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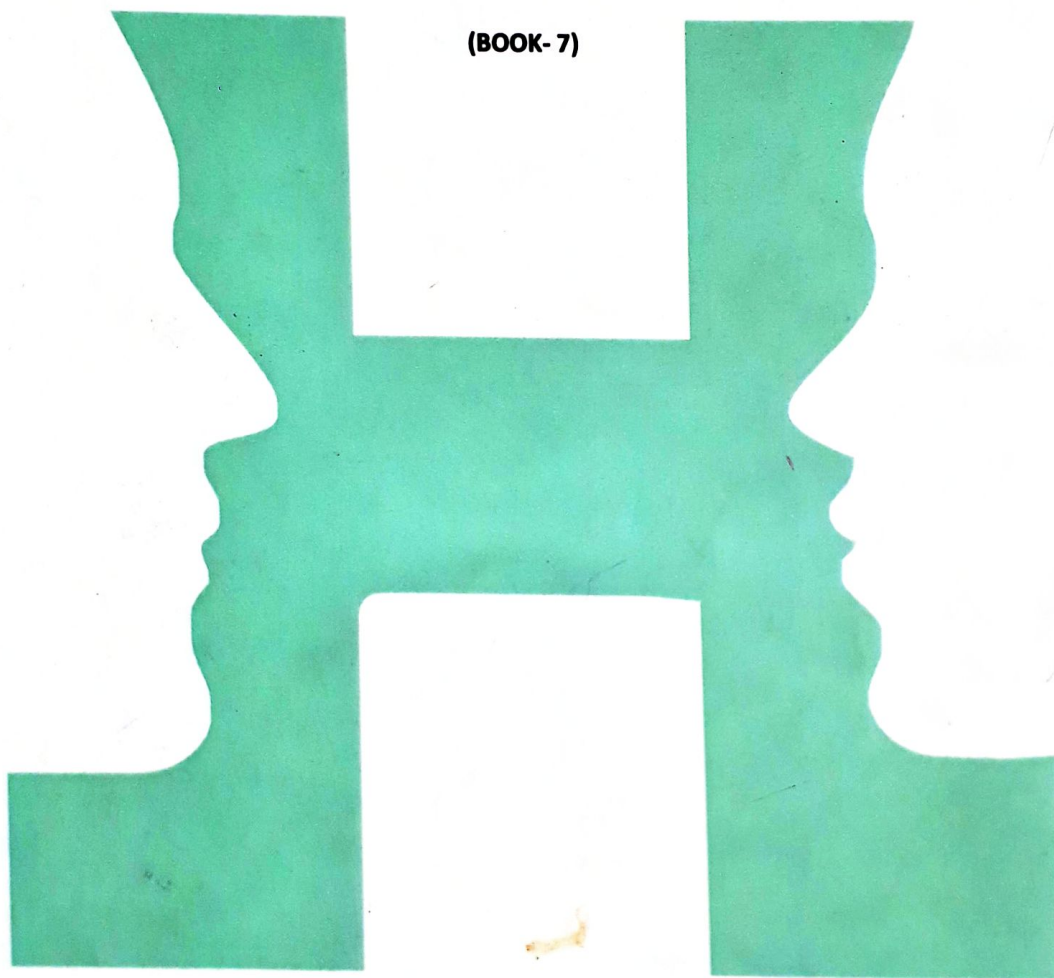
**SPECIAL ISSUE**

On the Occasion of One Day International Conference On

**RECENT ADVANCES IN  
LANGUAGES, LITERATURE AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

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(BOOK- 7)



*Guest Editors*

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## The poetic Hurt and the Violence of the External World in the *Winter Trees* by Sylvia Plath

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*Winter Trees* is the last of the three volumes of poems left unpublished at Sylvia Plath's death in 1963. Published in 1971 in an edition of *Critical Quarterly*, *Winter Trees* becomes the slimmest as well as the final collection of Sylvia Plath's poetry. There are only nineteen poems in the collection and the readers witness ample evidence of an endless imaginative resource in the restatement of her familiar themes; all proceeding, ultimately, from the "divided Self" the Self which is alienated, oppressed, disembodied and antithetical in its very essence. *Winter trees* can be called, "a case of trying to fit batches of awesome, alarming fragments into a picture the final dimensions of which are not made at all clear." (Wagner, 55) What distinguishes Sylvia Plath's late poems from the poems of her transitional period is their innate intensity combined with their ease of creation. In this collection, Plath composed poems more urgently than ever before being at a critical stage of her life, particularly her family life with Ted Hughes using the early morning hours for her compositions. In the words of Ted Hughes, almost, "at top speed, as one might write an urgent letter". (Hughes, 92) In *Winter Trees*, the most remarkable aspect is the recurrence of certain subjects and images. The poems present a dramatic focus, the concern is ultimately a personal one. There is fusion of the external and internal landscapes presented in its particular manifestations to four aspects of reality: to the family, to the women, to the Nature and to the death. The external landscapes and inner mindscapes provide Plath with the symbolic setting for the initiary drama of the life and the death. The poems about the family represent the split nature of her universe, they talk about destructive parents and the Holy family, about the death-haunted generations and innocent children. Women as well are perceived in antithetical ways; they appear at once as oppressors and as spiritual beings, as vicious enemies and as pure victims. The world of the death, provides the framework for the violent antagonism of thematic opposites of hate and love.

The strumpet-spinster conflict of her early poems and of the transitional ones, gets powerfully expressed in these late poems as well. In *The Colossus* the mind of Sylvia Plath mostly dwelt upon the outer world, analysing it in detail. In *Winter Trees*, Plath returns to the inner, icy, world of pain and alienation. The poems in *The Colossus* were mostly daytime compositions and those in *Winter Trees* in Plath's own words: "were all written at about four in the morning" (Alvarez, 59), a time of introversion and stillness.

*Winter Trees* presents two sections, the first one containing eighteen short poems and the second one having a long, dramatic poem which is a radio play titled "Three Women", basically composed for BBC. The poetess paints a vivid imagistic pattern of Thanatos in all the poems reflecting her upheavels which afflicted her personal life.

Chronologically, "Three Women" was written first and it is "a poem for three voices," which "can be seen as a bridge between *The Colossus* and *Ariel*, both in the change of style... and in that it was written to be read aloud." (Hughes, 7) This piece was written for, "radio at the invitation of Douglas Cleverdon, who produced it with great effect on the BBC's Third Programme, on 19 August, 1962." The text was published by Turret Books in 1968, in a limited edition of 180 copies.