Sylvia Plath

October 37, 1932 - February 11, 1963

Primary Sources

Poetry

Among the Narcissi (1962)

Ariel (1965)

Child (1963)

The Collected Poems (1981)

The Colossus (1960)

The Colossus and Other Poems (1960)

Crossing the Water (1971)

Fiesta Melons (1956)

The Green Rock (1982)

Lyonesse (1971)


Two Poems (1980)

Winter Trees (1972)
Fiction

*The Bell Jar* (1963)

*Zangen Aus Stein* (1991)

Children’s Literature

*The Bed Book* (1976)

*Collected Children’s Stories* (2001)


Non-fiction


*The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath* (2000)

Other

*Johnny Panic and The Bible of Dreams* (*Collection of Short Stories, Essays, and Diary Excerpts*) (1977)

*Three Women* (radio play) (1975)

*Trois Femmes* (French translation of *Three Women*) (1975)

Biographies/Autobiographies


**Secondary Sources**


Perloff, Margorie G. ""A Ritual For Being Born Twice": Sylvia Plath's "The Bell Jar"


**Articles on The Bell Jar (10 annotated)**


This article explores the popularity of Sylvia Plath and *The Bell Jar* that remains even 40 years after initial publication and how the story, autobiographical or not, resonates within our culture for different people in different ways.


This article divides *The Bell Jar* in two halves. The first half, the author discusses, is focused around Esther’s obsession with remaining separate or “dismembered” from what were considered normal societal expectations. The second half of the novel focuses on recovery where Esther “unwittingly” conforms, and the author asserts that there is something to learn from the power of cultural commitment.


The author of this article makes the claim that Plath wanted to use disablement of the female body through various forms to articulate the stifled nature of life for young women in the patriarchal society of the 1950s. Marilyn Boyer also draws conclusions focused around mind/body unification in search for the truth and how this unification may be hindered thereof.

In this article, Garry Leonard studies Esther’s contradictory habits of loving frivolous things of beauty, such as a makeup kit, and her growing hatred for the fashion and beauty industry. The overall focus of the article is on Esther’s struggle to not be a commodity in a world where women were viewed as just that, and her desire to maintain her “feminine allure” as a prized value.


This article is a review of Linda Wagner-Martin’s book *The Bell Jar: A Novel of the Fifties*. Meyering talks about my favorite aspect of the novel, which is the stream-of-consciousness method chosen by Plath. As the story progresses and Esther begins to lose her mind, the text becomes more fragmented and thus makes the reader feel as if they are also losing their mind. Meyering also expands on Wagner-Martin’s views of the novel as bildungsroman for young girls, and how this contrasts with coming of age stories about young boys, which are seen more often.


The focus of this article is on Plath’s voice in *The Bell Jar* saying how important it is for women to make a place in the world for themselves based on the significance of female life. Issues women deal with should not be demeaned but treated with confidence and consideration. Also that feminist writing deals with use of language such as diction and syntax in their own way that differs from masculine writing.
Mandeville


Perloff, Marjorie G. "'A Ritual for Being Born Twice': Sylvia Plath's "The Bell Jar""


Because Sylvia Plath gained so much popularity in ladies’ magazines that she despises in *The Bell Jar*, the author questions her credibility. She says that her novel is popular as a matter of inherently interesting subject matter (suicide) rather than fine craftsmanship. As with many critics, she compares *The Bell Jar* to *A Catcher in the Rye* as an “archetypal” mirror for young people of the day who take good things in life for granted.


This article talks about how *The Bell Jar* was an “unsatisfactory” novel that is only too autobiographical. The author makes the assertion that it’s similar to J.D. Salinger’s *A Catcher in the Rye* in that it only scratches the surface of troubling youth. Furthermore, the author claims that all of the characters are flat and the plot is suffocated by Plath’s overwhelming psychological problems. Her other complaint is that a lot of questions are left unanswered, but she praises Plath’s poetry.


This article focuses on a link between significant instances in *The Bell Jar* and feminine, domestic ideals published in popular 1950’s women’s magazines, namely *Mademoiselle*, and
Esther’s sense of self. The article also examines the push from these magazines for women to exit their “inner-sphere” while simultaneously being stifled in their “public-sphere”, which symbolizes Esther’s “starvation.”


The title pretty well sums up this article. It is a detailed description of how every aspect of the novel relates to Esther’s development and maturation in life.

**Interesting Fact about Sylvia Plath**

Though Sylvia Plath’s poetry is remarkable, her novel *The Bell Jar* is still hugely popular, and her name transcends our culture on many levels, the most famous thing about Sylvia Plath is probably the way she died. After separating from her husband, Ted Hughes, because he was having an affair, Sylvia and her two small children moved to London to a flat at 23 Fitzroy Road. This was December of 1962 and the coldest winter in one hundred years. Often the pipes froze and her children were sick and the flat had no phone. Plath’s depression returned. Her close friend and doctor, Dr. Horder, prescribed her to anti-depressants and continually tried to talk her into a hospital stay. She refused so he hired a live-in nurse. On February 11, 1963 the nurse was due to arrive at 9 o’clock a.m. but found herself locked out. With the help of a workman, Charles Langridge, they were able to get inside and found Sylvia Plath with her head in the oven and dead of carbon monoxide poisoning. She had sealed off the doors to the kitchen from her sleeping children with wet towels and cloths. It’s determined that she took her life at 4:30 in the morning. She was thirty years old.

**Resources Consulted**

*Biblio*, Biblio, Inc. Web. 10 Nov. 2011

JSTOR

Literary Criticism Online
MLA International Bibliography

SWAN