

## **INTERPRETATION AND CONNOTATION IN THE POEMS "DADDY" AND "TULIPS" BY SYLVIA PLATH**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Poetry is a form of literary work that is very well known and appreciated throughout the world. Famous poetry works are often able to describe the emotions, experiences, and lives of the poets in a very beautiful and poetic way. One of the famous poets whose works are highly adored is Sylvia Plath. Sylvia Plath is known as one of the most talented poets of the 20th century, who managed to capture strong emotional nuances and life experiences in her poems. This research aims to analyze and interpret the meaning of connotation in two of Sylvia Plath's poems, namely "Daddy" and "Tulips". These poems were chosen because they both have different themes and styles, but they both describe the poet's personal feelings and experiences. In this study, qualitative methods were used to collect data from text analysis and interpretation of the connotative meanings contained in the poems. The results of the study show that "Daddy" and "Tulips" have complex meanings and contain many symbols that describe the poet's experiences and emotions. The poem "Daddy" describes Sylvia Plath's feelings of hatred and anger towards her deceased father, while "Tulips" describes the poet's desire to escape feelings of depression and loneliness.

**Keywords: Interpretation, Connotation, Poetry.**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Language is used by humans to facilitate communication and interaction. Not only through oral, but also writing to convey their intentions and goals. Language according to Jean (2012) is a complex system used by humans to express ideas and communicate, which is learned through interaction with other people in a society. In other words, humans can express all forms of expression and feelings using language that is poured through a literary work, one of which is poetry.

Poetry is one of the literary works written to educate, entertain and express the poet's feelings at that time. Poetry describes something, tells an event or flashback from the past to the future, and expresses

human emotions. According to Sayuti (2008) poetry is a form of language pronunciation that takes into account aspects of sound, expressing the poet's imaginative, emotional, and intellectual experiences drawn from his individual and social life so that poetry can evoke experience, poetry does different things for each reader. Some respond with emotion, sadness, joy, and love. While others respond by quickly searching for the central message or meaning of the poem.

Poetry is also a form of literary work that is very well known and appreciated around the world. According to Waluyo (1987) that: poetry is a literary work, all literary works are imaginative, the language is connotative because many figurative meanings and symbolic meanings (*majas*) are used compared to other forms of literary works, poetry is more connotative, its language has more possible meanings. This is due to the concentration or solidification of all the power of language in poetry. Famous works of poetry are often able to describe the emotions, experiences, and lives of the poets in a very beautiful and poetic way. One of the famous poets whose works are highly revered is Sylvia Plath. Sylvia Plath is known as one of the most talented poets of the 20th century, who managed to capture strong emotional nuances and life experiences in her poems.

In this study, we will analyze and interpret the connotation meaning in two of Sylvia Plath's poems, "Daddy" and "Tulips". Both poems are very famous and full of complex connotations. "Daddy" is described as a poem full of anger and hatred towards the father figure, while "Tulips" describes the poet's feelings of trying to escape the emptiness and loneliness that surrounds her. Based on the background above, it can be concluded that the researcher focuses on the interpretation and connotation meaning contained in the poem Daddy and Tulips by Sylvia Plath.

## **DATA SOURCE**

The data source used in this research is taken from one of the literary works in the form of a poem by Sylvia Plath entitled "Daddy" (Sylvia, 1965) this poem was written on October 12, 1962 and "Tulips" (Sylvia, 2004) this poem was written on August 19, 1961. The technique used to collect data is by using reading techniques.

## **METHODS**

The research method used in this research is descriptive qualitative method. This is in accordance with the opinion of Sanjaya (2013) which reveals that qualitative research is a research method that aims to understand the meaning of individual experiences and perspectives, as well as how these individuals interpret and give meaning to the phenomena studied. used to describe or explain in an organized manner according to a system, based on reality and thorough about reality." Descriptive methods can also be used to collect data about a population or sample by observing, interviewing, or using other data collection instruments.

According to Charmaz (2014) explains that qualitative research is a type of research that focuses on human experience and construction of meaning, and uses data collection techniques such as interviews, observation, and document analysis. It can be concluded that qualitative research is a type of research that is flexible and open to change, not limited by certain hypotheses or theories.

This method is used because the focus of this research is on analyzing and interpreting the connotation meaning contained in Sylvia Plath's poems. Qualitative methods allow researchers to explore the data generated and provide more in-depth interpretations.

By using the objective approach proposed by Bryman (2016) the objective approach is an approach that pays attention to methodological aspects in data collection and analysis, so as to provide reliable and objective results. In an objective approach, researchers try to minimize the influence of subjectivity and ensure that the data produced is reliable and scientifically testable.

In the early stages of the research, the researcher read the poems "Daddy" and "Tulips" repeatedly to understand the meaning and connotations contained in the two poems. Furthermore, the data was collected by highlighting the passages containing connotation meanings and recording them in the form of notes. After that, the data was analyzed and interpreted by linking the connotation meanings in the poems with the poet's life experiences and emotions.

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

### **Interpretation**

Interpretation is a process or action of reading, understanding, and giving meaning to data information, or phenomena. Interpretation is often done to gain a deeper understanding or to explain something more clearly. Interpretation can be done on various types of information or data, such as text, images, graphs or statistics. The interpretation process usually involves several steps, such as reading and understanding the information, looking for context and underlying assumptions, relating the information to previous knowledge or experience, and making conclusions or inferences based on the interpretation that has been done.

According to Edmund (1913) interpretation is an act of taking meaning from subjective experience. Interpretation often involves an element of subjectivity because each individual has different experiences, knowledge and perspectives. Therefore, the resulting interpretation can vary from one individual to another. Interpretation is also often related to data or information analysis, where the results of interpretation can be the basis for making certain decisions or actions. Therefore, accurate and precise interpretation is essential to ensure that decisions are made based on correct and clear information.

Thus, it can be concluded that interpretation is an act of gaining a deeper understanding or giving meaning to information or data by considering the context, previous experiences, and subjective perspectives held by individuals. Interpretation is very important in ensuring that decisions or actions taken are based on correct and valid information or data.

### **Poetry**

Poetry is a form of literary work that uses beautiful and creative language with the use of rhythm, rhyme and arrangement of words that have a deep meaning and show beauty in its expression. According to Kosasih (2012) revealed that "poetry is beautiful words that are rich in meaning in literary form. Beautiful poetry is caused by rhyme, majas, rhythm and diction contained in the poem.

The meaning in poetry is influenced by all elements of language. Everyday language is very different from the language in poetry. Poetry uses short language, but the meaning is so many and varied." Meanwhile, according to Sapardi (2005) poetry is the processing of language carefully and precisely, so as to produce an aesthetic impression and deep meaning.

As described above, poetry is one of the literary works that uses language that is rich in meaning, brief and creative so that it is different from the language used daily because poetry combines language, sound and meaning in a compact, brief, and aesthetic form, the aim is to convey experiences and messages in a precise and accurate way.

### **Connotation Meaning**

In literature as well as history, meaning is not really objective but it is also subjective. Connotation refers to the additional or implicit meaning of a word or phrase that goes beyond its actual denotation. Connotation meaning is usually related to the associations or feelings evoked by the word, and can vary depending on the experience, culture, or context of the individual using the word. According to Krisdalaksana (2008) connotative meaning is an aspect of the meaning of a group of words that is based on feelings or thoughts that arise or are evoked by the speaker (writer) and listener (reader).

As explained above, it can be concluded that connotation meaning is a meaning of words and groups of words based on the relationship of a language in communication, with different contexts, different meanings contained in the sentence.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The poem "Daddy" by Sylvia Plath is full of complex connotations. The poem describes the poet's feelings of hatred and anger towards her dead father. The poem begins with the depiction of the father as a very large and frightening figure, which makes the poet feel like a scared child. The father in this poem is described as a figure who oppresses, controls, and enslaves the poet, as expressed in the lines "Every woman adores a Fascist, / The boot in the face, the brute / Brute heart of a brute like you." In this poem, Sylvia Plath uses various symbols to describe her feelings, such as the image of a German Nazi, the oppressive boots, and the gold dust and pieces that symbolize lost jewelry. These symbols illustrate how the poet feels trapped in hatred and anger towards her father, and how she feels like she has lost a part of herself because of her father's actions.

The poem "Tulips" by Sylvia Plath is a very different poem from "Daddy" in terms of theme and style. This poem depicts the poet's desire to escape the feelings of depression and loneliness that surround her. In this poem, the blooming tulips are depicted as a symbol of a normal and beautiful life that is actually inaccessible to the poet. The poet feels alienated from normal life, as expressed in the line "I am nobody; I have nothing to do with explosions." Sylvia Plath uses various symbols in this poem, such as the color white which symbolizes calmness and peace, as well as feelings of loneliness and alienation. The symbol of the blooming tulip depicts the poet's feelings of wanting to feel happiness and beauty, but feeling that she cannot access it.

Overall, the connotation meanings in both of Sylvia Plath's poems are very complex and require in-depth analysis. Through the use of various symbols and metaphors, Sylvia Plath is able to describe her personal feelings and experiences in a very beautiful and poetic way. Sylvia Plath's poems "Daddy" and "Tulips" are a testament to her skill in expressing complex feelings in a very impressive style.

### **1) Interpretation of The Poem "Daddy"**

Sylvia Plath's "Daddy" is a poem filled with complex feelings of resentment, grief and trauma. The poem is described as an emotional expression of her father who died when Sylvia was a teenager, but can also be interpreted as a critique of patriarchy and power in interpersonal relationships. Here are some interpretations of the poem "Daddy" by Sylvia Plath:

#### **Trauma and Sadness**

The poem "Daddy" reflects the deep feelings of trauma and grief experienced by Sylvia Plath after losing her father. Her father died when Sylvia was a teenager, and this experience stayed with her throughout her life. In this poem, Sylvia Plath describes her father as a figure of power and command over her, but also as a figure who has abandoned her.

#### **Critique of Patriarchy**

The poem "Daddy" can also be interpreted as a critique of patriarchy and power in interpersonal relationships. Sylvia Plath describes her father as a very powerful and oppressive figure, who places himself as the ruler over Sylvia's life. The critique of patriarchy is also reflected in the depiction of Sylvia's husband who is described as a "Nazi officer" who also oppresses and controls Sylvia.

#### **Resentment**

The poem "Daddy" reflects the deep hatred felt by Sylvia Plath towards her father and men in general. Sylvia Plath describes her father as an oppressive and cruel figure, thus causing great hatred in her. The hatred is also reflected in the depiction of Sylvia's husband who is described as oppressive and cruel.

#### **Symbolism**

The poem "Daddy" contains a lot of symbolism that can be interpreted as metaphors of Sylvia Plath's life experiences. For example, the image of the large boots and the feet wearing them reflect feelings of confinement and restraint in interpersonal relationships. The image of the black crab reflects feelings of fear and deep sadness, and the image of ashes scattered around the world reflects feelings of loss and emptiness.

Overall, Sylvia Plath's poem "Daddy" can be interpreted as an expression of deep feelings of trauma, sadness and hatred towards her father and men in general. It can also be interpreted as a critique of patriarchy and power in interpersonal relationships.

## 2) Interpretation of the poem "*Tulips*"

The poem "*Tulips*" by Sylvia Plath describes the feelings of isolation and loneliness experienced by the subject of the poem after undergoing surgery. The poem reflects complex feelings involving the conflict between the desire to return to a normal life and the desire to remain in a world isolated from reality. Here are some interpretations in the poem "*Tulips*" by Sylvia Plath:

### Loneliness

The poem "*Tulips*" reflects the deep sense of loneliness experienced by the subject of the poem. After undergoing surgery, the subject of the poem feels alienated from the outside world and experiences a great emotional void. The poem depicts the experience of loneliness symbolically through the image of tulips that symbolize emptiness and meaninglessness in life.

### Inner Conflict

The poem "*Tulips*" describes an inner conflict involving the desire to return to a normal life and the desire to remain in a world isolated from reality. The subject of the poem is shaken by the discomfort felt when feeling happiness in miserable circumstances. The poem depicts this inner conflict through the image of tulips that symbolize happiness and normal life.

### Symbolism

The poem "*Tulips*" contains a lot of symbolism that can be interpreted as a metaphor for the subject's life experiences. For example, the image of tulips symbolizes emptiness and meaninglessness in life, and the image of "like a cloth wrapping a corpse" symbolizes death and emptiness. In addition, the image of a "white blanket" also symbolizes new life and healing.

### Sylvia Plath's Life Experience

The poem "*Tulips*" can also be interpreted as a reflection of Sylvia Plath's own life experiences. Sylvia Plath experienced many traumatic experiences in her life, such as the loss of her father and divorce from her husband. This poem reflects Sylvia Plath's life experiences involving feelings of loneliness, alienation, and emotional emptiness.

Overall, the poem "*Tulips*" by Sylvia Plath can be interpreted as an expression of feelings of loneliness, inner conflict, and deep emotional emptiness after undergoing surgery. The poem can also be interpreted as a symbolism of Sylvia Plath's own life experiences involving trauma and emotional emptiness.

## 3) The connotation meaning of the poem "*Daddy*"

### Data 1

*"You do not do, you do not do /  
Any more, black shoe /  
In which I have lived like a foot"*

In this stanza, the poet compares his father to a black shoe that has crushed him. The black shoes here are a metaphor for her father who controls her life and makes her feel constrained.

**Data 2**

*"For thirty years, poor and white, /  
Barely daring to breathe or Achoo."*

In this stanza, the poet shows his feelings towards his father by describing his father's financial situation and social status. His father is described as a poor, white man who dares not speak up.

**Data 3**

*"Daddy, I have had to kill you."*

In this stanza, the poet begins the confession that he has symbolically killed his father. The word "kill" here does not refer to physical death, but to the poet's attempt to break away from his father's controlling influence on his life.

**Data 4**

*"If I've killed one man, I've killed two-"*

In this stanza, the poet states that he not only killed his father, but also killed himself, or at least the part of himself associated with his father.

**Data 5**

*"A vampire or St. George, / I am ashamed."*

In this stanza, the poet uses metaphor to describe his feelings towards his father. His father is described as a vampire or a monster that must be defeated like St. George, a legendary hero. However, the poet also feels ashamed for feeling too weak to fight his father

**Data 6**

*"I think I may well be a Jew"*

In this stanza, the poet uses metaphor to describe his feelings towards his father. His father is described as a Nazi who wants to destroy the poet's identity. The word "Jew" here is a metaphor for the poet's identity that his father wants to destroy.

**Data 7**

*"The snows of the Tyrol, the clear beer of Vienna /  
Are not very pure or true."*

In this stanza, the poet tries to separate himself from his Austrian father's identity. He feels that his father's identity is not pure and true to reality.

Overall, the poem "Daddy" by Sylvia Plath contains many connotations in each stanza. The poet uses metaphors and symbols to describe her feelings towards her father and her struggle to break away from his controlling influence on her life. The poem expresses the poet's feelings of sadness and restraint, and also summarizes her struggle and desire to achieve independence.

**4) The connotation meaning of the poem "Tulips"**

"Tulips" by Sylvia Plath is a poem that involves complex connotative meanings. Each stanza in the poem has different connotations, and evokes different associations and interpretations for the reader.

## Connotative Meanings:

### Data 8

*"The tulips are too excitable, it is winter here".*

The connotation in data 8 can be interpreted as anxiety or nervousness on the part of the writer as she feels too impressed by the tulips' overpowering beauty. On the other hand, there is also the possibility that the writer feels sad and depressed, as the tulips remind her of the beauty of the world out there that she cannot enjoy because she is confined to a hospital room.

### Data 9

*"Look how white everything is, how quiet, how snowed-in".*

The connotation in data 9 is loneliness or emptiness. The whiteness and silence of her surroundings reflect the emptiness in her heart. She also feels sad because she feels alienated from the outside world which is still so lively and colorful.

### Data 10

*"I am nobody; I have nothing to do with explosions".*

The connotation in data 10 is a feeling of uselessness or meaninglessness. The writer feels uninvolved in the life and activities out there that offer joy and happiness. She feels like she is meaningless compared to the beauty and joy out there.

### Data 11

*"The doctors are liars. They lied to me. They locked me away".*

The connotation in data 11 is a feeling of confusion and distrust in the people around her, especially the doctors treating her. The author feels that the doctors have been dishonest about her condition and have confined her to a hospital room, leaving her feeling isolated and without control over her own life.

### Data 12

*"I have let things slip, a thirty-year-old cargo boat stubbornly hanging on to my name".*

The connotation in data 12 is a feeling of regret and fear that time has passed so quickly without her realizing it. She feels like she has lost control of her own life and let time pass her by. The analogy of the cargo ship that keeps sticking to her name shows that she feels burdened by her past and cannot let go.

### Data 13

*"And I am aware of my heart: it opens and closes its bowl of red blooms out of sheer love of me".*

The connotation in this last stanza is that of discomfort and disturbance. The author feels that even her own heart has been affected by the beauty of the tulips.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the journal titles mentioned earlier, it can be concluded that both poems by Sylvia Plath, "Daddy" and "Tulips", contain complex meanings and invite various interpretations. In both



poems, connotations are used very effectively to express the poet's complex feelings. The poem "Daddy" expresses the poet's pain and anger towards her dead father. The connotations in this poem are very strong and contain autobiographical elements from Sylvia Plath's life. The poet uses strong imagery and metaphors to express the complexity of her feelings towards her father. Meanwhile, the poem "Tulips" expresses the poet's feelings of displeasure towards herself and describes the poet's attempts to break free from the pain and distress she is experiencing. The connotation of tulips as a symbol of purity and innocence is used effectively to express the poet's inner conflict and her desire to get out of a burdensome situation. These two poems express very strong emotional feelings and express the complexity of Sylvia Plath's life in depth. Therefore, they have been the subject of much analysis and interpretation by literary critics and academics.

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