

The Lilly Library: Photographing Plath

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I embarked on the 225-mile road trip to the Lilly Library in Bloomington, Indiana with the intention of discovering a new piece of Sylvia Plath. I saw the journey as a challenge to photograph a location that houses original Plath manuscripts and also for those photographs to somehow enhance the meaning of various poems, poems that already reveal much about Plath.

In *Aftermath*, I positioned myself to the left of the Lilly Library's front steps, kneeled, and angled my camera skyward. This black and white shot intends to capture the shading, smoothness and stability of the stone exterior, representing the strength of Plath's work, which seems mythical and rooted in our literary history, much like the Gorgon, Medusa, is rooted in Greek literature. The final line of the poem establishes my primary connection because visiting the Lilly Library allowed me to go beyond the sensational details that surround Plath and her work: "The crowd sucks her last tear and turns away" (114). I did not turn away.

The Colossus is a picture framing the front of the building from a side view. From this angle, the immensity of the building staggered me. I realized how my journey resembled Plath's in that I, too, am searching for understanding and meaning in something. The library is a place where readers can go to visit Plath's history, to go back in time with her thoughts and work. As Plath contemplates her father, I contemplate her and recognize that: "I shall never get you put together entirely, / Pieced, glued and properly jointed" (129).

On the west side of the building, I found a certain amount of privacy, yet I also experienced a sense of emptiness. "Something is gone" (226). More specifically, *someone* is gone, and I cannot help but experience a moment of regret. Much of Plath's poetry focuses on death, death as an escape. Ironically, though, and in sad reality, Plath is in fact jailed by death. She could arguably be a prominent contemporary poet, but her work instead remains trapped. *The Jailer* highlights the sadness of her choice.

These photos strive to show how much Plath has to say in this place, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, America.

Aftermath



The Colossus



The Jailer



Works Cited

Plath, Sylvia. *The Collected Poems*. Ed. Ted Hughes. New York City: Harper Perennial, 1992.
Print.