

“*The Life and Work of Sylvia Plath: An Essay*”

Colleen Farrow

Bibliography List

**Alexander, Paul. *Rough Magic: A Biography of Sylvia Plath*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1999.**

Alexander drew the title for this biography from lines of William Shakespeare's, *The Tempest*. This edition is an unabridged republication of the edition Alexander originally published in 1991 and includes a new Introduction by the author. Alexander knew Plath's mother Aurelia Schober Plath personally and extrapolated great portions of his data from her. Aurelia often wept while talking about her daughter to Alexander; she cooperated with his research, but wanted no attribution in this biography.

**Butscher, Edward. *Sylvia Plath: Method and Madness*. New York: The Seabury Press, 1976.**

This first edition copy is the first critical biography written on Plath, and one of two books put together by Butscher. He opens the work with a Preface, acknowledging that the largest task for any biographer is to make sense out of material from the artist's life and work; he remarks, "to write about an artist's life is to write about his or her art."

**Butscher, Edward. *Sylvia Plath: The Woman & The Work*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1977.**

Edward Butscher is the editor of this collection of critical essays and personal documents (such as poems and essays) written by those who knew Plath during her lifetime, particularly at important points. This book, a first edition, includes essays written by Joyce Carol Oates, Irving Howe, and others analyzing Plath's work from literary angles.

**Hayman, Ronald. *The Death and Life of Sylvia Plath*. Great Britain: Sutton Publishing, 2003.**

This biography, published originally in Great Britain in 1991, contains beautiful black and white photographs from Plath's childhood and college years, as well as later photographs of her with Ted Hughes and their two young children, Frieda and Nick. Its account of her life is fresh, straightforward, and thoughtfully detailed.

**Kyle, Barry. *Sylvia Plath: A Dramatic Portrait*. New York: Harper & Row, 1976.**

Kyle's idea was to create a companion piece to Plath's *Three Women*, which is the only play Plath ever wrote. Plath centers her drama on the theme of childbirth. Kyle dramatizes Plath's play and some of her poems in his presentation, which was first theatrically produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1973. This is a first edition copy of the portrait Kyle created from adaptations of her writings.

**Middlebrook, Diane. *Her Husband: Hughes and Plath--A Marriage*. New York: Viking Penguin, 2003.**

When Plath met Ted Hughes in 1956 at Cambridge University, she was already fond of his poetry. Plath and Hughes married after only four months of courtship. Their relationship was passionate, albeit often tumultuous; it is the focus of Middlebrook's biography, which offers many examples of how the romance affected each of their poetry in different manners. Middlebrook hails their union as "one of the most mutually productive literary marriages of the twentieth century." This is a first edition copy.

**Moses, Kate. *Wintering: a novel of Sylvia Plath*. New York: Anchor House, 2003.**

Many critics argue Plath wrote some of her best, most powerful poems in the last few months of her life--in her *Ariel* voice--living with her two children in London after separating from Hughes. Moses' fictitious account takes place during this dark period in her life. She uses Plath's poems as chapter headings for her imaginings. This is a first edition copy and one of several novels recently published in which the circumstances surrounding the last stretch of Plath's life are explored. *Wintering* is also the title of one of Plath's poems.

**Plath, Sylvia. *Ariel*. New York: Harper & Row, 1965**

Robert Lowell writes the Introduction to this first edition volume of poetry left by Plath on her desk in February 1963. Ted Hughes assembled this particular collection, publishing it two years after her infamous suicide. Most poems in this volume were written in those last months and with a fervent, almost violent pace; it includes many of her most famous poems: "Daddy", "Lady Lazarus", and "Cut". Many readers scour this book of poetry in particular, searching for clues to better understand Plath's mindset directly before her death.

**Plath, Sylvia. *Ariel: The Restored Edition*. New York: HarperCollins, 2004.**

Nearly four decades after Ted Hughes published Plath's final manuscript, Plath's daughter Frieda Hughes gives us this edition comprised of forty poems; the manuscript is exactly as Plath left it on her desk in a black binder. Frieda Hughes writes the Forward to this edition in which she candidly admits, "I can only approach [the manuscript]...from the purely personal perspective of its history within my family." Plath begins the collection with the word "love" and ends it with "spring", and it therefore tells a story very different from the one Ted Hughes published. This *Ariel* charts the movement from just before a break-up to a new life--and all the fury in between. This first edition copy also includes facsimile of Plath's original manuscript in which she experiments with several titles (including *The Rival*, *A Birthday Present*, and *Daddy*) before finally settling on *Ariel*.

**Plath, Sylvia. *The Bell Jar*. New York: Everyman's Library, 1998.**

Her most famous work was first published early in 1963 in Great Britain under the pen

name Victoria Lucas. After her suicide in February, readers eventually linked Plath to the book, which is a thinly disguised account of her experiences with depression, writing, and adolescence. The protagonist Esther Greenwood narrates the story from a poignant and remarkably detached viewpoint. The New York Times Book Review writes, on the back cover of this edition, that this novel is "the kind of book Salinger's Franny might have written about herself ten years later, if she had spent those ten years in hell."

**Plath, Sylvia. *Crossing the Water*. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.**

Most of the poems from this collection, published posthumously, were written between the publication of the British edition of *The Colossus* (1960) and before *Ariel* (1961). Some of the poems were published in the British version of *The Colossus*, but not in the U.S. edition; some poems appeared in other publications and others in another book, *Uncollected Poems* (1965). The poems themselves are examples of Plath's beautiful but enigmatic work.

**Plath, Sylvia. *Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams: Short Stories, Prose, and Diary Excerpts*. New York: HarperPerennial, 2000.**

The contents of this collection of short stories and diary entries is marshaled in reverse chronological order, beginning with "Mothers" (published in 1962 in *Story*), and ending with "Among the Bumblebees" (written in the early 1950s when Plath was late in her teens). This book also contains diary excerpts which showcase some of her most affecting prose. Ted Hughes writes the Introduction of this book.

**Plath, Sylvia. *Letters Home*. New York: Harper & Row, 1975.**

This is a first edition copy of Plath's letters written to her mother between 1950 and 1963. The last letter is dated February 4, 1963-just a week before Plath took her own life. Aurelia Schober Plath selected and edited these letters and wrote some commentary on her daughter for this volume-something uncharacteristic of the woman who was hesitant, until her death in 1994, to grant interviews to the many interested inquirers. This collection also contains samples of Plath's handwriting and actual representations of some of the letters she wrote during her first year at Smith College. She often signed her letters "Sivvy"-her affectionate family nickname.

**Plath, Sylvia. *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath: 1950-1962*. New York: Anchor Books, 2000.**

Karen V. Kukil wrote the Preface for this first American publication of Plath's unabridged journals. Though Ted Hughes ostensibly destroyed material from Plath's journals and personal notebooks after her death, what survives of her work is presented in this volume, preserved with some journal fragments (particularly from her hospital stays) and drawings. In addition, Kukil includes Plath's notes for potential pieces of fiction. The book's appendices include other rare and random fragments, such as a list of resolutions Plath wrote: "Back to School Commandments". One of them says "keep a CHEERFUL

FRONT continuously." Undoubtedly, this first edition copy of her journals gives even more insight to the inner life of an intense writer who began keeping a journal at age eight.

**Rose, Jacqueline. *The Haunting of Sylvia Plath*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991.**

In a forthcoming manner, Rose asserts in the Preface of this first edition copy of her book that this is *not* a biography of Plath. As an author, Rose is more interested in Plath's writing than the events of her life; secondly, Rose recognizes that there are almost always competing versions of history, and those discrepancies tremendously complicate the task of biography writing. Rose also writes about some of the difficulties she faced while assembling this account and how her manuscript was not met with complete acceptance by Plath's estate. In this book, Rose explores how and explains why Sylvia Plath is almost a ghost-like figure haunting our culture; Rose confesses to feeling personally haunted by her.

**Tennant, Emma. *Sylvia and Ted: a novel*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2001.**

In this fictional re-creation of Plath's relationship with Ted Hughes, Tennant—who knew Hughes personally during his life—draws from facts about their relationship to create this portrait of Plath and Hughes. The story begins the day they met until the time their short marriage began to deteriorate after Hughes' infidelity. This is a first edition book.

**Wagner-Martin, Linda. *Sylvia Plath: A Biography*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987.**

Wagner-Martin published the second biography ever written about Plath, and it is also the first to use material from her unpublished journals and letters. In this first edition copy of an account of Plath's work, Wagner-Martin tries to organize the pieces of her life, specifically the origins of some of Plath's emotional problems and the role they played in her eventual suicide. She writes of Plath's amazing ability to "transform her suffering into art."