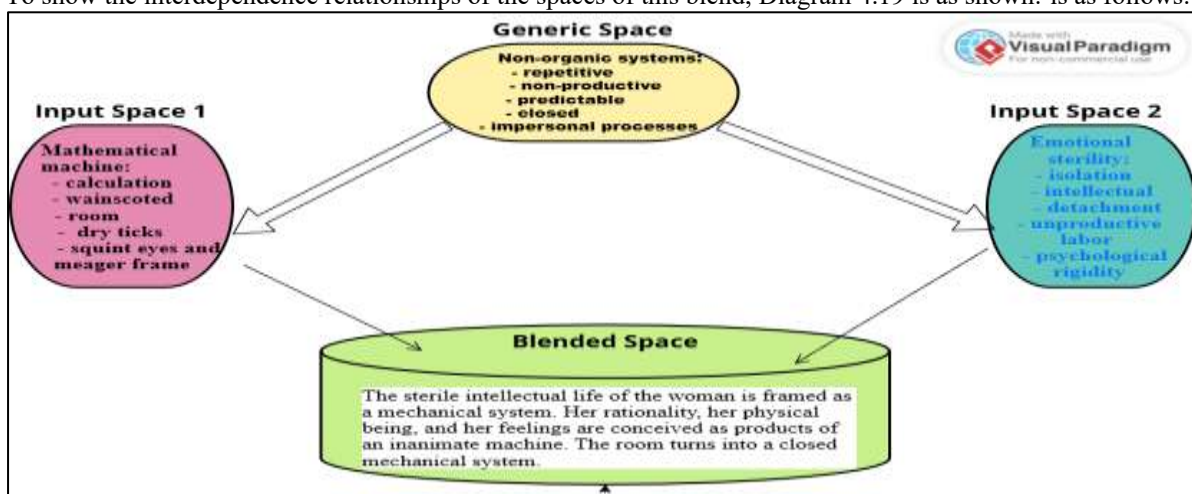To show the interdependence relationships of the spaces of this blend, Diagram 4.19 is as shown: is as follows:

Diagram 4.19: The Conceptual Blending Analysis of the Blend: "Intellectual Sterility as Mechanical Lifelessness"

2. Blend: Fertility as Organic Ritual Power
Input Space 1: Red poppies (seed, grass, earth, petaled blood, green altar, sun's blade, bearing a king)
Input Space 2: Fertility (natural cycles, power of creation, sacrifice, labor of fulfillment, sacred offering, sensual awakening, transformation into maternal identity)
Generic Space: Life-generating processes (growth, transformation, renewal, receptivity, submission to cycle).

Blended Space: The body and experience of the woman are contextualized as a natural sacred place. Sexuality is visualized as ceremonial as well as organic. Fertility is a force that comes with the fulfillment of natural and ritual power.

Emergent Structure: The woman turns out to be the subject and the place of creation. Sexual union is visualized as a ritual sacrifice that stimulates natural and metaphorical fertility. Embodied pleasure turns into sacred change and social power.

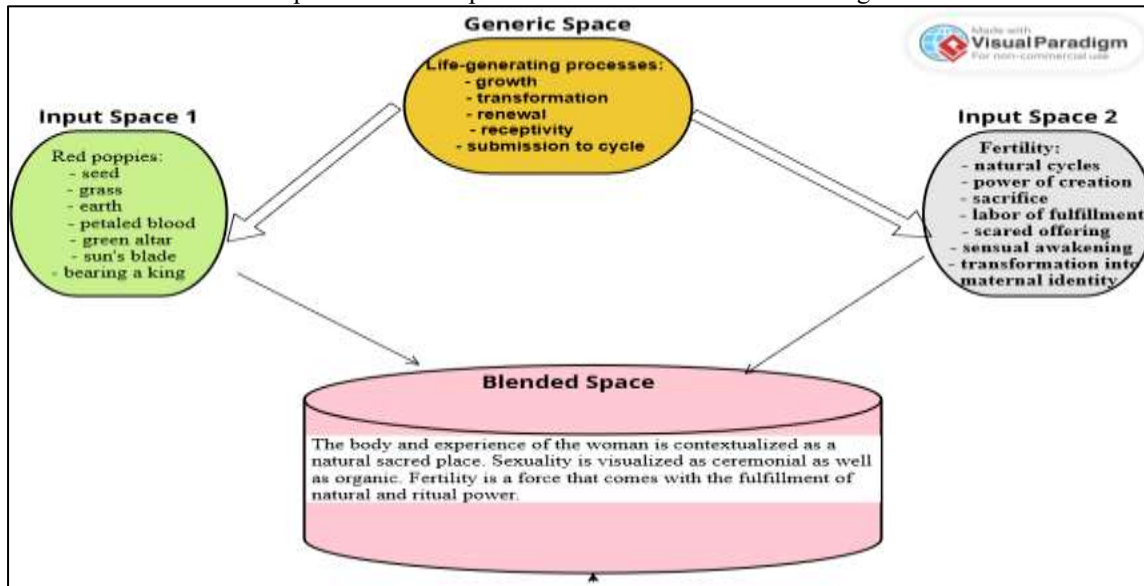The interrelated relationships between the spaces of this blend are shown in Diagram 4.20.

Diagram 4.20: The Conceptual Blending Analysis of the Blend: "Fertility as Organic Ritual Power"

3. Blend: Virginity as Self-Erasure Through Decay

Input Space 1: Worm (no husband, flesh laid waste, sallow skin, lemon, grave, no seed).

Input Space 2: Virginity (isolation, identity denial, repression, lifelessness, unfulfilled potential, emotional void, social exclusion).

Generic Space: Loss of vitality and continuation (non-generation, stasis, absence, deterioration).

Blended Space: Virginity is imagined as a form of body and existential decay. Physical and psychological erasure is brought about by lack of sexual satisfaction. The woman is a container of death and not life.

Emergent Structure: Virginity is a source of rotting rather than conservation. The union is not claimed by the body but by worms. The absence of relationship leads to loss of identity. The unrealized potential of the woman is reduced to dust and nothingness.

The interrelated relationships between the spaces of this blend can be represented in Diagram 4.21 as follows:
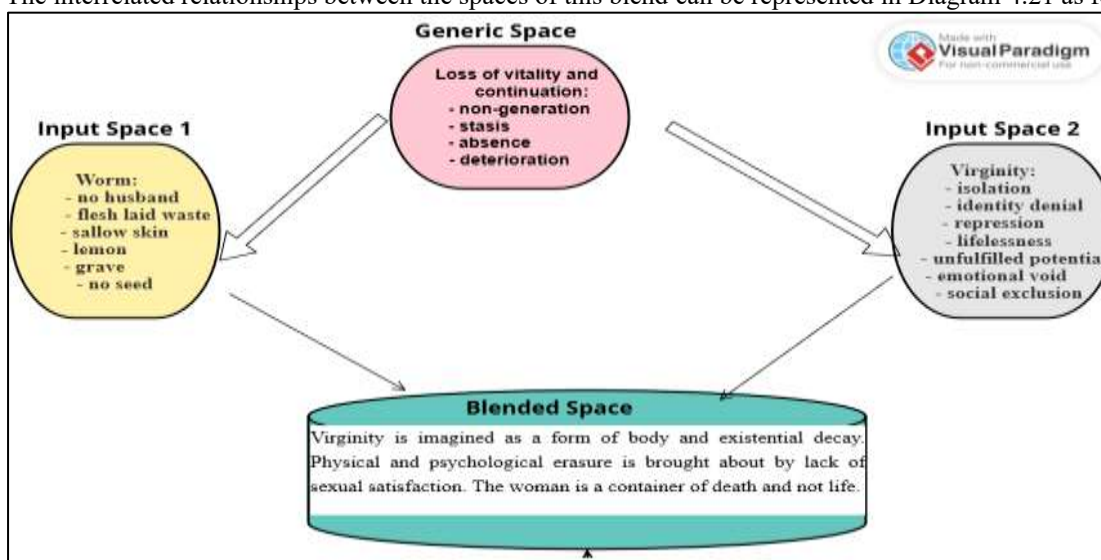

Diagram 4.21: The Conceptual Blending Analysis of the Blend: "Virginity as Self-Erasure Through Decay"

4. Blend: Emotional Harmony as Natural Alignment

Input Space 1: Bright air (sunlight, poppies bronzed skin, ticks blown gold, reclining body).

Input Space 2: Emotional harmony (receptivity, calmness, sensual ease, fulfillment, integration with self).

Generic Space: Balanced systems (openness, flow, cyclical renewal, sensory harmony).

Blended Space: The emotional state of the woman is experienced through immersion into natural elements. Her harmony is depicted in her correspondence with color, rhythm, and texture in nature. Time and space become golden, liquid, and complete.

Emergent Structure: Emotional satisfaction is embodied as a natural state. Integration into the environment increases the sense of sensory perception. Nature is not a background but is a continuation of inner balance. Time becomes slower and becomes symbolically rich.

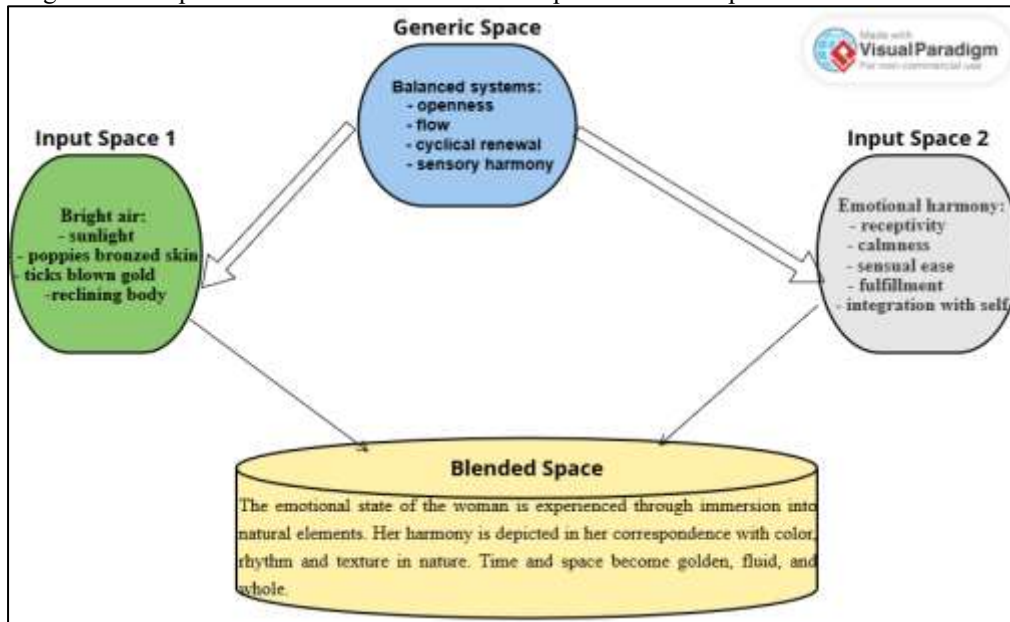Diagram 4.22 represents the interrelated relationships between the spaces of this blend:

Diagram 4.22: The Conceptual Blending Analysis of the Blend: "Emotional Harmony as Natural Alignment"

5. Blend: Cognitive Effort as Spatial Confinement

Input Space 1: Enclosed room (stillness, dry air, wainscoted walls, sitting inside).

Input Space 2: Mental entrapment (isolation, cognitive overexertion, psychological limitation, sterile labor, emotional repression).

Generic Space: Restricted systems (enclosed, limited in movement and output, unyielding, bounded).

Blended Space: The thinking process is spatially bound. The room itself turns into a mental trap with emotional and intellectual sterility being supported by physical confines. Thinking is not wide-ranging but enclosed and inanimate.

Emergent Structure: The mind is conceived as confined within its own geometrical and emotional spaces. The body is a reflection of the confinement of the mind. The room is not merely a background but a metaphorical building of suppression and suppressed life.

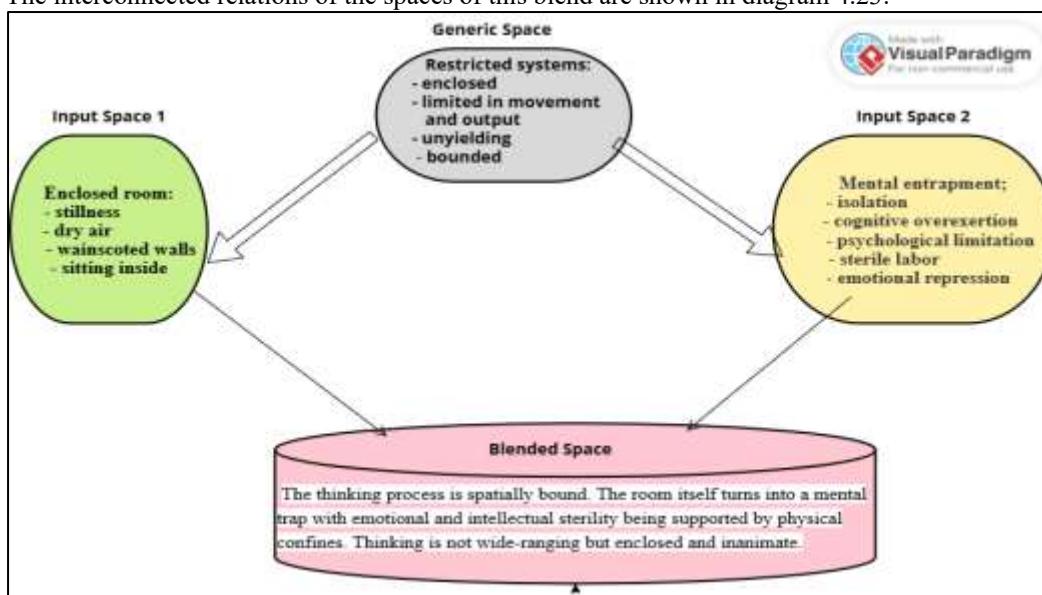The interconnected relations of the spaces of this blend are shown in diagram 4.23:

Diagram 4.23: The Conceptual Blending Analysis of the Blend: "Cognitive Effort as Spatial Confinement"

5. CONCLUSION

Sylvia Plath in Two Sisters of Persephone introduces identity as a dynamic and fragmented cognitive construct based on metaphor and conceptual blending. The poem juxtaposes two psychological versions of selfhood: the sterile intellect and the confinement on the one hand and the sensual fertility and a recreation with nature on the other hand. Plath employs the spatial, mechanical, and organic imagery to represent the inner psychological struggle through such metaphors as IDENTITY IS SPATIAL DIVISION, THINKING IS MECHANICAL LABOR, and FERTILITY IS CREATIVE POWER. This framework is further refined by conceptual blending that combines the components of abstract and concrete worlds to create emergent models of identity. Such blends like Intellectual Sterility as Mechanical Lifelessness and Fertility as Organic Ritual Power prove the power of metaphor and blending to create the appearance of psychological depth, since the poem reveals that identity is not a fixed state but a dynamic cultural encoding of the mind. The two sisters are reflections of conceptual possibilities of self, which are formed by cognitive contrast and integration.

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