

[PDF] Rough Magic: A Biography Of Sylvia Plath

Paul Alexander - pdf download free book

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Author: Paul Alexander

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Description:

From Publishers Weekly Nearly 30 years after Plath's (1932-1963) suicide, her troubled life proves to be fertile ground for biographers, as witness this work by Alexander (editor of *Ariel Ascending*), which may be the most objective portrayal yet of the controversial American poet. Choosing to write Plath's life without the consent and probable constraints of the estate, Alexander eschews quoting from Plath's work; his is not a literary study. Yet the results are impressive: a thorough, beautifully fashioned chronicle rich in new materials and significant minutiae, beginning with the convergence of her parents' lives, continuing with Plath's precocious childhood and tumultuous adulthood, and concluding with her posthumous literary career. The book's achievement is to record Plath's notable vicissitudes with respect and sensitivity, implying but not imposing an

interpretation on complex, often ambiguous evidence. Though at times we may desire more direct analysis, Alexander's understated approach has the considerable virtue of allowing readers to determine for themselves--insofar as such questions can ever be answered--what forces nurtured Plath's extraordinary lyrical gifts and what finally ended them. Photos.

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From Library Journal It seems no longer possible to read Plath's poems and fictions without her life and suicide as guide. Ignore her death, and the fiction and most of the poems increasingly seem self-indulgent and less than first-rate, unable to support a major reputation half as well as her self-destructive behavior does. Because her estate--which is ruled over by Ted Hughes and his sister Olwyn, the villains in these biographies--denies authors permission to quote from Plath's work unless manuscripts are submitted for approval and changes, if requested, are made, readers are left with inadequate paraphrase, innuendo, gossip, and speculation, which then lead to controversy and mystery--which in their turn lead to sales and literary immortality. Alexander, editor of *Ariel Ascending: Writings About Sylvia Plath*, deserves some attention. Still, each biography finally fails, either because of padding with irrelevant minutiae (Alexander's); or a melodramatic and Kitty Kelleyish tone (Hayman's); or the substitution of simplistic paraphrase for analyses, sensationalism for objectivity, mystery for understanding (both). The Plath Industry thrives, though the quality of its products decreases. Previewed in *Prepub Alert*, LJ 6/1/91 and LJ 3/15/91.

- *Vincent D. Balitas, Allentown Coll. , Center Valley, Pa.*

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