



Mad Girl's Love Song: Sylvia Plath and Life Before Ted

Andrew Wilson

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A new biography of Sylvia Plath, a literary icon who continues to haunt, fascinate, and enthrall even now, fifty years after her death

On February 25, 1956, twenty-three-year-old Sylvia Plath walked into a party and immediately spotted Ted Hughes. This encounter—now one of the most famous in all of literary history—was recorded by Plath in her journal, where she described Hughes as a “big, dark, hunky boy.” Sylvia viewed Ted as something of a colossus, and to this day his enormous shadow has obscured her life and work. The sensational aspects of the Plath-Hughes relationship have dominated the cultural landscape to such an extent that their story has taken on the resonance of a modern myth.

Before she met Ted, Plath had lived a complex, creative, and disturbing life. Her father had died when she was only eight; she had gone out with literally hundreds of men, had been unofficially engaged, had tried to commit suicide, and had written more than two hundred poems. *Mad Girl's Love Song* chronicles these early years, traces the sources of her mental instability, and examines how a range of personal, economic, and societal factors—the real disquieting muses—conspired against her.

Drawing on exclusive interviews with friends and lovers who have never spoken openly about Plath before and using previously unavailable archives and papers, this is the first book to focus on the early life of the twentieth century's most popular and enduring female poet. *Mad Girl's Love Song* reclaims Sylvia Plath from the tangle of emotions associated with her relationship with Ted Hughes and reveals the origins of her unsettled and unsettling voice.

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