

## SYLVIA PLATH IN CONTEXT

*Sylvia Plath in Context* brings together an exciting combination of established and emerging thinkers from a range of disciplines. The book reveals Plath's responses to the writers she reads, her interventions in the literary techniques and forms she encounters, and the wide range of cultural, personal, artistic, political, historical and geographical influences that shaped her work. Many of these essays confront the specific challenges of reading Sylvia Plath today. Others evaluate her legacy to the writers who followed her. Reaching well beyond any simple equation in which biographical cause results in literary effect, all of them argue for a body of work that emerges from Plath's deep involvement in the world she inhabits. Situating Plath's writing within a wide frame of references that reach beyond any single notion of self, this book will be a vital resource for students, scholars, instructors and researchers of Sylvia Plath.

TRACY BRAIN is Reader in English Literature and Creative Writing at Bath Spa University, where she runs the PhD in Creative Writing programme. She is the author of *The Other Sylvia Plath* (2001) and co-editor of *Representing Sylvia Plath* (2011). She has published numerous essays on Plath's work. Her interests are wide-ranging – from an essay on sewing in *Jane Eyre* to a book about pregnancy and birth in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novel.

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-47013-1 — Sylvia Plath in Context  
Edited by Tracy Brain  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

---

# SYLVIA PLATH IN CONTEXT

EDITED BY  
TRACY BRAIN  
*Bath Spa University*



**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press  
 978-1-108-47013-1 — Sylvia Plath in Context  
 Edited by Tracy Brain  
 Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

**CAMBRIDGE**  
 UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom  
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
 314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,  
 New Delhi – 110025, India  
 79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108470131](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108470131)

DOI: 10.1017/9781108556200

© Cambridge University Press 2019

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2019

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

NAMES: Brain, Tracy, editor.

TITLE: Sylvia Plath in context / edited by Tracy Brain.

DESCRIPTION: Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2019. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2019011493 | ISBN 9781108470131 (Hardback : alk. paper)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Plath, Sylvia – Criticism and interpretation.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC PS3566.L27 Z9156 2019 | DDC 811/.54 [B]–dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2019011493>

ISBN 978-1-108-47013-1 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

## *Contents*

<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xviii
<i>Chronology</i>	xix
<i>List of Abbreviations and Textual Note</i>	xxv
<i>Key Archives</i>	xxvii
Introduction	I
<i>Tracy Brain</i>	
PART I LITERARY CONTEXTS	II
1 Plath and the American Poetry Scene	13
<i>Jonathan Ellis</i>	
2 The Dominant Trends in British Poetry of the 1950s and Early 1960s	23
<i>Eleanor Spencer</i>	
3 Plath and the Classics	33
<i>Holly Ranger</i>	
4 Plath and the Radio Drama	43
<i>Andrew Walker</i>	
5 ‘Sincerely Yours’: Plath and <i>The New Yorker</i>	52
<i>Peter K. Steinberg</i>	
PART II LITERARY TECHNIQUE AND INFLUENCE	63
6 Plath in the Context of Stevie Smith	65
<i>Noreen Masud</i>	

vi	<i>Contents</i>	
7	Plath's Whimsy <i>Will May</i>	75
8	Sylvia Plath and You <i>Tracy Brain</i>	84
9	Plath and the Lyric <i>Lucy Tunstall</i>	94
10	Plath and the Pastoral <i>Iain Twiddy</i>	105
	PART III CULTURAL CONTEXTS	115
11	Plath and Food <i>Gerard Woodward</i>	117
12	Plath and Fashion <i>Rebecca C. Tuite</i>	126
13	Experimental Bravery: Plath's Poetry and Auteur Cinema <i>Lynda K. Bundtzen</i>	138
14	Plath and Television <i>Nicola Presley</i>	148
15	Plath and Art <i>Jane Hedley</i>	158
	PART IV SEXUAL AND GENDER CONTEXTS	167
16	'Minor Scandal': Lesbian Writing Contexts for <i>The Bell Jar</i> <i>Beatrice Hitchman</i>	169
17	'Woman-haters Were Like Gods': <i>The Bell Jar</i> and Violence Against Women in 1950s America <i>Kate Harding</i>	180
18	Plath and the Culture of Hygiene <i>Laura Perry</i>	191

<i>Contents</i>		vii
PART V POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS CONTEXTS		201
19 <i>The Bell Jar</i> , the Rosenbergs and the Problem of the Enemy Within		203
	<i>Robin Peel</i>	
20 Religious Contexts for Plath's Work		213
	<i>Gail Crowther</i>	
21 Plath and Nature		221
	<i>Richard Kerridge</i>	
22 Plath and War		233
	<i>Cornelia Pearsall</i>	
PART VI BIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXTS		243
23 Plath's Journals		245
	<i>Sally Bayley</i>	
24 Plath's Teaching and the Shaping of Her Work		255
	<i>Amanda Golden</i>	
25 Electroshock Therapy and Plath's Convulsive Poetics		264
	<i>Anita Helle</i>	
26 Plath's Scrapbooks		275
	<i>Peter K. Steinberg</i>	
27 Beyond <i>Letters Home</i> : Plath's Unabridged Correspondence		284
	<i>Karen V. Kukil</i>	
PART VII PLATH AND PLACE		295
28 'A Certain Minor Light': Plath in Brontë Country		297
	<i>Sarah Corbett</i>	
29 Plath in London		306
	<i>Elaine Feinstein</i>	
30 Plath in Devon: Growing Words Out of Isolation		317
	<i>Maeve O'Brien</i>	

viii	<i>Contents</i>	
PART VIII THE CREATIVE AFTERLIFE		327
31 An Alternative Afterlife: Plath's Experimental Poetics		329
	<i>Gareth Farmer</i>	
32 British and American Editions of <i>Ariel</i> and <i>The Bell Jar</i>		340
	<i>Elena Rebollo-Cortés</i>	
33 After Plath: The Legacy of Influence		350
	<i>Fiona Sampson</i>	
34 P(l)athography: Plath and Her Biographers		360
	<i>Heather Clark</i>	
<i>Bibliography</i>		371
<i>Index</i>		397