

A Psychoanalytic Interpretation of “Daddy” by Sylvia Plath

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a psychoanalytic reading of “Daddy” by Sylvia Plath, focusing on the psychological conflicts that shape the poem’s emotional intensity. Drawing on the theories of Sigmund Freud, the study explores how repression, unresolved childhood attachment, repetition compulsion, and death drive operate within the speaker’s relationship with her father. The poem portrays the father as an overpowering internalized authority figure whose early death results in fixation and emotional paralysis. Through metaphors of confinement, fragmented language, and fascist imagery, the speaker expresses the workings of the unconscious mind and projects internal fear onto symbolic representations of domination. The analysis also examines how the speaker’s marriage to a man resembling her father reflects repetition compulsion, demonstrating the persistence of unresolved trauma in adult relationships. The speaker’s attraction toward death is interpreted as a manifestation of the desire to reunite with the lost father. Therefore, the poem enacts a process of symbolic confrontation and psychological release, asserting the speaker’s movement from oppression to emotional independence.

Keywords: Death, Loss, Paralysis, Authority, Psychology.
