



Sylvia Plath: The Wound and the Cure of Words

Steven Gould Axelrod

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This is a "biography of the imagination," an inner narrative of Sylvia Plath's life and work. Combining psychoanalytical, feminist, and intertextual methods, Steven Gould Axelrod traces what Roland Barthes has called "the body's journey through language." After an introductory look at the roles played by language and silence in Plath's verbal universe, Axelrod explores the ways in which the poet's father -- and father figures, including male literary precursors -- interfered with her imagination even as they helped shape it. He describes Plath's ambiguous relations with her mother and with the two literary forebears who took the mother's place -- Virginia Woolf and Emily Dickinson. And he examines Plath's doubling relationship to her husband, describing how she eventually transferred her doubling impulse to her texts. Axelrod concludes by suggesting a link between Plath's discontinuous narrative of the double and her personal fate.

Sylvia Plath: The Wound and the Cure of Words offers illuminating and often revolutionary readings of all of Plath's major texts, including such poems as "Daddy" and "Three Women," her novel, *The Bell Jar*, and her letters and journals. At once sympathetic and incisive, it offers a compelling account of Plath's creative drive and personal history.

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