



Plath Profiles

Editor's Note

In Four Voices

Robert Eric Shoemaker:

Welcome, reader, to Volume 12 of *Plath Profiles*.

2020 has been quite a year, to say the very least. Amidst the global COVID-19 pandemic, anti-racist activism, and climate change's raging wildfires and devastating hurricanes, we at Plath Profiles have used this journal and our interest in Plath and her work as a grounding zone. In this, "occult" Volume 12, we hope that you find solace and a catalyst for your own scholarly and creative work in the growing storm.

In this volume, you will find poetry, scholarship and hybrid writing that explores Sylvia Plath's work as mystically and magically invested in transformation. Plath's occult interests, from her Ouija practice with Ted Hughes to her witchy bonfires, are no secret to our community, though you might be surprised at how few beyond our circle know of Plath's commitment to the esoteric arts. Her interest in the occult, the intentionality of her work's investment in gnosis and magick, and the intensity of scholarship possible in this regard have been less explored than we might imagine. In this volume, we hope you find inspiration to continue and expand on Plath's witchier qualities.

The works in this volume, including a hybrid musical composition score, student work, visual art, numerous poems and essays, and an interview with Julia Gordon-Bramer, a Plath scholar, are all intensively peer-reviewed and edited, often with peer revision assistance that is uncommon in the publishing realm. We pride ourselves on our interest in each individual contributor's work and process, and we hope you see the fruits of this labor. In this spirit of collaboration, we reached out to Julia Gordon-Bramer and Catherine Rankovic, two fellow Plath enthusiasts for their very different brief takes on Plath and the occult to introduce this volume. As you can see, the range of interests and commentary on this aspect of Plath scholarship is vast:

Julia Gordon-Bramer:

It has always fascinated me that Sylvia Plath's husband, Ted Hughes, has been widely examined regarding his occult pursuits, but almost no academic exploration (beyond my own) has been made of Plath's practices with the supernatural. Or perhaps I should say, her obsessions with it. The common reader does not understand that there are atheists out there, as Plath told others she was, who are also deeply spiritual. I'm excited for this forthcoming edition of *Plath Profiles* and the serious look it takes at a passion of Plath's that is a raging current running throughout her work and lending to a wider understanding.

Catherine Rankovic:

An occultist actively seeks power and gain, often through tools such as cards, crystal balls, incantations or horoscopes; the use of such for those ends is called magic(k). A mystic seeks unity and wisdom, is receptive, and wants less rather than more.

Sylvia Plath dabbled in the occult but was not a mystic, nor (as Ted Hughes would have it) was she bedeviled by "psychic gifts" seemingly never used except to catch him cheating. Her writings show a character hyper-rational, practical, keen-eyed, and worldly. The "Mystic" of her eponymous poem returns to Earth with a thud. We, not Plath, are the "spiritual but not religious" New Agers communing with an idealized spirit or "ghost" of Plath imagined to "haunt" our favorite places, or alleged to have led a well-hidden mystical magickal spiritual life precisely aligned with our New Age values.

Above all, Plath was a dedicated writer and experienced inspirations and breakthroughs to higher levels --not of spirit but of confidence, nerve and skill. Those are part of a working writer's experience, remarkable but not mystical or magical at all. For her hard work on the Ariel poems we have ample documentation.

*Eternity bores me,
I never wanted it.*

Dolores Batten:

As we usher in this volume, we would also like to take a moment to highlight some incredible developments in the Plath world. First off, major kudos are due to Peter K. Steinberg and Karen V. Kukil for their wonderful work in the production and editing of *The Letters of Sylvia Plath, Vol. II, 1956-1963*, now recognized as one of the "Top Books of The Decade" by *The Sunday Times* of London. Credit must also be extended to the many Smith College students who worked on both the transcribing and compiling the over 1,400 letters included in the Volume, according to Kukil.

We would also like to take this opportunity to introduce our Plathian readers to the brand new induction of the first official Plath Society. If you would like more information, please contact: plathsoc@gmail.com.

This special issue of Plath Profiles has a specific focus on ideas of spirituality and enlightenment, as we know that this has been an extremely hard time in our world's history for everyone, and want to remind our readers that, no matter the struggle, this will get better, and reading is healing. We are all in this together!

Thank you so much to our regular readers for your continued support, and to our new readers, we hope that you enjoy this Volume of Plath Profiles.

If you are a writer interested in submission, please review the guidelines in the end material of the journal.

Have a wonderful upcoming holiday season, and we will see you in 2021!

Sincerely,
The Editors of Plath Profiles

Dolores Batten and Robert Eric Shoemaker are the editors of Plath Profiles; Catherine Rankovic and Julia Gordon-Bramer are contributors and Plath scholars.

We are always looking for new submissions to continue the scholarly discourse and creative output of our Plath-centric network. If you have any questions, comments, ideas, or would be interested in helping with the process of publication for Plath Profiles, please email our organization at PlathProfiles@gmail.com.

In addition, if you would like to submit work for future consideration, please visit the Indiana University submission page at <https://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/plath/submission/wizard>.

Thank you again for your patronage, and we look forward to continuing to provide you with the only Plath-based academic journal in the world, *Plath Profiles*.

About the Journal

William K. Buckley, Professor Emeritus at Indiana University Northwest, founded Plath Profiles in 2008 at Oxford University in the U.K. during a Sylvia Plath convention. He announced his intention for such a journal and the response from Plath scholars was immediate. The response to this journal since 2009 has been overwhelming.

Plath Profiles prints essays, poetry, art, memoirs, book reviews, responses, student essays, and notes, along with new media and released documents from the Plath estate. Indiana University is also the home of the Lilly Library, which has the largest and most extensive collection of materials on Plath.