



The life and work of Sylvia Plath has taken on the proportions of legend. Educated at Smith, she had a conflicted relationship with her mother, Aurelia. She then married the poet Ted Hughes and plunged into the storm and drang of literary celebrity. Her poems were fought over, rejected, accepted—and ultimately embraced by readers everywhere. At age thirty she committed suicide by putting her head in an oven while her children slept on the floor above in rooms she had sealed off from the poisonous gas. *Ariel*, a collection of poems she wrote at white-hot speed during her final months, became a modern classic. Her novel, *The Bell Jar*, has become a part of the literary canon, appearing on student reading lists worldwide. On the fiftieth anniversary of her death, Carl Rollyson gives us a new biography of Plath that shows her as a powerful figure who embraced both high and low culture to become the Marilyn Monroe of modern literature, a writer who wanted nothing less than to become central to the mythology of modern consciousness. This is the first biography of Sylvia Plath to use materials newly deposited in the Ted Hughes archive at the British Library—including forty-one letters between Plath and Hughes—to create a fresh and startling look at this American icon.

"An illuminating work on Plath by an accomplished biographer. While not underestimating Plath's troubled nature, Rollyson recognizes her as the agent of her own fame: a skilled mythmaker who worked hard to become not only a great poet but also an intellectual celebrity. Like Marilyn Monroe, who influenced her, she both shaped and reflected her times, becoming a symbol for our age."

- Lois Banner, Professor of History and Gender Studies, University of Southern California. Author of *Marilyn Monroe: The Passion and the Paradox*

"Carl Rollyson's impeccably researched, compulsively readable life of Sylvia Plath is likely to remain for years to come the definitive biography of this complex, fascinating woman. I could not put the book down."

-Donald Spoto, author of *Possessed: The Life of Joan Crawford*, *High Society: The Life of Grace Kelly* and *The Kindness of Strangers: The Life of Tennessee Williams*



Carl Rollyson, Professor of Journalism at Baruch College, The City University of New York, has published more than forty books ranging in subject matter from biographies of Marilyn Monroe, Lillian Hellman, Martha Gellhorn, Norman Mailer, Rebecca West, Susan Sontag, Dana Andrews, and Jill Craigie to studies of American culture, genealogy, children's biography, film, and literary criticism. He lives in Cape May County, New Jersey.