

Editor's Note

W. K. Buckley

Even from the beginning of my teaching career at San Diego State University, at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, and Hanover College, Indiana, and to where I now teach at Indiana University, Northwest, 40 miles south of Chicago and close to the beaches of Lake Michigan, with its sudden storms and sometimes rough waves, and near our famous steel mills, my students in all above schools have asked me about Sylvia Plath's life, and her love for the Atlantic Ocean, especially those students who are the daughters and granddaughters of steel workers at U. S. Steel, and Inland Steel – as we read Plath's most famous poems in *Ariel* in my introduction to poetry classes.

Over the years, I have spent my time publishing poems on California, Mexico, steel mills, Lake Michigan, Chicago, New Mexico, and Colorado, as well as painting the landscapes of New Mexico and drawing portraits, and getting schooled in basic car engine repair for a part-time job [I saw a relationship between engine repair and revision of poetry: I wanted to make things "work" right]. Maintenance.

Yet in 2007, in my classroom at Indiana University Northwest, a female graduate student stood up in my "Writing Poetry" class after reading her own poems on marital troubles, and said: "How do you explain, Mr. Buckley, Plath's complaints about our American life? It seems to me that she undermines our ideals about love and marriage, and maybe even our repressive politics. Don't you think she spent too much time in maintenance, in her marriage with Ted Hughes?"

I responded with something like: "Let me get back to you on that." It was her word "maintenance" that got me thinking more about Plath, since she, too, wanted to "make things work right," in her poetry, and in her life with Hughes.

Luckily, as I would discover, the Lilly Library at Indiana University, Bloomington has the most extensive collection of Plath materials in America, from her girlhood writings and drawings, to her Smith College and Cambridge days. It was there, at the famous Lilly Library, that I would discover an astonishing display of Plath's brilliance at Smith and Cambridge, England, especially after reading her essays on D. H. Lawrence's work and its influence on her poetry, as well as its influence on her marriage with Ted Hughes.

In that same year, 2007, I had been invited to deliver a speech for a Virginia Woolf Conference at Smith College, Plath's alma mater. I had been reading Plath poems and her journal entries on Woolf, whom she admired and loved, greatly. So I decided to compliment my speech on Woolf with a chapbook of poems entitled *Sylvia's Bells*. I assumed the voice of Plath, a damn pretentious thing to do indeed, and as I discussed Woolf, I would complement my ideas on Woolf with my poems on Plath. The reception, from an all female audience, was generous and supportive. One Smith student stood up and asked: "Is there a journal devoted to Sylvia Plath?" I said, "No, but there should be."

And so I approached Karen V. Kukil, Associate Curator of Rare Books at the Mortimer

Rare Book Room at Smith College, Scholarly Supervisor of the Sylvia Plath Collection, and editor of *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath* (Anchor Books, 2000) to see if she would like to help me found a journal on Plath. She referred me to Kathleen Connors at Indiana University (editor of *Eye Rhymes: Sylvia Plath's Art of the Visual* published in 2007 by Oxford University Press).

Kathleen invited me to attend the Sylvia Plath 75th Year Symposium at Oxford University, in Oxford, England, in October 2007. I did, and after giving a speech on Plath, as well as a speech on how American students are influenced by Plath, I held a workshop on establishing *Plath Profiles: An Interdisciplinary Journal for Sylvia Plath Studies*.

The response was immediate. In a few days, I had gathered together an international Board of Directors, composed of Plath scholars, and with the help of Kathleen Connors, Peter K. Steinberg, and IU student Mary Nolan, who gave us the title "Plath Profiles," the journal was launched.

Today, we get tens of thousands of "hits" a year from the world over, as well as thousands of downloads. Print copies of the first four volumes of *Plath Profiles* are now in the archives at the Lilly Library. Volumes 1-4 average more than 300 pages, and Volume 5 exceeded 500 pages.

These days, I am no longer a "car mechanic." I maintain the engine of *Plath Profiles* by the roaring beaches of Lake Michigan and its shifting dunes, and in my memory of the Pacific as I play piano in a local pub on a Friday night, remembering Plath's love of the Atlantic. I surf in my boyhood California memories while riding the waves of our contributors to this journal from Canada, South America, India, Australia, England, Japan, Serbia, Iran, Macedonia, Estonia, Cyprus, Ireland, Wales, China, the United Arab Emirates, and America – from New York City, Florida, Alabama, Chicago, Massachusetts, and Indiana to New Mexico, Colorado, Washington, California, Oregon, and other states, and other countries.

Sylvia Plath's poetry, translated into other languages, rivals that of Emily Dickinson and Alan Ginsberg in its reach around the world, and captivates an audience of non-English speakers.

And so we celebrate our fifth anniversary edition of *Plath Profiles*. As you can see, we accept traditional academic essays, as well as art, teacher-reactions, student essays, archival research, book reviews, responses, notes, and photographs. Yet we also want *radical voices* for our future editions, voices that disagree with our usual Plath scholarship, as well as essays on her relationship to American "Beat" poets (i.e., Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, Anne Waldman, et. al.), Freudian discussions, how and why D.H. Lawrence influenced her vision and her marriage with Ted Hughes, and as she exemplifies in her poetry and journals, a radical undermining of our ideals about love.