

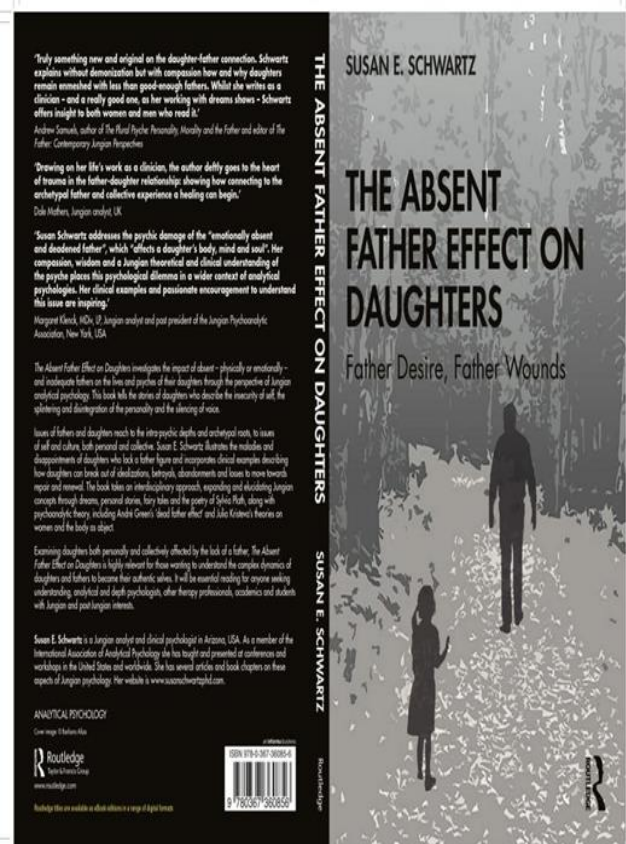
***Absent Father Effect on Daughters: Father Desire, Father Wounds* by
Susan E. Schwartz, Routledge, ISBN 978-03673360856, 176 pages, 2020,
13,341 (Hardcover)**

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*“Jung can’t be explained in simple terms.
One has to live Jung, not just read Jung.”*
June K. Singer, *Boundaries of the Soul*,
1972.

American Jungian Analyst Susan E. Schwartz has fulfilled this conditionality of Singer's contemplation on Jung. She turned the seemingly impossible task into a possible one. She lived Carl Jung and explained him in simple terms in the poignant book *The Absent Father Effect on Daughters: Father Desire, Father Wounds* (2020). In the demesne of psycho-analytical literature, where scholars were busy exploring the intimate

labyrinths of the human psyche, she examined the thwarts and maladies of the daughters lacking a father figure. Published by Routledge in 2020, as a compilation of 15 articles as chapters—The Parallax, Loss and Longing, Father Desire, Father Wounds, Mirroring in the Dead Father Effect, Bad Dad—Negative Father Complex, Father Archetypal Dynamics, Symbols and Images, Who Is She Really? The ‘as-if’ Personality, The Dialogue of Therapy, If He Loves Her, Where Is He?, Idealization of Father—A Tomb of Illusion, Do You Want to Be ‘Daddy’s Girl? Behind the Mask and the Glitter—A Narcissistic Response, The Body in Shadow, Sylvia Plath’s ‘Daddy,’ and Filling the Absence—in 176 pages, this book won the IAJS (Inter National Association for Jungian Studies) Best Clinical Book Award in 2021.



Skillfully combining analytical insight with literary elegance and surprisingly intertwining personal experiences with universal themes drawn on contemporary and archetypal perspectives from analytical psychology, this erudite opus interweaves Jungian archetypes, dreams, fairy tales, Sylvia Plath's poetry, and psychoanalytic theory, including André Green's "dead father effect" and Julia Kristeva's profound meditations on abjection and the female body.

Schwartz offers a poignant fusion of scholarly insight and heartfelt confession for the readers through the explorations of daughters burdened by insecurities, shaded by identities, and muted by voices. To navigate the complex entanglements of identity and emotional legacies, she intricately weaves a narrative that delves deep into the shadow cast by an absent father upon the feminine psyche, fusing Jungian concepts, psychoanalytic theory, and clinical examples. Moreover, to explore the central premise that the absence of a father, whether literal, emotional, or psychological, significantly impacts a daughter's self-concept and relationship patterns, she presents herself as a guide and a fellow traveller. Moreover, she has a captivating way of exploring the concepts. Like a juggler, she fuses mythological frameworks with clinical insights, and as a grandmother tells stories to her grandsons, she confidently narrates the story to her readers. This aspect of her writing collectively leads the text to its pineapple. The nuance with which she interrogates the ideas is excellent. Her dexterous canasta of mythological frameworks with clinical insights elevates the text to a luminous scholarly achievement.

Opening with a quote from *Swann's Way: In Search of Lost* (1920): "We hear endlessly all around us that unvarying sound which is not an echo from without, but the resonance of a vibration from within" (Marcel Proust 93), the book confers a persuasive evocation of the mythological and symbolic proportion of fatherhood. Schwartz brings up the father archetype as a personal and collective symbol: a figure imbued with authority, protection, and guidance but also fraught with the potential for neglect, abandonment, and harm. Pushing in the works (chiefly) of Carl Jung and (generally) of Sylvia Plath and Julia Kristeva, the author solidifies the ambivalence of the father's role: as the moulder of psychic growth and an absent presence whose want can create psychic fissures. This archetypal framing sets the tone and mood for the book, inviting readers to consider their narratives within a broader mythopoetic context. The narrative structure of the book is contemplative. Its chapters develop like a carefully curated exhibit, blending theoretical exposition with poignant case studies and personal reflections. The language of the book is both lyrical and precise, oscillating between the

clinical and the poetic in a manner that mirrors the complexity of the subject matter. The text is rich in metaphor and imagery, drawing readers into the liminal spaces of the psyche where absence becomes presence and silence speaks volumes.

The cardinal theme of the book is how the absent father—whether physically absent (through death, divorce, or desertion) or emotionally absent (through neglect, indifference, or abuse)—casts a long shadow, especially on the daughters' psychological and behavioural evolution. Schwartz meticulously examines the multiple ways this absence manifests: as feelings of inadequacy, a propensity for self-sabotage, difficulties in forming healthy relationships, and a pervasive sense of yearning. She intertwines these psychological consequences with Jungian concepts such as the anima and animus, exploring how the absent father disrupts the balance of these inward vigours. Moreover, her contributions lie in exploring the “inner father”. She posits that an internalized paternal figure shapes the daughters' psyche even in the father's absence. This inner father, often a distorted reflection of the real one, can become a source of torment and potential healing. Her discourse of the inner father is meliorated by her engagement with literary and mythological texts, from Greek tragedies to modern novels, which she employs to illuminate the universal dimensions of this psychic phenomenon.

The case studies, be illustrative or evocative, that Schwartz interthreads throughout the text enhance its authenticity. The clinical enation and her reflections on their journeys shine in her sensitive portrayal of her clients' struggles. Each narrative is rendered with compassion, underscoring the profound human stakes of her work. Through these stories, she politely unveils the transformative potential of confronting and integrating the absent father's legacy. Her therapeutic approach, rooted in Jungian analysis, emphasizes the importance of acknowledging the wounds inflicted by absence while seeking the hidden gifts within those wounds. Moreover, engaging with the broader cultural and societal implications of the father's absence further enhances the book's depth. She examines how patriarchal structures and shifting familial dynamics have contributed to the phenomenon of the absent father, situating individual experiences within a larger historical and sociopolitical framework. This contextualization enriches the reader's understanding and underscores the urgency of addressing these issues personally and collectively.

In the most lucent passages of the treatise, Schwartz explores the mythopoetic proportions of the father's absence. Her discourse of myths, for illustration, Persephone's ravishment by Hades and Demeter's ensuing grief, assist as compelling allegories for the cognitive and affectional actualities encountered by the daughters of the absent fathers. The myths she

prefers in this book offer a lens through which one assimilates oneself in understanding the psychological wounds alleviated by the absence and finds a medium for curative transformation if one is the victim of any such psychological phenomenon. In her narrative, this interplay—of myth and psychology—is a testament to her talent as both a scholar and a storyteller. However, the themes and messages—e.g., self-esteem, needing reassurance, trust and attachment, being kind to oneself, breaking emotional avoidance, recognizing unrealistic expectations in relationships, healing through inner work, embracing female role models, and reclaiming personal identity—with that this book deals give a greater sense of father and daughter relationship.

By blending familiar and expository writing styles, Schwartz's thoughts gently become mind-blowing. Their captivation goes on from the opening to the concluding line of the book. Mind-blowing literary gems of psychology, myth, and philosophy that the readers get keep them captivating. A few of those gems follow: "The parallax of her perspectives alters by recognizing the disturbances from the absent father. Sifting through and peeling off the layers of time, learned responses, the wishes covering reality takes a long time. Through all this, the daughter begins to feel, think, reflect, and discover herself (Schwartz, 1920), "How do we heal the father who is absent and has left holes in his daughter's heart? A daughter may turn from her power or creativity, potential wasted, voice unheard. The search for the father is connected to the search for herself. It resides in the places she does not yet know" (Schwartz, 1920), and finally, "The presence of the father's absence affects a daughter's body, mind, and soul. Overidentification with or ignorance of the absent father has serious ramifications. A daughter can become unconscious and inwardly empty, without connection to herself" (Schwartz, 1920).

Despite its merits, the book is not without its demarcations. The text's profound emphasis on the absent father's effect on daughters may leave readers longing for a more panoptic exploration of how these mechanics run into other identity prospects, for illustration, race, class, and sexuality. Schwartz motiles toward these carrefours but does not profoundly explore them as she leaves a gap for futurity. Moreover, while illuminating, her dependency on Jungian concepts may feel esoteric to readers unfamiliar with this theoretical framework. Despite these peripheral weaknesses, this book is an Olympian endeavour at psychoanalysis and beyond. It is a work that speaks to therapists, scholars, and anyone who has wrestled with the abiding bequests of absence in their own lives. Her writing is flushed with a subtle blend of cerebral asperity and earnest empathy, making the book time-testing and readers-gratifying.

In short, this oeuvre by Schwartz has extensive sonority and long-lasting import. The Absent Father Effect on Daughters: Father Desire, Father Wounds is more than a book. It is an invitation to commence a journey of self-exploration and alleviation, meet the reminiscence and lay open the light within. Moreover, she offers a road map with a guiding hand for those considering undertaking such a journey with fellow feeling, profundity, and unfaltering faith in the metamorphic faculty of the human spirit. The rest rests on the million minds with a billion views.

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