

FIRST AMERICAN PUBLICATION

THE UNABRIDGED JOURNALS OF  
**SYLVIA PLATH**



EDITED  
KAREN V. KUKI

The Unabridged Journals of  
**SYLVIA PLATH**  
1950-1962

TRANSCRIBED  
FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS  
AT SMITH COLLEGE

EDITED BY KAREN V. KUKIL



ANCHOR BOOKS

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## Table of Contents

[Title Page](#)

[PUBLISHER'S NOTE](#)

[PREFACE](#)

[JOURNAL - July 1930-July 1953](#)

[JOURNAL - 22 November 1955-18 April 1956](#)

[JOURNAL - 15 July 1956](#)

[JOURNAL - 22 July 1956 - 26 August 1956](#)

[JOURNAL - 3 January 1957 - 11 March 1957](#)

[JOURNAL - 15 July 1957 - 21 August 1957](#)

[JOURNAL - 28 August 1957 - 14 October 1958](#)

[JOURNAL - 12 December 1958 - 15 November 1959](#)

[APPENDIX 1 - Journal Fragment 17-19 October 1951](#)

[APPENDIX 2 - Back to School Commandments](#)

[APPENDIX 3 - Journal Fragments 24 March 1933-9 April 1953](#)

[APPENDIX 4 - Journal Fragment 19 June 1953](#)

[APPENDIX 5 - Letter June - July 1953](#)

[APPENDIX 6 - Journal Fragment 31 December 1955 - 1 January 1956](#)

[APPENDIX 7 - Journal 26 March 1956-5 April 1956](#)

[APPENDIX 8 - Journal Fragment 1 April 1956](#)

[APPENDIX 9 - Journal Fragment 16 April 1956](#)

[APPENDIX 10 - Journal 26 June 1956- 6 March 1961](#)

[APPENDIX 11 - Journal June 1957 -June 1960](#)

[APPENDIX 12 - Letter 1 October 1957](#)

[APPENDIX 13 - Journal Fragment 5 November 1957](#)

[APPENDIX 14 - Hospital Notes](#)

[APPENDIX 15 - Journal 1962](#)

[NOTES](#)

[Photo Insert](#)

[Acknowledgments](#)

[ABOUT THE EDITOR](#)

[About the Author](#)

[ALSO BY SYLVIA PLATH](#)

[Copyright Page](#)

## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

In the years before his death, Ted Hughes was working towards the publication of Sylvia Plath's unabridged Journals both in Britain and America. In 1997 he passed the responsibility for the project to his children, Frieda and Nicholas, who had already held the copyright for some time. To this end, he authorized the opening of the journals that he had previously sealed.

Frieda and Nicholas entrusted the task of editing the book to Karen Kukil, Associate Curator of Rare Books at Smith College, Massachusetts. The project continued under the guidance of Ted Hughes until his death in October 1998, and was completed in December 1999.

These journals contain Sylvia Plath's opinions and not those of the publisher. Readers should keep in mind the colloquial meanings of words appropriate to the time period of the journals. For example, Plath used the word 'queer' to denote an eccentric or suspicious person, according to her annotated dictionary, and not a homosexual.

## PREFACE

Sylvia Plath speaks for herself in this unabridged edition of her journals. She began keeping diaries and journals at the age of eleven and continued this practice until her death at the age of thirty. It is her adult journals from 1950 to 1962 that comprise this edition. The text is an exact transcription of twenty-three original manuscripts in the Sylvia Plath Collection at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. This collection of handwritten volumes and typed sheets documents Plath's student years at Smith College and Newnham College, Cambridge, her marriage to Ted Hughes, and two years of teaching and writing in New England. A few journal fragments from 1960 to 1962 complete the edition.

In 1981 when Smith College acquired all the manuscripts remaining in the possession of the Plath Estate in England, two of the journals in the archive were sealed by Ted Hughes until February 11, 2013. Plath's professional career as an instructor of English at Smith College, followed by a year as a writer in Boston, and her private therapy sessions with Ruth Beuscher are the focus of the two sealed journals written between August 1957 and November 1959. Both journals were unsealed by Ted Hughes shortly before his death in 1998 and are included in this edition.

The two bound journals that Plath wrote during the last three years of her life are not included in this publication. One of the journals 'disappeared', according to Ted Hughes in his foreword to Frances McCullough's edition of *The Journals of Sylvia Plath* (New York: Dial Press, 1982); it is still missing. The second 'maroon-backed ledger', which contained entries to within three days of Plath's suicide, was destroyed by Hughes.

The goal of this new edition of Sylvia Plath's journals is to present a complete and historically accurate text. The transcription of the manuscripts at Smith College is as faithful to the author's originals as possible. Plath's final revisions are preserved and her substantive deletions and corrections are discussed in the notes. Plath's spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and grammar, as well as her errors, have been carefully transcribed and are presented without editorial comment. Every nuance of the physical journals

has been preserved, including Plath's practice of underlining certain words and passages in her journals. Original layout and page breaks, however, are not duplicated. Detailed descriptions of the physical features of the journals are contained in the notes.

The text is complete, except for a few names that have been shortened to initials and dashes to protect the privacy of living individuals. In two places, six sentences have been omitted (for a total of twelve omitted sentences). Ellipses that appear in the text were made by Sylvia Plath.

Eight main journals, written between 1950 and 1959, comprise the central narrative of this edition and are arranged separately in chronological order. Fifteen journal fragments and notebooks, written between 1951 and 1962, are arranged chronologically as appendices. Since a few journals and notebooks were kept simultaneously, there is some overlap. General biographical information is presented on the appropriate half-title for each of the eight principal journals. A few editorial notes, contained within square brackets and clearly marked 'ed.', direct the reader to relevant journal fragments in the appendices. These are the only extraneous notes that appear within the journals. Every effort has been made in this edition to give the reader direct access to Sylvia Plath's actual words without interruption or interpretation.

Factual notes have been provided at the end of the journals and appendices in order to preserve the flow of the text. Significant places, family, friends, and professional contacts are identified at their first mention. Annotations, textual variants, and specific physical characteristics of the journals are described, particularly when this information affects the meaning of the text. Marginalia such as exclamation points and tick marks are not recorded. The presence of a note is indicated by a superscript n after the term to be identified or described. Notes for each separate journal and appendix are keyed to appropriate page numbers. References to additional manuscript at Smith College and at other institutions are included in the notes when appropriate.

Karen V. Kukil

# JOURNAL

July 1930-July 1953



Sylvia Plath was born on 27 October 1932 at 2:10 p.m. in Boston, Massachusetts, to Otto and Aurelia Schober Plath. Her brother Warren was born on 27 April 1935. They lived at 24 Prince Street, Jamaica Plain, until 1936 when the family moved to 92 Johnson Avenue, Winthrop, Massachusetts, to be near Aurelia Plath's parents. Otto Plath died on 5 November 1940 from complications of diabetes. In 1942, Sylvia Plath moved to 26 Elmwood Road, Wellesley, Massachusetts, with her mother, brother, and maternal grandparents.

Sylvia Plath began writing the following journal during the summer of 1950 before leaving home for college in Northampton, Massachusetts. Some of the entries are excerpts from letters to friends. Plath matriculated with the class of 1954 at Smith College, but did not graduate until June 1955 because of the semester she missed during the fall of 1953.

THIS BOOK BELONGS TO

- Sylvia Plath -

Wellesley, Massachusetts

CLASS OF 1954

SMITH COLLEGE

HARVARD COOPERATIVE SOCIETY  
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

legitimate cause + effect. Editor of Smith Review This morning: The one office on campus I coveted; back to balance about psychology; prospect of Harvard Summer School - holiday tables under the trees. New York and Ray (and neurology + brilliance) This weekend! New Haven and Mike (sun, beach, strong good love) The next.

Tonight, spring, plural, fertile, offering up clean green leaf whorls to a soft moon covered with fuzz-fractured clouds, and god, the listening to Auden read in Drew's front livingroom, and Vivid questioning, darting scintillant wit. My Plato! pedestrian I! And Drew, (exuberant exquisitely frail intelligent Elizabeth), saying, "Now that is really difficult".

Auden tossing his big head back with a twist of wide ugly grinning lips, his sandy hair, his coarse tweedy brown jacket, his bunlap-textured voice and the crackling brilliant utterances - the naughty mischievous boy genius, and the inconsistent white hairless skin of his legs, and the short puffy stubbed fingers - and the carpet slippers - been he drank, and smoked lucky strikes in

Sylvia Plath

Aubade

by Louis Macneice

Having bitten on life like a sharp apple  
Or, playing it like a fish, been happy,

Having felt with fingers that the sky is blue  
What have we after that to look forward to?