

Sylvia Plath: a Poet of the Personal or "I"

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Sylvia Plath (1932-1963) is one of the great outstanding 20th century American poets. She suffered from depression from the age of 20 and separated from her husband. Consequently, she committed suicide in 1963. However, the events of her life and death, as well as her writing and legacy were controversial. Plath is best known for developing the genre of confessional poetry and is acknowledged with her two published collections: *The Colossus and Other Poems* and *Ariel*. Confessional poetry refers to work that reveals unpleasant details about one's own life. It is called "the poetry of the personal or "I" " as it stresses the close, and sometimes unfavorable information about details of the poet's personal life, such as in poems about private experiences, mental illness, sexuality, death, trauma, depression, relationships and despondence. The word "confessionalists" or "confessional poets" is applied to a number of poets of the 1950s and 1960s. John Berryman, Allen Ginsberg, Robert Lowell, Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, and W.D. Snodgrass. Plath's "Daddy" is one of the best confessional poems. It is addressed to her father, contains references to the Holocaust but uses a sing-song rhythm that echoes the nursery rhymes of childhood:

Daddy, I have had to kill you.

You died before I had time-- Marble-heavy, a bag full of God,

Ghastly statue with one gray toe Big as a Frisco seal

It is written immediately before she committed suicide in 1962 and published in her collection entitled *Ariel* in 1965. It can be considered as a type of confession as it is a deep, dark examination of a paternal relationship that died when Plath was young. Plath gives the reader a close insight into her own soul with an emphasis on the intense feelings of hatred and resentment she feels toward men. She mixes biographical facts with assertions based on emotions. This study explores Sylvia Plath as a confessional poet, confessional poetry, her poem "Daddy" and her influence on post confessional poets.