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(FALSE) PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A WOMAN:

**EDITORIAL STRATEGY IN THE DIARIES OF
VIRGINIA WOOLF AND SYLVIA PLATH**

by

Jill M. Pioter

**A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the
DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN'S STUDIES**

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated with much love to Dominic and the Joys we share. You are my weakness, but more than anything, You are my strength. Without You, there would be no thesis, no Master's, no me.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis contends that, in the process of publication of the diaries of Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath, their husbands, Leonard Woolf and Ted Hughes, employed editorial strategies that created false portraits of the authors. Each of these men tantalized readers with the possibility of reading the 'truth' of these women's lives, but they edited their texts in ways that would minimize readers' understanding of Plath and Woolf while maximizing the benefits they would collect as heirs of the authors' literary estates. These examples are typical of a larger pattern in which women's private writings are edited by family and/or friends of the author in an effort to gain control of the author's public personae.

Introduction

"But what is to become of all these diaries, I asked myself yesterday. If I died, what would Leo make of them? He would be disinclined to burn them; he could not publish them. Well, he should make up a book from them, I think; and then burn the body..."

-Virginia Woolf, Saturday, March 20, 1926

Of all the texts that reflect an individual's private voice, the diary is ostensibly the most "authentic."¹ In recent years, the publication of diaries has fed a public hungry for a more intimate look at the powerful and famous. Many families release their loved ones' private writings as a means of keeping that individual in the public eye while also keeping the family afloat financially. Two of the most famous published diaries are those written by Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath, renowned writers whose deaths by suicide catapulted their reputations from merely famous to immortal. When each of these women's diaries was released for publication, many readers thought that, at last, they would know the private woman behind the public exterior of her creative works. However, the publishing tactics employed by Leonard Woolf and Ted Hughes denied readers access to the full

¹ When I say "authentic," I understand the problematic nature of the word. Because language belongs to everyone, it really belongs to no one; that is, because language is a sign system, everyone recognizes the meaning of the word (or sign) but interprets it differently. The words an author writes in one way may be read by audiences in a variety of other ways based on each individual's position. Catherine Belsey describes the problem in this way: "Subjectivity, then, is linguistically and discursively constructed and displaced across the range of discourses in which the concrete individual participates. It follows from Saussure's theory of language as a system of differences that the world is intelligible only in discourse: there is no unmediated experience, no access to the raw reality of self and others" (596).

However, even as I recognize that language can never fully articulate our experiences, I maintain that language remains the best system for expressing ourselves to others. Thus, when I use the word "authentic" in this thesis, I recognize that language can never authentically represent an individual but still believe that as a system in which we all participate, language offers us the potential for understanding one another's experiences.

body of these women's diaries; rather, these husbands² used their editorial position to craft images that would reflect how each husband/editor wanted the reading public to see his wife.

I contend that during the initial publication of their wives' diaries, Leonard Woolf and Ted Hughes used editorial strategies that would help them control the public personae of Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath, respectively. By comparing the versions of the diaries that each husband edited with later, more complete versions, I will show that various passages in the diaries of Woolf and Plath were cut in an attempt to manipulate each author's voice. I maintain that Leonard Woolf made his cuts so as to help protect and further promote Virginia's reputation as a literary genius. Simultaneously, Leonard could use his editorial power to ensure that he would be perceived as central to his wife's creativity. Ted Hughes' editorial endeavors indicate a need to present Sylvia Plath as a flawed woman so as to justify her suicide, which could then alleviate scrutiny from those who held Hughes responsible for Plath's death. At the same time that they worked to control their deceased wives' public personae, then, each man could also shape how he would be perceived in relation to his wife. Such depictions would allow Leonard Woolf and Ted Hughes the opportunity to enhance their reputations while also increasing the royalties they would receive from their wives' literary estates.

The editorial strategies used by Leonard Woolf and Ted Hughes are often employed by friends and family members of deceased authors—particularly women

² In Plath's case, she and Hughes were estranged at the time of her suicide. Because no formal divorce had been undertaken, Hughes, retaining his legal rights as husband, became executor of Plath's literary estate and held the rights to all her writings, both published and unpublished.

authors—but rarely questioned by the literary public, allowing for the silencing of authors' authentic voices. The examples of Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath are indicative of a larger problem in the field of diary publication. The private writings of Katherine Mansfield, a contemporary and friend of Woolf (which were not even kept in a regular diary form at all), were collected by Mansfield's husband John Middleton Murry and published after her death in order to capitalize on her fame. Otto Frank released his daughter Anne's diary to the public after the end of World War II, but only after cutting passages in which Anne made reference to her budding sexuality and her often tumultuous relationship with her mother. Men have long chosen to publish the private writings of their wives, sisters and daughters, often failing to consider whether those women would actually want the world to know their most intimate thoughts or whether excising certain entries might be a manipulation of these women's voices. While male authors' words have certainly been affected by similar editorial strategies, I have chosen to focus this project on women because I believe that women are particularly confined by such editorial choices. Because women have a smaller range of acceptable behaviors than men, women's diaries are often edited to remove entries that might be questionable to mainstream audiences. Women's sexuality and anger are two subjects that are regularly excised from their posthumously published diaries to make their writing more palatable—and more marketable.

For these reasons and others, this topic is a relevant one to the fields of women's studies and literary criticism. My work will examine the power relations of the editorial process and the gender dynamics involved in marriage roles. In my research, I have found other critics who have questioned the power dynamics involved when an author's family

first edits and then publishes a volume as intimate as a diary; however, such analyses do not typically occur until long after an author's immediate heirs have died and the original diary manuscript becomes accessible. The diaries of Marie Baskirtseff, Katherine Mansfield and Anne Frank have all been read from a perspective critical of their editorial standpoint. However, while critics have discerned the ulterior motives of editors in specific diaries, they have failed to recognize that these are not isolated incidents but instead, pieces of a larger pattern that continually allows women authors to be restrained through editorial strategy. I argue that readers cannot focus solely on the words on the page when we read diaries; we must also 'read between the lines' and recognize that editorial decisions have shaped our understanding of these authors. If we are to understand how women's personae have been manipulated when their diaries are edited and published by their families, we must read both the text and the context of these volumes. In addition to these broader issues, my work will also focus more specifically on the private writings of Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath, as I chart external reactions to intimate aspects of these women's lives, including their relationships with their husbands and ultimately, themselves. In addition, as I critique the editorial process, I will explore what subjects were deemed inappropriate for the original publications done by Leonard Woolf and Ted Hughes and attempt to determine why some passages were included and others were omitted. My analysis will reach beyond the scope of the diaries themselves as I read and examine published responses, including book reviews and literary criticism, to each version of these journals in order to help gauge how literary audiences reacted to the private writings of Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath. This same method will also help us understand how public opinion of these women shifted when the diaries were originally

released and again when more complete versions became available. In short, this thesis will look at the power dynamics and gendered relations between husband and wife, editor and author, reader and writer, and public and private writing, making it valuable not only to students of literature, but also to feminists working with issues such as the expression of women's agency through the writing process, as well as marriage, power and the tensions therein.

This work fuses traditional literary studies with issues central to women's studies and diary studies. In many ways, it is a new departure for these fields, because few scholars are currently critiquing the editorial process, particularly when the relationship between the editor and the author is as intimate as it often is in the publication of private documents like journals or letters. Even in the case of Plath and Hughes, arguably one of the most notorious instances of questionable diary editing, only a handful of scholars have addressed Hughes' cuts in any extended manner, and even fewer recognize that such problematic editing is indicative of a larger pattern of controlling an author's intended voice. I hope that this thesis will open a new way of thinking about the editorial process, the power politics of marriage, and lead to a better understanding of who Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath were in their own words, beyond the skewed portraits created by editors who had much to gain or lose depending on how readers responded to their personae.

This project has developed out of a combination of several of my passions as both a student and an avid reader. First and foremost, I have long been interested in the absence of women's voices from the literary canon. While Woolf and Plath have admittedly been studied more than many other women authors, the fact remains that both can and are often overlooked on the basis of their gender. On the whole, women are still

looked upon as a minor force within the history of literature. Women like Plath and Woolf are luckier than most, for in addition to their private writings, they have left behind literary legacies in the genres of poetry, fiction and literary criticism. Countless other women have left only diaries and letters, traditionally seen as 'feminine' forms of writing that, for many scholars, lack any true literary merit or scholarly value. Recently, the field of diary studies has opened within academic circles and is beginning to change perceptions regarding the value of such texts, thus allowing more women the possibility of being considered 'authors' rather than just 'scribblers' while also helping redefine what 'literature' really is. Theorists like Suzanne Bunkers, Harriett Blodgett, Cynthia Huff and Judy Nolte Temple have turned diary studies from a marginal area of study to a vital one in the larger field of feminist literary criticism, another of the passions that led me to this project. I love reinterpreting texts in new ways that reflect on myself as a feminist reader, as well as thinking about literature in ways that are not often discussed in classrooms outside the women's studies department. Looking at the diaries of Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath for the past year and a half, I have been able to formulate new ideas about the diary as a feminine form of writing, as well as the connections between public and private writings and how we might better study private writings as a unique genre, not just supplementary materials that can complement our study of pieces intended for publication but rather, works with their own literary merits.

While I enjoy studying diaries in terms of their artistic value, I have to admit that this project was also sparked by my interest in their voyeuristic aspects. I have long been a reader of biography, autobiography and diary in the search for the 'true' self of famous figures I could never hope to meet. Diaries, in particular, allowed me an intimacy with

favorite authors that I couldn't gain when I read their creative works. That's what originally led me to want to read the diaries of Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath. When I read their fiction and poetry, I felt an indescribable connection with these women. I looked up to them on many levels—as writers, as feminist foremothers, as women—and I looked forward to reading published versions of their diaries and gaining yet another level of understanding about who they really were.

When I picked up *A Writer's Diary* and *The Journals of Sylvia Plath*, however, I was surprised to discover how freely Leonard Woolf and Ted Hughes admitted that they had cut entries in the interest of space and, more shockingly, content that might be offensive to some readers. The versions I was reading weren't giving me an opportunity to know these women's authentic voices; instead, I was only allowed to know what their husband-editors *wanted* me to know. At the same time that their families were making money off of these diaries by promising readers intimate insights into the lives of Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath, they were cutting them so as to manipulate how these women would be portrayed—and not incidentally, to protect their own reputations in the process. Though this thesis focuses on the editorial strategies employed in the publication of the diaries of Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath, I hope my project will shed light on the larger issue of how women's private writings have been manipulated for their heirs' gain.

Throughout the course of this project, my thoughts on published diaries have shifted. As I mentioned earlier, I was once interested in the voyeuristic aspects of reading diaries. I now understand that those who choose to publish their loved ones' private writings are capitalizing on that curiosity by tantalizing readers with the promise of intimate knowledge of their favorite writers' lives while withholding anything that could

be deemed *too* intimate. The back cover of the 1982 version of *The Journals of Sylvia Plath* teases readers with the tagline “Self-Portrait of the Artist as a Woman” (McCullough, back cover), but that “self-portrait” is one that has been distorted by its editors. The same is true in the cases of Virginia Woolf and countless other authors who wrote for their eyes only and whose ‘private’ words (or at least, sections thereof) are now read by millions.

The diaries of Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath have each been re-released in expanded versions in recent years, but I am still left to question the wisdom of publishing private writings without the author’s express consent. In the case of Virginia Woolf, the author planned to use her diaries as background material for memoirs; in the event that she would not live to complete that project (which she did not), she imagined that Leonard might create a small volume for publication and dispose of the rest. He did this, but his volume pieced together the fragments relating to the works Woolf wrote specifically for publication, entries that are not representative of her diaries as a whole, which tended to distance themselves from the novels and essays on which the author spent much of her time and instead were meant to create a new genre somewhere between fact and fiction. *A Writer’s Diary* implied that Woolf’s private writing focused only on her published works, which was hardly the case; the author only occasionally used her diary to mediate on her professional writings. If Virginia Woolf were allowed to select the entries to be included in *A Writer’s Diary*, would she agree with her husband’s choices? It is hard to say, though I can’t help feeling that she might have chosen differently, based on the knowledge that Woolf saw her notebooks as a place not to work out frustrations within her other works, but as a space in which to create a new form of literature. In any case,

Leonard Woolf's status as editor can at least be somewhat justified; we know that Woolf planned to use her private notebooks in some sort of publication. We cannot delude ourselves into thinking that Sylvia Plath ever intended the masses to see her private writings. Not only were they published without any hint of consent from the author, but Hughes' foreword also notes that he went so far as to destroy one of her notebooks because he "did not want her children to have to read it" (Plath, *Journals*, xv). Putting his estranged wife on display while also preventing readers from studying the writings of her final days, Hughes contorted our understanding of who Plath really was; he let her journals tell the story of her life—but on *his* terms. In each of these cases, editorial harm was done to women's authentic voices. Their private words were edited in such a way as to maximize public interest without the threat of scandal that could turn readers away from their other works. For better or worse, their words should have remained untouched. If sections of their diaries were too outrageous (or alternately, too boring) for public consumption, then why were they published in the first place? Money and hopes of reviving interest in an author seem to be two of the most common reasons. Do these explanations justify the damage that has been done to women's words? Hardly.

Some critics might argue that editorial choices are typically made in an author's best interest. After all, an author's reputation could potentially be damaged if audiences were allowed to witness the full range of that author's experiences; an editor could shape and condense the highlights of a diary into a package that gave readers a glimpse of the author while still protecting the author's privacy. For many editors and critics, it might appear to be a good solution. Once upon a time, I might have agreed with them, since my future career goals include working in some editorial branch of the publishing field.

However, I now contend that the editorial strategies employed by Leonard Woolf and Ted Hughes have been harmful to the very women they purport to protect. In order to better understand the extent to which editorial choices can manipulate the way readers perceive these authors, I have chosen to do textual analyses of the versions of the diaries edited by these men and to compare them with later, more complete versions of the diaries.

Doing a side-by-side comparison of Virginia Woolf's diaries was not as easy a task as I had anticipated, due in large part to Leonard Woolf's choice to make his editorial work invisible to readers. In his Introduction to *A Writer's Diary*, Leonard Woolf informs readers that he will not mark omissions, which he feels would have been so continual that his process might have worried readers (ix). *A Writer's Diary* (1952) comprises a very small percentage of the mass of writings found in the five volumes of *The Diary of Virginia Woolf* (1977-1984), making it difficult for me find Leonard's selections (which were relatively few and far between) within the larger publication. In spite of this setback, there were cases in which I was able to perform a side-by-side analysis. Looking at the nuances of the two versions of specific entries, I could locate subtle changes Leonard had made to Virginia's words, changes that would alter readers' understanding of her.

Nevertheless, I also had to employ other techniques for analysis. In particular, I examined Leonard Woolf's own explanation of what was included in *A Writer's Diary* and why, then I read the volume with that model in mind; time and again, I found specific passages which did not fit with his stated editorial goals. I was able to critique Woolf's editorial mindset by noting what he purported to include and why, and conversely, what he claimed to omit and why. Leonard's stated attempts to present Virginia Woolf only as a writer leave out many other important facets of her personality, facets which some might contend

actually helped contribute to Woolf's perception of herself as a writer.

Analyzing Sylvia Plath's journals proved easier than my work with Woolf's diaries. With relative ease, I was able to compare passages from the recently released edition of *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath* (2000) with those omitted from *The Journals of Sylvia Plath* (1982). This is because within the original version, Frances McCullough, the editor selected by Ted Hughes, uses different markings to distinguish the cuts she has made from the ones made at the request of the Plath Estate. Jacqueline Rose notes that "McCullough uses ['omission' signs] to indicate cuts requested by the Estate, ellipses indicate some of her cuts, others are unmarked" (72). Thus, while readers may have a difficult time discerning what McCullough has omitted because not all her cuts are marked, all those erased by Plath's literary estate³ are clearly delineated by 'omission' signs, making her system a helpful one for this study, which will focus on the cuts Hughes made. In my work, I was able to look at two different versions of the same passage and know exactly what had been cut from the original publication of the *Journals*, as well as who authorized that cut. In addition, I looked to McCullough and Hughes' editorial commentary, which, while minimal, distorts certain passages by implying an understanding of the text otherwise unavailable to the reader. Combining these two strategies, it became relatively easy for me to comprehend Hughes' editorial strategy and understand that he wanted readers to perceive his estranged wife as a madwoman in whose best interest he acted both in life and after death.

³ It should be noted that Sylvia Plath's literary estate is overseen by Ted Hughes' sister Olwyn, with whom Plath shared a very contentious relationship during her life.

Comparing the published versions of the diaries of Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath, it is obvious that Leonard Woolf and Ted Hughes released their versions with the intent of presenting carefully controlled images of their spouses. Leonard Woolf wanted to portray Virginia Woolf as a genius writer whose life revolved solely around her craft; he hoped that publishing fragments of her diary would elevate her status in literary studies and reignite interest in her fiction and essays. Ted Hughes, on the other hand, released selections from Sylvia Plath's private writings in an effort to present Plath as a flawed woman whose suicide was her own choice, not something Hughes drove her to, as many had speculated. Woolf's motivation might seem more benevolent than Hughes', but the end result was the same: a skewed self-portrait that neither woman had the ability to contest or change. In both cases, the husband/editors manipulated these women's private words for their own public gain—in terms of both reputation and economic status. Their work is indicative of a larger pattern within the field of diary publication, in which women's private writings are published without their consent. Dorothy Wordsworth and Marjory Fleming are only two examples of women who kept diaries that were heavily and inaccurately edited after their deaths; their words were turned against them at a point at which they could no longer use their voices to refute the claims made by editors. My hope is that this work will shed light on a practice that has rarely been questioned in academic circles, as well as lead to a feminist re-imagining of what the editorial process should look like. Readers may already have made up their minds about Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath through a reading of their diaries, but I hope this study will lead to a re-vision of how editorial process can significantly shift the way an individual is presented, as well as a heightened consciousness around the fact that the editorial voice is always a character in

such a publication. In the case of these two diaries, the editorial voice is doubly entrenched as a character, for Leonard Woolf and Ted Hughes are characters within the narration *and* characters who silence certain portions of the text. Newer versions of each diary have been published, allowing Woolf and Plath the opportunity to more fully speak for themselves again, but even these versions are problematic, for what might these women have edited of themselves if they knew their private writings were to be published? Publishing diaries and letters may provide readers with an insight into the private mind of a public author, but doing so takes authority away from the author and ultimately, expurgated or not, leaves readers with a distorted portrait of who the author really was.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

Before I introduce readers to my own analysis of the effects of diary editing, let me turn now to a review of the literature I have read in preparation for this project. Through this exercise, I hope to convey my place within the fields of feminist literary criticism and diary studies, in order to determine what work has already been done in these fields and what ground is left to be broken.

The Diaries Themselves

For this project, I relied extensively on the two published versions of Virginia Woolf's and Sylvia Plath's diaries. These texts comprised the backbone for the rest of my work. I studied Virginia Woolf's *A Writer's Diary* and four of the five volumes of *The Diaries of Virginia Woolf*, as well as both versions of *The Journals of Sylvia Plath*. Obviously, the later versions of the diaries (edited by Anne Olivier Bell and Karen Kukil, respectively) served as the basis this study, since they represent the voices of the authors more completely than any other source. However, even the newer versions, while far more complete than the original publications, give readers only restricted access to the authors' complete diaries.

Though *The Diaries of Virginia Woolf* were released in a greatly expanded version beginning in 1977, readers cannot be certain that we are reading the authentic voice of Virginia Woolf. *A Writer's Diary* weighs in at 336 pages while *The Diaries of Virginia Woolf* are well over 1,600 pages, so obviously, we can find a more accurate gauge of what Woolf perceived as the truth of the events of her life and her lifetime in the newer version. However, like Leonard Woolf's slim edition, the five-volume set was also edited by a

family member. This time, Anne Olivier Bell, wife of Virginia's nephew Quentin Bell (who also wrote a highly lauded biography of his aunt), did the honors. From the time Leonard himself published *A Writer's Diary*, Woolf's heirs have long supported themselves by relying on her literary reputation—and her royalties. Bell's preface to the *Diary* is decidedly vague as to whether some of Woolf's entries may have been omitted from publication, but it seems fairly certain that her position within the Woolf dynasty might have shaped her editorial decisions.

Further, in the introduction to *The Diaries*, Quentin Bell opens by discrediting Virginia's version of the 'truth': "Virginia Woolf's reputation for truthfulness was not good. She was supposed to be malicious, a gossip, and one who allowed her imagination to run away with her" (Bell, xiii). Discrediting the author before the book even opens serves as a means of controlling Woolf's voice; those entries in which she wrote badly of anyone else could be explained away as the author's misconception, not the wrongdoing of people whose heirs might still be alive to read the diaries—and possibly sue over them.

Editorial decisions within *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath* are similarly problematic. In this version of Plath's journals, six sentences are cut from one passage and six sentences are cut from another. The editor, Karen Kukil, gives no explanation for why she cuts these 12 sentences, and barely even acknowledges that there have been any cuts at all (Plath, *Unabridged Journals*, x). While less disconcerting than the editorial choices made by Ted Hughes, Kukil's work is troubling in other ways, for she inexplicably puts some passages (typically those pertaining to Plath's writing) in appendices while leaving others in the main narrative-style text of the book, forcing readers to constantly

flip back and forth and thus, breaking the rhythm of Plath's writing as it occurred organically.

Also frustrating is the fact that, while Kukil's version of the diaries contains over 300 pages of material not included in the previous addition, the final years of Plath's diaries remain missing. In his foreword to the 1982 version of *The Journals of Sylvia Plath*, Ted Hughes hinted that he knew where those missing pages are, though his answer is hardly to readers' satisfaction: "The last of these [notebooks] contained entries for several months, and I destroyed it because I did not want her children to have to read it (in those days I regarded forgetfulness as an essential part of survival. The other [notebook] disappeared" (Plath, *Journals*, xv). The last part of Hughes' statement could indicate that the final notebook could still exist somewhere, but as of yet, it remains hidden from public view. Thus, even in the 'more complete' version of the *Journals*, Hughes still had editorial control, for he managed to keep Plath's thoughts in her final days away from general scrutiny.

It is clear, then, that no published version of either diary presents the unedited voice of its author. Still, the newer versions of these diaries provide more accurate portraits of Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath than their predecessors, and the gaps between them can provide us with an important system for studying the editorial process. I understand the troublesome nature of each version of the diaries, but they are all I have to work with, so I can only comment on the difficulties in trusting any of these editors.

The large scope of these diaries would make a complete side-by-side analysis of the texts impossible given the restraints of this project's timetable. To that end, I have

chosen to analyze just a few passages from each woman's diaries that are indicative of the larger editorial patterns in each text. Similarly, it cannot be stressed enough that the diaries of Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath serve as only two examples among the many women whose words and reputations have suffered similar fates. Rather than skim over several of these cases and risk diminishing my awareness of how editorial decisions have affected women, I have chosen to concentrate only on Woolf and Plath so that I might provide a comprehensive reading of how editorial process has been used to control women.

Biographies of Woolf and Plath

I read several biographies of Woolf and Plath in order to get other perspectives on the incidents noted by each in their diaries. In particular, I wanted outside analysis on the marriages of Leonard and Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes. As I began the project, some naïve part of me expected that these biographies would carry unbiased accounts of Woolf and Plath's lives. However, I quickly discovered that many biographers reiterated the same myths that had been created by Leonard Woolf and Ted Hughes. In particular, several Woolf biographers, among them Panthea Reid and Mitchell Leaska, completely trusted the image that Leonard had created of his relationship with Virginia and presented him as the hero of Virginia's life. This realization shaped many of my conclusions regarding the extent to which these men's editorial power had shaped the images of Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath.

Many Woolf biographies comment extensively on Leonard's often-maternal role as the primary caregiver in the couple's marriage (Leaska, 192, Reid, 154, et al). This image

of Leonard is important to my work both in terms of the specific nature of the Woolfs' relationship and in the way that it provides an example through which I can do my larger analysis of the power and gender dynamics of marriage. First, if this were a biography about a male writer, his wife's care and support would receive little to no comment. However, in the reversal of those traditional roles, their situation receives extended analysis in terms of both Virginia's bouts with mental illness and the power dynamics of their relationship.

Biographers and critics alike regularly comment on the fact that Virginia appears to have had more control in the Woolfs' marriage, and they often determine that the health problems Virginia suffered throughout her life were merely a ploy by which she could garner the attention of those around her—especially Leonard. Again, if the roles of caretaker and receiver were reversed, I speculate that few would comment on a wife's devotion to her ill husband, but since we here find a man willing to sacrifice his ambitions for his wife, writers find this 'abnormal' and worthy of extensive discussion. Those who have written joint studies of the Woolfs as a couple have often portrayed Leonard's patient nursing as key to his wife's literary success. Peter Alexander, in particular, claims that "without Leonard, we should not have had Virginia—or at least, no more of her than *The Voyage Out*" (211). Such biographical studies point out time and again how 'unusual' the Woolf marriage was, and even though both partners took on traits and roles that were nontraditional for their gender, Leonard is regularly perceived as the key to the couple's success.

In contrast to biographies about Virginia Woolf, those written about the life of

Sylvia Plath provide us with a portrait of just how ‘normal’ her marriage to Ted Hughes was—for better *and* for worse (Stevenson, 182, Alexander, 215, et al). In many ways, they serve to supplement that which Plath has already told us. Despite, for instance, the couple’s shared view that they would have a “modern marriage” in which both partners would take equal responsibility for household and breadwinning duties (which seems fairly impossible, considered the couple were married in the 1950s, clearly the most traditional and conservative decade of the 20th century), we learn that Plath not only did most of the cooking, she also typed and submitted most of Hughes’ poems for him so that he could focus on his craft without the distractions of tedious day-to-day work (Alexander, 189). Never mind that she, too, was writing and submitting poems; Plath gladly (at least at first) put Hughes on a pedestal, glorifying his work while deprioritizing her own.

This situation oddly parallels the relationship between Plath’s own parents. When Otto Plath decided to rewrite his dissertation into a book, it was his wife, Aurelia, who typed and edited her husband’s manuscript (Wagner-Martin, 4); Otto barely acknowledged Aurelia’s place in his own creative process (Ibid, 12-13). Though young Sylvia recognized this imbalance, she repeated it herself some 20 years later in her relationship with Hughes, illustrating just how difficult it often is for women to break out of traditional roles, particularly within the bonds of marriage. This example, too, will play a role in my analysis of marriage and power, as I speculate that Hughes may have felt justified in the editorial role he played in the publication of Plath’s journals because he saw himself as the superior literary mind of their partnership, a belief with which Plath herself often agreed.

Diary Theory

Diary studies is a new field within the larger realm of literary theory, and in many ways, the key concepts of diary theory are still emerging. I hope that my work can make a significant contribution to the field, because while I have found critics like Philip Waldron and Laureen Nussbaum, who have written specifically on the complicated editorial process in the *Journal of Katherine Mansfield* and Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl*, respectively, no one has made the connection that these examples are indicative of a larger system in which women's diaries are regularly manipulated by their family and friends. While she does not deal specifically with a diary edited by anyone close to the author, Elizabeth Hampsten's "Editing a Woman's Diary: A Case Study" supplied me with a helpful model of how to look beyond a text's surface and problematize an editor's decisions in shaping the volume for publication.

Suzanne Bunker's "Whose Diary Is It, Anyway? Issues of Agency, Authority, Ownership" gave me a crucial perspective on diary editing. Bunkers gave me an insider's perspective on how editors prepare diaries for publication, how they determine what to excise and how they constructive a cohesive narrative where one might not exist. She asks many of the questions I have been asking throughout this study: Whose diary is it when a private document is published? Who gets to determine what gets published? Can any diary tell us the story of its author's life? Though I stumbled across Bunkers' paper late into my research, it still provided me with a theoretical framework I could apply to my own study.

Other diary theorists have provided me with helpful techniques by which to read the journals of Sylvia Plath and Virginia Woolf. Helen M. Buss notes that by examining women's diaries, we can often learn about the larger social issues that were ongoing during these women's lives. "When reading personal documents, an informed consciousness of the power systems that are operational in such an economy is essential" (Bunkers, 99). By understanding the power systems at work in the diaries of Woolf and Plath, we can better understand the experiences that shaped these women as authors and as individuals; conversely, by understanding who Plath and Woolf were as individuals, we can better understand the power dynamics of their worlds.

Other theorists' beliefs have been helpful only in that my opposition to their theories has helped to strengthen my own argumentative stance. Lynn Z. Bloom, for instance, analyzes the shift many diaries undergo from public to private documents. She states that, "for a professional writer there are no private writings" (Bunkers, 24). Bloom looks at the diaries of Virginia Woolf and other professional authors, noting that their use of literary techniques like foreshadowing and the use of metaphors indicated that their diaries were written for readers other than themselves. While I agree that most diaries are written not just for their authors but for some sort of imagined audience, I have to disagree with Bloom's assertion. In my opinion, evidence of literary method alone cannot determine an author's intent; technique does not give readers sufficient access to an author's motives for keeping a diary or journal. While Woolf *did* plan on using her diaries as the basis for memoirs, there is no evidence that Plath wanted to use her private writings for anything other than brainstorming toward poem and short story topics; she never

indicated a desire to publish her private writings. Assuming that published authors who kept diaries would want their private work read by a larger audience allows families to justify the release of such writings, even when the author never gave consent for such publications.

Critical Analysis of the Diaries of Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath

To date, I have found no sustained critical analysis on Leonard Woolf's work as editor of his wife's diaries. I speculate that this links with my earlier assertions regarding the literary community's emphasis on Leonard as Virginia's caregiver. While it is easy to discern the problems of Ted Hughes editing his estranged wife's private writings, many of which concern him, the relationship between Virginia and Leonard Woolf is often regarded as idyllic. Because Leonard is perceived to have been nurturing, even maternal, with Virginia, we often assume that his editorial work was done benevolently, that he honored her words and her literary vision as much as he did her health. Still, benevolent or not, the fact remains that Leonard *did* manipulate Virginia's voice through the editorial process, and I believe that he did so in order to control how she would be perceived by the literary community. In her book *Virginia Woolf Icon*, Brenda Silver stresses that "Leonard's clearly stated editorial choice to present Virginia as a writer, period, introduces....the family's desire both to disseminate and to contain Virginia Woolf's image..." (97). While Silver's contention is helpful in that she provides one of the few mentions of Leonard's attempt to control Virginia's image, she does not analyze *A Writer's Diary* in order to back up her claim. Similarly, Cynthia Ozick's influential essay "Mrs. Virginia Woolf" was one of the first to probe what Leonard Woolf had to gain from

presenting himself as his wife's ultimate caretaker and confidant, but she does not carry this inquiry to Leonard's editorial work. However, both of these pieces have supplied me with the knowledge that the portrait of the Woolf marriage that Leonard created *is* being questioned; their probing gave me a foundation from which to make my own claims regarding Leonard's motivation for his editorial work.

I had better luck finding critiques of Ted Hughes' editorial work in *The Journals of Sylvia Plath*. Though several authors comment on the problematic nature of Hughes' editing, Jacqueline Rose's *The Haunting of Sylvia Plath* includes a particularly fine analysis of his double role as husband/editor. Among her other contributions, Rose discerns the difference between the cuts made by Hughes himself and his co-editor, Francis McCullough. Her investigation made it easy for me to determine which editorial decisions were made by Hughes, thus freeing me to concentrate more on why he omitted the sections he did than having to speculate which cuts were even his. Rose also comments extensively on the commentary made in the *Journals* by Hughes and by Plath's mother Aurelia, which repudiates Plath's voice even as it pretends to honor it. Rose also examines specific passages in *The Journals of Sylvia Plath*, but since her study was published before Karen Kukil's version of the *Journals* was released, Rose could only speculate on what had been left out. I was able to compare the same passages in both texts to find exactly what had been excised.

Book Reviews

To supplement my understanding of how each version of these diaries shaped the public's perception of Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath, I found book reviews that

critiqued each publication. I wanted to find out if critics were questioning the editorial choices made by Leonard Woolf and Ted Hughes, and if they saw as problematic the conflicts that can arise when an author's husband also takes on the role of editor. In the case of Virginia and Leonard Woolf, I had little difficulty locating reviews and criticism on *The Diaries of Virginia Woolf*, but struggled to uncover reviews that marked the 1954 U.S. release of *A Writer's Diary*. Eventually, I was able to locate two that were representative of the two divergent perspectives on *A Writer's Diary*. W.H. Auden praised Leonard Woolf's decision to focus the book only on Virginia's thoughts on her own writing, while Elizabeth Bowen questioned what might be missing from such a heavily edited text. Even today, Bowen's query remains a marginal perspective on Leonard's work; few scholars have questioned his editorial stance.

While my search for reviews of Woolf's diaries was a taxing one, I encountered no such difficulties while locating reviews of *The Journals of Sylvia Plath*. The fact that Plath had become something of a icon during the Second Wave of the Women's Movement led to a plethora of feminist reviews of the book. Though few critics had expressed skepticism over Leonard Woolf's expurgation of Virginia's words in *A Writer's Diary*, a resurgence of interest in women's writing produced many critical readings on Hughes' editorial work on his Plath's *Journals*. Public outcry over what was missing from the *Journals* grew so strong, in fact, that in 1990 Hughes' co-editor, Frances McCullough, released a statement asserting that it was Hughes, not she, who made many of the most controversial cuts. When Karen Kukil's unabridged version of the *Journals* appeared in 2000, critics were finally able to return to the 1982 edition and confirm their

suspensions about Hughes' excisions. Since Kukil's text is not quite two years old, I was able to locate popular reviews of the book; however, it will still take some time before literary theorists release more formal criticism of the text.

Feminist Biography Theory

As I formulated my own conclusions regarding the value of diary publication, I wanted some background on other ways the stories of women's lives have been told. *The Challenge of Feminist Biography* provided me with a solid introduction to the unique features of feminist biography theory and helped me develop the voice I would use for telling the story of these diaries. Linda Wagner-Martin's *Telling Women's Lives* supported my belief that the stories of women's lives cannot be told using the archetype established for male-centered biography. Her work provided me with many examples of alternative biographical narratives and gave me a lens through which I could analyze the Woolf and Plath biographies I read. Carolyn Heilbrun's *Writing a Woman's Life* articulated many of my concerns with how the traditional structure of biography is not suited for expressing the complexity of women's lives. Her analysis intensified my understanding of the fact that male editors can excise many of a diary's most intense entries simply because they are unfamiliar or uncomfortable with the intimate moments that the authors have found valuable. This awareness gave me the ability to recognize that sexuality and anger, two big themes in the diaries I studied, were cut not necessarily because the authors would have wanted them removed, but because Leonard Woolf and Ted Hughes were uneasy with how readers might perceive these subjects.

Chapter 2: *A Writer's Diary*

The 1912 union of Virginia Stephen to Leonard Woolf does not fit most people's imaginings of marriage in the post-Victorian Era. The Woolfs defied convention regarding marriage and gender roles in a number of ways. For starters, the average British woman marrying in the early part of the 20th century was not quite 26 years old ("Women and Men in Britain...", 6), but Virginia was 30 years old on her wedding day. Much older than the typical bride of her time, she was perceived by most of her family and friends as a spinster well beyond any hope of marriage. But despite the pity of many within her circle, Virginia Stephen had actually had several suitors. In fact, her engagement to Leonard was not the first in her life; other men had proposed over the years, but Virginia had found few of them acceptable potential partners. The year before her marriage to Woolf, Virginia's friend Lytton Strachey (a well-known homosexual among Virginia's circle of friends) proposed marriage, and Virginia quickly accepted (Reid, 96). Why Strachey proposed remains a mystery, as does Virginia's acceptance of the proposal. In any case, the relationship was quickly called off, and Strachey looked to his friend Woolf (whom Virginia had met once or twice nearly a decade before, when he had been a close friend of Virginia's brother Thoby) as a potential husband for Virginia. Leonard barely knew Virginia except by reputation, but within six months of his return to Britain from colonial Ceylon (where he spent years in civil service with the British regime), he proposed marriage (Alexander, 70).

Through the time they spent together at gatherings of mutual friends, Leonard had begun to fall in love with Virginia, finding her charming, intelligent and beautiful, but his

motivations for marriage included practical as well as romantic ones. Virginia's comfortable middle class existence, coupled with her association with the illustrious Bloomsbury Group, made her part of a world that Leonard could never completely enter. While he shared friendships with many of London's best and brightest, he could be easily overlooked by them because of his working class background and his Jewish heritage. Marriage to a well-connected and financially secure woman, on the other hand, would help cement his position in Bloomsbury's intellectual circle. Further, Virginia's small inheritances would be enough to secure them a comfortable life together, one in which they could both work creatively and not have to live from hand to mouth (Ibid). Leonard had gone to Ceylon years before to presumably make his fortune and elevate his status back in England, but in these respects, his time away was unsuccessful. Nearing the age of 32, Leonard must have sensed that it was 'do or die' time; if he did not find a relatively wealthy and socially connected wife, he could never truly integrate himself as part of the intellectual elite he so admired.

Somewhat ironically, Virginia Stephen's mental illness made her even more attractive to Leonard Woolf. Not only did she have the social connections and intellect he so valued, but her weakness would allow his strength to shine through and guarantee his place within the Bloomsbury Group. Leonard was also attracted to Virginia's sister Vanessa, but in many ways, Virginia's vulnerability made her the more desirable partner. In her 1973 essay "Mrs. Virginia Woolf," Cynthia Ozick remarks that

He was fit for her because her madness, especially in combination with her innovative genius, demanded the most grave, minutely persevering and attentive service. She was fit for him not simply because she represented

Bloomsbury in its most resplendent flowering of originality and luminousness....What Leonard needed in Virginia was not so much her genius as her madness. (Ozick, 38-39)

Motivated initially by Virginia Stephen's connection to the Bloomsbury circle and her independent economic status, Leonard Woolf also found her charming and attractive—and pliant enough—to make a good mate.

But if practicality motivated Leonard's proposal, it was an even larger factor in Virginia's acceptance. In fact, unlike the stereotypical image of a woman blinded by love, Virginia's decision to marry was based even less in emotion than Leonard's was. Her few deep emotional attachments throughout her life had been with women, and she had never been particularly attracted to any man. Still, she was 30 years old, and her chances at a 'normal' life were quickly evaporating. Society was certain to view Virginia as a spinster—as something less than a true woman—if she did not marry soon. In addition to the internalization of these societal pressures to marry, Virginia Stephen had to deal with overt, external pressures from some unlikely sources. Virginia's physician, Dr. Savage, recommended marriage as a possible cure for Virginia's bouts with mental illness (Alexander, 217). Her sister Vanessa repeatedly urged Virginia to marry—not for the sake of Virginia's own happiness, but rather, so that Vanessa could be relieved of the responsibility of caring for Virginia (Leaska, 154-55). Eager to please her sister and with few other desirable options, Virginia accepted Leonard's proposal. He had been a close friend of Virginia's brother Thoby, who had died some years before, and spending time with Leonard reminded Virginia of her favorite sibling. Conversely, his time in Ceylon, coupled with his Jewishness, made him exotic and different to her (Reid, 127). This

combination of the familiar and the mysterious set Leonard apart from the other suitors Virginia had entertained. But while he may have intrigued her, that didn't mean she was in love with him. On the contrary, while she later grew to admire and respect him for his intelligence and unending care for her, in the beginning, Virginia Stephen became Virginia Woolf primarily out of a lack of socially acceptable alternatives for her future.

In addition to their non-traditional courtship and motivations for marriage, the Woolfs continued to transcend conventional gender roles throughout their relationship. In addition to her small inheritance, Virginia supported her husband by making the bulk of the couple's earned income (Alexander, 156), but Leonard controlled their finances and gave the author only a small allowance every week (Ozick, 41). But while Virginia's position in the traditionally male role of breadwinner is often downplayed by biographers and critics, Leonard's role as Virginia's caretaker and nurse receives ample attention. The image of Leonard as caretaker serves two important functions. First, presenting Leonard in this light makes him the hero of Virginia's life story and robs her of agency. Presenting Leonard as Virginia's caretaker allows their life together to be seen as exemplary of the larger archetype of the male Prince Charming figure who risks his life to save that of the passive princess who waits to be rescued from the forces in her life that she cannot face alone. Seen from this perspective, the knowledge that Leonard devoted so much time and energy to rescuing Virginia from her struggles with mental illness can thus serve as an explanation as to why his writing is not as critically and popularly received. Second, setting Leonard up as caretaker serves to idealize him as one who works selflessly in Virginia's best interest. Nearly all scholars studying the life of Virginia Woolf comment

extensively on the fact that, for much of her marriage, she was emotionally and mentally unstable and relied heavily on Leonard to care for her well-being. It can be speculated that if the roles were reversed and *Virginia* were playing the maternal role typically assigned to wives, there would be little to no comment on the situation; it would simply be seen as part of her wifely duty.¹ When Leonard played the nurturing role, however, it garnered much sympathy and respect precisely because it fell outside the boundaries of the expected role of men. Biographer Panthea Reid, for instance, notes that “[Leonard] was the powerless partner before [Virginia]” (156). Among one of his 14 indexed mentions of Virginia’s emotional dependency on Leonard, Mitchell Leaska writes that “Leonard, apart from being her husband, had become and would remain the principal mainstay in her life” (192). Most tellingly, perhaps, Peter F. Alexander speculates on whether the world would even have known Virginia Woolf at all without the unending support that Leonard provided:

For his part, Leonard’s mind was in many ways a perfect counterpoise to his wife’s quicksilver instability. He lacked her sensitivity, her butterfly quickness, her imagination and her brilliant felicity of phrase. *But his firm command of external reality gave him the power to support her psychologically and materially to such effect that it seems very likely that without Leonard we should not have had Virginia-- or at least, no more of her than *The Voyage Out*.* (Alexander, 211, emphasis mine)

Alexander’s use of words like “power”, “command”, “support” and “firm” all serve to insinuate that even though the relationship revolved around Virginia and her battles with

¹ Examples illustrating the way wives in Leonard’s role have been overlooked can be seen in the portrayal of relationships like those of Thomas and Jane Carlyle and Thomas and Emma Hardy. See Dale Spender’s essay “Women’s Work and Women’s Criticism” in her book *The Writing or the Sex?* for a fuller discussion of these marriages.

mental illness, it was Leonard who had control of the relationship. The implication is clear: Virginia Woolf may have been a genius, but without Leonard, she would have been nothing.

In reality, while Virginia's art was in many ways indebted to the stability Leonard provided throughout her life, the relationship was not as one-sided as is often portrayed. Marriage to the illustrious Virginia Woolf brought Leonard "not only social position in the only society that mattered to him, but financial security as well" (Alexander, 71). During Virginia's life, Leonard Woolf established himself as a noted political analyst and together, the pair founded the illustrious Hogarth Press, a small publishing firm which quickly established a reputation for printing the short works of such literary innovators as T.S. Eliot, Katherine Mansfield and, of course, Virginia herself (Leaska, 198, 204, Reid, 198, et al). Still, despite all his professional successes, Leonard Woolf was known primarily as Virginia Woolf's husband, the artist's stalwart protector through her many bouts with mental illness. When Virginia committed suicide, Leonard did not relinquish his caretaker role. Being Virginia Woolf's husband had given him everything he ever wanted, and he was not willing to let her death bring the best part of his life to an end. Virginia's social and economic status had given Leonard prestige and prominence during her lifetime, and after her death by suicide in early 1941, Leonard knew he had to keep his wife's reputation alive for his own to have any hope of survival. He lived nearly 30 years after his wife's death, spending the remainder of his days writing his five-volume autobiography while focusing most of his energy on managing Virginia's literary estate (Reid, 456).

While Virginia Woolf was a fairly popular writer during her life, it was after her death that her works achieved an iconic status, due in large part to Leonard's efforts to keep Virginia ever-present in the public eye. Brenda R. Silver notes that under Leonard's watchful eye, the Hogarth Press meticulously set out a timetable for rerelease of all of Virginia's works so as to maximize critical and financial reaction from the literary community:

Histories of the Hogarth Press make clear that Leonard, who controlled his wife's literary estate, carefully planned the posthumous publication of her works to stretch them out over time; in the years immediately after her death these included her final novel, *Between the Acts*, and collections of her essays. In this sense, Leonard could be said to have promoted and marketed Virginia Woolf, keeping her in the eye of at least that public that reads serious literature or its reviews in the literary and intellectual journals. (Silver, 97-98)

Just as he had cared for Virginia in life, so Leonard would tend to her literary reputation in death, making sure that the world did not soon forget this woman who had helped change the face of fiction. In this vein, then, Leonard Woolf released *A Writer's Diary*, published in Britain in 1953 and in the United States in 1954. This slim volume was meant to be a means of keeping the public interested in Virginia so as to better market her novels, whose popularity had begun to decline in recent years (Silver, 97).

In Leonard Woolf's Preface to *A Writer's Diary*, he made clear his intentions as an editor: he would limit the published entries to those that focus solely on Virginia as a writer. "I have been carefully through the 26 volumes of diary and have extracted and now publish in this volume practically everything which referred to her own writing" (viii). He noted, however, that he would include three other types of entry: 1) Entries in which

he perceives that she was experimenting with a particular writing style or working with the craft of writing; 2) Entries which he feels give the reader an idea of the “raw material of her art”; 3) Entries in which Virginia comments on the books she was reading (ix). His criteria were determinedly vague; though he wanted this publication to give readers a glimpse into the mind of a writer, the power was entirely to determine what parts of that writer’s mind were significant to her art rested entirely in his hands. As we will later see, his criteria for entries dealing with Virginia Woolf as a writer was elastic enough to allow him to cut anything he saw as too personal while also enabling him to include entries that he found valuable but that ultimately had little or nothing to do with her writing.

Another point of interest is the contradiction between Leonard’s preferences as a reader of diaries and as an editor. Near the beginning of his preface, he wrote that it is “nearly always a mistake to publish extracts from diaries or letters....The omissions almost always distort or conceal the true character of the diarist or letter-writer...” (vii-viii). Yet he noted that in the end, he ultimately chose to omit those entries (or sections of entries) he deemed too personal. Further, he stated:

In editing the diary I was in some doubt whether to indicate omissions. In the end I decided not to do so as a general rule. The omissions and dots would have been so continual as to worry the reader...The reader must remember that what is printed in this volume is only a very small portion of the diaries and that the extracts were *embedded in a mass of matter unconnected with Virginia Woolf’s writing*. (*A Writer’s Diary*, ix, emphasis mine)

In this brief passage, Leonard Woolf made several moves to establish himself as *the* authority on Virginia Woolf as an individual and a writer. Though he normally disapproved of omissions when publishing private writings, here was an exception in

which he felt that it would be more beneficial to the reader to omit anything which he deemed unrelated to Virginia's writing. In addition, he decided that marking omissions would be too distracting for the reader and thus, 'helpfully' omitted any note of omission so that readers can 'better' focus on the selections at hand. The lack of any marking that would denote omissions allowed *A Writer's Diary* the artifice of an unexpurgated volume, making it easier for readers to forget that anything Virginia Woolf wrote was removed. Finally, when Leonard wrote that the entries focused solely on writing were "embedded in a mass of matter unconnected with Virginia Woolf's writing," he implied that her published works were the only thing of importance she ever did. His editorial work would thus save readers from the tedium of writings he considered inconsequential.

Simultaneously, by referring to his wife only as "Virginia Woolf", Leonard could downplay his relationship with the author, thus maintaining a façade of unbiased editorial work. Such a presentation both established Virginia as a writer of genius and also attempted to diminish interest in her personal life. Minimizing interest in Virginia's private life also allowed Leonard to evade public curiosity regarding his own life, at least until he could tell his story on his own terms.

In the late 1950s, Leonard Woolf began writing and publishing five volumes of autobiography, placing himself at the center of his narrative (Reid, 455). Just weeks before he died in 1969, Leonard read a draft of *Virginia Woolf: A Biography*, which was written by Virginia's nephew Quentin Bell (456). Leonard had handpicked Bell, the son of Virginia's sister Vanessa, to write the first major biography of Virginia. Keeping Virginia's story in the family would allow Leonard to retain control over her image in a

way that allowing an outsider to write the narrative would not. When Woolf's literary estate made the decision to release a more complete version of the author's diaries, the family again looked among themselves for an editor. In 1977, Anne Olivier Bell, Quentin Bell's wife, released the first of five volumes of *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*. Within these five volumes, readers could find the full text of the 27 notebooks the author had kept during her life, but the notebooks themselves had already been available to scholars for some time. In her Preface, Bell informs readers that after releasing *A Writer's Diary*, Leonard Woolf sold the original manuscript of his wife's notebooks to the New York Public Library's Berg Collection of English and American Literature for \$20,000 (vii-viii). Bell's intervention with the diaries appears to have been minimal. She retains Woolf's rare spelling and grammatical errors and inserts footnotes minimally. The editor's one concession to standard standardization comes in her treatment of Woolf's dates throughout the diary. "Virginia Woolf dated her diary entries with every possible combination and abbreviation of day, date, and month....the essential thing is to give the reader a clear and accurate point of reference. So in these volumes the date is invariably set out: day, date, month, and italicized" (ix). Bell maintains that other than this one intervention, her transcription of the diaries is "entirely faithful" (ix). Readers must assume that Bell has given them full access to Woolf's diaries, unlike the limited scope Leonard had provided 25 years before.

In his Preface to *A Writer's Diary*, Leonard Woolf wrote of his distrust for publications that included unmarked omissions. Despite this suspicion of a practice that "almost always [distorts] and [conceals] the true character of the diarist of letter-

writer...”, Leonard certainly used the practice to his advantage (vii). In his version of Virginia’s February 12, 1927 entry, Virginia ended her journal with a comment on Leonard’s unyielding support for her throughout the wild mood swings that came while she was writing. The author would vacillate between seeing her work as either the manifestation of a new art form or a pile of papers bound for the rubbish heap. However, she noted that “L’s opinion keeps me steady; I’m neither one thing nor the other,” when she heard his critique of *To the Lighthouse*, one of her most ambitious novels (Woolf, *AWD*, 105). In reality, however, Virginia’s writing continued with a more mundane description of the mounting work that needed to be done at Hogarth.

Yesterday Wells asked us to publish a pamphlet for him. This is a great rise in the world for us; & comes on top of rather a flat talk with Angus. L. says he doesn’t ‘manage’. (sic) Angus refuses to budge an inch. He can’t see the point of it. As he says, too, what’s he to do if he leaves? He doesn’t want to leave. Though sometimes ‘fed up’ he likes it better than most work. But I’m persuaded we need, the press needs, a fanatic at the moment; not this quiet easygoing gentlemanliness. I am annoyed at doing cards, & envelopes; & L. does twice the work I do. (Woolf, *DVW* 3, 128)²

Though the extended version of this passage concerns itself with the Woolfs’ interactions with their beloved Hogarth Press (which could easily be seen as a fulfillment of Leonard’s stated editorial goals), Leonard ended his version with a portrait of himself as the great steadying influence in Virginia’s life. In the longer journal entry, this small comment could

² It should be noted here that Virginia Woolf frequently used the ampersand (&) and other abbreviations in her private writings. When Leonard Woolf published *A Writer’s Diary*, he removed the ampersands and abbreviations used by the author and employed standard English usage. When Anne Olivier Bell edited *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, she chose to employ the author’s original usage so as to give readers a better feel for Woolf’s true writing style. See *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume One*, pages ix-x for more on Woolf’s writing within her diaries.

easily be overlooked. Ending the passage with an image of Leonard as the one person Virginia could count on to be totally truthful and kind regarding her writing, however, gives the statement resonance and again sets up an image of Leonard as the person most equipped to give readers the ‘truth’ regarding Virginia Woolf as a writer.

Leonard made another noteworthy editorial choice earlier in the same passage, when Virginia praises another writer’s work. In *A Writer’s Diary*, the entry begins “X’s prose is too fluent. I’ve been reading it and it makes my pen run. When I’ve read a classic I am curbed and—not castrated; no, the opposite; I can’t think of the word at the moment. Had I been writing ‘Y---’, I should have run off whole pools of this coloured water; and then (I think) found my own method of attack” (Woolf, *AWD*, 105).

Leonard’s presentation of the entry seems harmless enough until readers compare it to the version found in *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*. There, we find that the “X” in question is none other than Vita Sackville-West, one of the great loves of Virginia Woolf’s life. Why did Leonard choose to remove Vita’s name from this entry when Virginia is writing positively about another author’s writing process *and* commenting on her own writing style at the same time? It would appear that this entry fits the editorial criteria Leonard set up in his preface, yet the entry is markedly changed with the simple exchange of the letter “X” for Vita’s name.

In fact, despite the reality that Vita is the subject of many passionate moments in Virginia Woolf’s private writings, Leonard omits all but the most banal mentions of Virginia’s close friend and sometime lover. In one of the most touching sections of her journal, Virginia writes beautifully of her longing for Vita:

Vita having this moment (20 minutes ago—it is now 7) left me, what are my feelings? Of a dim November fog; the lights dulled & damped. I walked towards the sound of a barrel organ in Marchmont Street. But this will disperse; then I shall want her, clearly & distinctly. Then not—& so on. This is the normal human feeling, I think. One wants to finish sentences. One wants that atmosphere-- to me so rosy & calm. She is not clever; but abundant and truthful too. She taps so many sources of life: repose & variety, was her own expression, sitting on the floor this evening in the gaslight....I feel a lack of stimulus, of marked days, now Vita is gone; & some pathos, common to all these partings; & she has 4 days journey through the snow. (Woolf, *DVW* 3, 57)

This entry, of course, is not included in *A Writer's Diary*, though it provides a striking example of Virginia Woolf's stream-of-consciousness style. Though beautiful, Virginia's words here were far too personal to be included in a volume meant to concentrate solely on the image of Virginia Woolf as a writer. Vita Sackville-West was a major part of Virginia Woolf's life, yet she plays only a bit part in *A Writer's Diary*.

Why would Leonard choose to almost completely eliminate someone so central to his wife's life? There are several possible explanations. One possibility is that Leonard was worried that Sackville-West might usurp Virginia Woolf as the preeminent female writer of her generation. In an era when few women authors were recognized as great writers worthy of the company of their male counterparts, perhaps Leonard feared that acknowledging a female author whom even Virginia Woolf admired would elevate Vita Sackville-West's reputation—at the cost of his wife's. Another possibility, of course, is that Leonard Woolf might have been threatened by his wife's relationship with another woman. Several writers have described Leonard as approving of—and even encouraging—Virginia's relationship with Vita: “Leonard seems to have been pleased to see Virginia eroticized by Vita; certainly he was not shocked by homosexuality, nor was

he afraid of losing Virginia's love. Frederic Spott's perspective is that Virginia's infatuation with Vita did not alter her affection for Leonard, who was genuinely fond of Vita" (Reid, 288). Such portrayals again reinscribe the image of Leonard as benevolent caretaker; if he could not provide what Virginia needed, he was more than happy to know that she found it elsewhere. But perhaps Leonard was not as comfortable with the relationship as it appeared, and was unsettled by the fact that his wife had found love in the arms of another woman.

Yet another potential reason is that Leonard *did* like Vita and respect Virginia's relationship with her but still wanted to keep the potential for scandal out of *A Writer's Diary*. Leonard published *A Writer's Diary* at the height of Cold War conservatism, when any hint of homosexuality meant a severely tarnished reputation. As Elaine Tyler May writes in *Homeward Bound: American Families and the Cold War*, "According to the common wisdom of the [1950s], 'normal' heterosexual behavior culminating in marriage represented 'maturity' and 'responsibility;' therefore, those who were 'deviant' were, by definition, irresponsible, immature, and weak" (94). By reducing Vita Sackville-West to only a minor figure in Virginia's life, Leonard could protect his wife from negative response to her sexuality while also continuing to focus attention on her solely as a great writer worthy of immortality. Presenting Virginia Woolf as a writer who happened to be a woman instead of a woman who happened to be a writer, Leonard removed much of his wife's humanity in his attempts to shape her into an icon of literary greatness. It could be argued that Leonard's editorial work was actually beneficial to Woolf's image, because traditional editorial practices would have focused *too much* on the author's humanity,

subordinating her art and concentrating only on her experiences as a female. In this light, Leonard's decision to de-emphasize the intimate details of Virginia's life could be seen as radical, for most female authors were seen as women first and artists second.

However, Leonard Woolf did not focus *A Writer's Diary* on Virginia's art solely because he wanted to subvert this tradition. In his efforts to distract readers from wanting to know more about Virginia Woolf's personal life, Leonard Woolf had a twofold goal. "Leonard's clearly stated editorial choice to present Virginia as a writer, period, introduces into [the] narrative the family's desire both to disseminate and to contain Virginia Woolf's image..."(Silver, 97). Leonard wanted to do more than simply control Virginia's image, though; he also needed to protect the images and reputations of those mentioned in Virginia's diary who were still alive. Any one of them might perceive Woolf's portraits of her friends, family and contemporaries unflattering, and thus, untrue; any hint of disagreement with her perspective on the world might subsequently cast doubt on her status as a writer of genius proportions.

"The diary is too personal to be published as a whole during the lifetime of many people referred to in it," Leonard wrote in the preface of *A Writer's Diary* (vii). If Woolf's diaries are intimate enough that they might offend the living, why did her death allow for the publication of *her* intimacies? Why were the reputations and integrity of the living more valuable than those of the author herself? Leonard never gave readers his reasoning for publishing only extracts from the diaries, so we cannot know the justifications of his editorial strategy. What we do know is this: By using his editorial status to silence his wife around personal subjects, Leonard Woolf could ensure that there

would be no negative feedback from those mentioned in the diary. This desire to protect the living at the cost of manipulating his wife's words becomes one of the key factors throughout Leonard's editorial process in *A Writer's Diary*.

Take, for example, his rendering of Virginia's February 20, 1930 diary entry. In *A Writer's Diary*, Leonard included only two sentences from what is actually a longer section: "I must canter my wits if I can. Perhaps some character sketches" (Woolf, 150). In reality, however, the entry actually included a character sketch, which would fit with Leonard's definition of what to publish. Such a rendering would provide readers with an insight into a writing exercise undertaken by Virginia and an example of how the people and places around her influenced her writing. Why did Leonard omit such a valuable glimpse into the mind of a writer? Because the sketch in question was a somewhat unflattering portrait of an old family friend, affectionately referred to by Virginia as "Snow." As a writer, Virginia Woolf had a keen eye for noticing both the physical characteristics and the mannerisms of those around her, and her observations shine through in this brief character sketch. The author remarks that "Snow's" "neck is very loose skinned; & there are the dewlaps of middle age" (Woolf, *DVW* 3, 289). Virginia also noticed and focused on "Snow's" bleak attitude toward life: "She seemed to be saying inwardly 'I have missed everything. There are Vanessa & Virginia, They have lives full of novels & husbands & exhibitions. I am fifty & it has all slipped by'.... Nothing distracted her from her central concern—I have no life & life is over" (289). While the piece is a fascinating one when read from the perspective of an outsider, we can only imagine Leonard Woolf's reaction at reading this vignette and others like it. Part of his duty as

Virginia's protector was to minimize criticism of her, and what would garner criticism faster than the knowledge that the genius writer had written unflattering, even gossipy, pieces about her closest friends? Here Leonard's manipulation of Virginia's words served several purposes. In omitting such an entry from his publication, Leonard was able to protect Virginia from the criticism of others, while also protecting those who might take offense at Virginia's words—and ultimately, protecting himself (as executor of Woolf's literary estate) from libel suits that might potentially be brought by 'victims' of Virginia's pen.

As tirelessly as Leonard worked to protect Virginia's public image, it was Virginia's nephew Quentin Bell who most damaged his aunt's reputation as a means of preserving the reputations of others. In his 1977 introduction to the first volume of *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, Bell declares, "Virginia Woolf's reputation for truthfulness was not good. She was supposed to be malicious, a gossip, and one who allowed her imagination to run away with her" (Woolf, *DVW* 1, xiii). He goes on to comment that "She is certainly untruthful in her assessment of people: that is to say she is true only to her mood at the moment of writing...." (Woolf, *DVW* 1, xiv). Of course, every diary is only true to the writer's perceptions of a person or situation when s/he is writing, yet Bell implies that Woolf is somehow being particularly deviant by presenting biased portraits of those around her. Bell's depiction of his aunt is the reverse of the one created by Leonard Woolf; while Leonard presented Virginia as a genius whose life revolved around her writing, Bell portrayed her as an inconsistent, often untruthful writer who was overwhelmed by her failings. While each of these representations gives readers important

insights into Woolf's life, neither of these images tells the complete story. Viewing Virginia Woolf through this dichotomy prevents readers from recognizing the complexity of her existence. Even together, these images do more to minimize her accomplishments than to articulate the wide range of emotions and experiences that marked the life of the author. Quentin Bell's discussion of his aunt's "untruthful" diary entries may have given readers more humanity than Leonard had allowed, but in so doing, he minimized all that Woolf *did* accomplish in her diaries. Thus, even as *The Diary of Virginia Woolf* purports to give the full body of Virginia Woolf's private writings by presenting many of the details Leonard Woolf omitted from *A Writer's Diary*, it manages to discredit the author's observations as little more than the ramblings of a madwoman.

Still, in Leonard's version of his wife's diaries, some people *were* assumed to be presented truthfully, especially if her portrayal suits the purposes of the editor. Leonard Woolf included a lengthy entry in *A Writer's Diary* that fits with his editorial criteria (entries regarding Virginia's novels, writing exercises, raw material for her writing, and books she was currently reading) only in the broadest sense. Here, Leonard provides the full text of an extensive entry in which the author describes a meeting with Thomas Hardy (Woolf, *AWD*, 91-96), a celebrated Victorian poet and novelist who had been Virginia's father's contemporary. The entry is too lengthy to reprint here, and it is much longer than almost all of the others contained in *A Writer's Diary*. This, coupled with the fact that only in the barest sense did it fit Leonard's goals for the volume, makes its inclusion a peculiar one. Why did he choose this entry? Virginia Woolf's afternoon with Thomas Hardy did not affect her writing in any way, other than the fact that it made for an amusing

entry in her notebooks. Particularly humorous is the fact that, despite her fame, Hardy had no idea who Virginia Woolf was (other than the daughter of his old friend, Leslie Stephen); when he autographed a copy of his *Life's Little Ironies*, he even spelled her name 'Wollf' (Woolf, *AWD*, 92, 95). But despite the fact that Hardy was oblivious to Woolf's reputation as an author, Leonard used this entry to subtly set up the idea that a passing of the torch has just been witnessed. His hope was that just as Thomas Hardy was hailed as a genius of the Victorian generation, so Virginia Woolf would be seen as a genius among the Modernists. Yet again, Leonard used his editorial prowess as a means of manipulating the public's perception of Virginia: with this passage, he elevated her to the heights of genius and helped to solidify her reputation as one who would be remembered long after her death—just as Thomas Hardy was.

Time and again, Leonard Woolf's editorial strategy works to present a one-sided portrait of his wife: that of a literary genius. He left out most of her feelings of frustration (of which there were many) surrounding both her private life and her writing. Doubts plagued Virginia Woolf constantly, and after finishing a new novel, there were often long bouts when the author would take to her bed unable to write at all, not even in her diaries (Leaska, 232, Reid, 247, et al). Leonard removed this complexity from his portrait and instead showed readers an author for whom the craft seems to have come effortlessly. Knowledge of her struggles might have simultaneously made the author appear both more approachable (Virginia Woolf battles demons just like the rest of us) and more successful (Virginia Woolf faced great odds and triumphed against them) to the literary public, thus

heightening the author's reputation, but her husband instead chose to create an idealized rendering that would give readers no choice but to revere her.

It might seem only natural that a husband would want to present an idolized picture of his deceased wife, as Leonard did in *A Writer's Diary*. But when he used his wife's own words and purports that only selected portions of them will give readers insight into her inner psyche, he took the agency of self-representation away from her. Would Virginia Woolf have published her diaries without an opportunity to edit them, as Leonard did? Probably not. Like most authors, she would have wanted a chance to revise what she had written, but that doesn't mean that she would have made as many cuts as Leonard had. Woolf hoped to polish portions of her private writings as a basis for her memoirs, but that project never came to be; if it had, Woolf might have been more forthcoming about her shortcomings than her husband's work allowed. In addition to her desire to write her memoirs, the author imagined other possibilities for her diaries as well. On March 20, 1926, Virginia Woolf wrote "But what is to become of all these diaries, I asked myself yesterday. If I died, what would Leo make of them? He would be disinclined to burn them; he could not publish them. Well, he should make up a book from them, I think; and then burn the body..." (Woolf, *DVW* 3, 67). Does this musing serve as Virginia's consent that Leonard may do whatever he pleases with her private writings? Hardly. We cannot know what Virginia Woolf would ultimately have done with her diaries, but we *do* know what Leonard Woolf did with them. His editorial strategies present a narrow depiction of the complex woman Virginia Woolf really was. The entries Leonard Woolf chose as representative of Virginia Woolf's life as a writer portray her,

rather narrowly, as a genius whose greatness stemmed in large part from the unending care and support of her husband.

Few critics have bothered to question the elements of power involved both in Leonard's careful editing of *A Writer's Diary* and in Quentin Bell's *Virginia Woolf: A Biography*. Bell worked closely with Leonard on the biography, presenting his uncle with a copy of the finished work only weeks before Leonard's death. Together, the two created an image of Leonard as the champion of Virginia Woolf's life, the ballast without whom our icon would fail to exist. Cynthia Ozick writes, "Without [Leonard]—Quentin Bell's clarity on this point is ineffaceable—Virginia Woolf might have spent her life in a mental institution" (34). Virginia thus loses autonomy over her life. Instead of being the heroine of her own story, Virginia Woolf is presented as little more than a backdrop against which Leonard's gallantry can shine. Numerous reviews of both *A Writer's Diary* and *Virginia Woolf: A Biography* picked up on this theme and further disseminated the perception that without Leonard to nurse her, Virginia would simply have been another madwoman to be locked in the attic. Instead of critiquing the ways that a familial relationship might hinder Bell from giving an accurate portrait of his aunt, most reviewers instead

credited his inherited insider's view as revealing 'the truth' (his own term), granting him an authority that grew even stronger when he began to review subsequent works on Woolf. This 'truth' helped create the image of Virginia Woolf as twentieth-century madwoman....that survived well into the 1990s and still surfaces today. (Silver, 123)

When *A Writer's Diary* was released in 1953, Leonard, like his nephew years later, emerged from the gauntlet of book reviews relatively unscathed. Many readers were

simply grateful for a glimpse into the mind of a writer as great as Virginia Woolf and either ignored or were totally oblivious to the conflict of interest that a husband serving as editor would bring. W.H. Auden's review of *A Writer's Diary*, published in *The New Yorker*, not only failed to see how the book's editorial policy was problematic, but actually applauded the fact that the volume included only entries pertaining to Woolf's writing. "It was, I feel, a very happy idea to confine the selections from her diary to her reflections on her own career as a writer" (99). Auden's use of the word "confine" hints at just how narrow the volume really was and reinforces Leonard's assertion that the only significant parts of the diary are those entries regarding Virginia Woolf's published novels and essays. At the same time, however, this endorsement is somewhat surprising, for Auden also expressed hope that further installments of Woolf's diaries will soon be forthcoming. A writer himself, Auden made no mention of how Leonard's editorial strategy might have corrupted the integrity of Virginia's words. In her piece for *The New York Times*, Elizabeth Bowen was one of the few reviewers to publicly comment on the skewed portrait that Leonard Woolf's editorial strategy might produce. In 1954, she wrote:

Mr. Woolf's withholding (for the time being) of the bulk of the diary, on the score that it was too personal to be published during the lifetime of many people referred to in it, has been, if not challenged outright, queried....[I]t is felt or feared that the picture may be lopsided, or that the editor's sense of what made for continuity may have been over-arbitrary, or that pain-saving excisions sacrificed too much else to the interests of a pacific caution. (1)

This brief interval notwithstanding, Bowen's review remains respectful to Leonard's work, focusing on the answers *A Writer's Diary* can provide to readers, rather than the questions the publication raises.

Thirty years after Bowen's review appeared in *The New York Times*, the final book in a five-volume edition of *The Diaries of Virginia Woolf* was released. Readers were eager for a more complete portrait of the artist than the one Leonard had provided, with many hoping to find out more about Virginia's private life than previous publications had allowed. But contrary to popular employment of the diary, Woolf seldom used her notebooks as a place for secret ventings and musings. There are no diatribes against her sister Vanessa or Leonard and practically nothing about the writer's relationship with Vita Sackville-West. Instead, notes Harriett Blodgett, Woolf's "diary...is largely 'formal', controlled; it strives to sustain impersonality, not only through exclusion but also through artistry....she writes with active awareness of herself as a diarist and of the diary as a literary form to be mastered" (60). Carolyn G. Heilburn's review of the last volume of *The Diary of Virginia Woolf* expressed pleasure that the complete notebooks were now available, but noted that it would be some time before scholars could comment on the set as a whole. "Of Woolf's diary as a whole, time will surely offer us ample analysis and criticism, for it is one of the world's great diaries. At present, however, we can only take up the volumes one at a time as they appear..." ("A Framework of Steel," 128).

Heilburn and others like her have been able to recognize that an individual's diary must be examined as a whole if we hope to gain insights about both the author and the genre. Many of the readers of the original *A Writer's Diary* were content with the fragmentary portrait Leonard's editorial work had given them. Even today, scholars working with the diaries of Virginia Woolf seem hesitant to critique Leonard's editorial decisions because they appear to have been made in good faith; who wouldn't want to

protect a loved one from public criticism by minimizing her weaknesses? At first glance, Leonard Woolf's work seems to do just that. But Leonard's monument to his wife is built on a shaky foundation that simultaneously builds her up as an infallible literary icon, while also undermining her opinions of others and highlighting her lack of self-confidence. All these pieces work together to create two skewed portraits, one of Virginia as genius/madwoman, and another of Leonard as the hero who could save her from herself, both in life as her nurse, and after death as her editor. The injustice here is that both portraits were created by Leonard with pieces of Virginia's own words, an act that took away her power over her writings and her agency over her life.

Chapter 3: *The Journals of Sylvia Plath*

Sylvia Plath stands among that group of writers whose notorious personal lives have brought them as much fame as the writing that initially brought them celebrity. As one of a group of writers known as the confessional poets, Plath used her short life, ended by suicide in 1963 when she was only 31, as an impetus for much of her poetry and fiction. Because so much of Plath's writing was so intimate, it struck a chord with readers; this connection between the public and the personal fueled the literary (and later the feminist) community's desire to know the 'true' Sylvia Plath. In 1982, Plath's husband and fellow poet Ted Hughes (from whom she was estranged at the time of her death) worked with editor Frances McCullough to release *The Journals of Sylvia Plath*, a collection of many of Plath's personal writings from the notebooks in which she wrote almost daily. The cover of the volume tantalizingly tells readers that this is, "In her own words, the true story behind *The Bell Jar*." *The Bell Jar* was Plath's fictionalized account of her own journey to adulthood; the book's candid exploration of Plath's teenaged sexual encounters and battles with mental illness made it a must-read for anyone who wanted to learn about the woman behind poems like "Daddy" and "Lady Lazarus." Marketing *The Journals of Sylvia Plath* as the 'true' story of Plath's life capitalized on her notoriety by promising a previously unavailable intimate look at the author, a view of her world as she saw it. However, as one begins to read this book, one is struck by the fact that, although the words inside are Plath's, they are heavily edited and thus may not carry the meanings the author attached to them during her writing. It was not until Karen V. Kukil released a new, unabridged version of the Plath journals in 2000 that readers were able to see the

extent to which Plath's words (and indeed, her entire self) had been edited in the original publication of the journals. In comparing these two versions of Plath's manuscript, we can examine the editorial strategies undertaken by Hughes and McCullough. Though their editorial decisions may seem benevolent as one reads *The Journals of Sylvia Plath*, looking at the full text of Plath's notebook entries shows while Hughes and McCullough worked to give the reading public a glimpse of Plath, they also carefully controlled the images they presented—not only of Plath, but of Hughes as well.

When Sylvia Plath married Ted Hughes in 1956, the two seemed a perfect match: two young poets who had each achieved a considerable amount of notice surrounding their work at a relatively early age (Stevenson, 90). Determined to break free of the traditional suburban life that she felt had stifled her mother's creativity and independence, Plath worked to make her marriage with Hughes as egalitarian as possible. Individually, they had each defined themselves as intellectual non-conformists who wanted more than a bourgeois life. As they began to build a life together, the pair determined that theirs would be a true partnership of sharing economic and homemaking responsibilities (90-91). Their chosen life as artists would allow them a flexibility not afforded to most of their generation. Many middle class women of the 1950s were like Plath in that they were college educated, but unlike Plath, few publicly expressed a desire to work outside the home (May, 29). A woman of Plath's position was expected to find her ultimate fulfillment supporting her family, not financially, but in other ways—cooking the perfect meal, keeping the house spotless, participating in community organizations and serving as the ultimate confidant to children and husband alike (Coontz, 27). Plath wanted a family,

but she also wanted a life of her own. 'Keeping up with the Joneses' was not important to her, and she and her new husband avoided much of the materialism that marked their generation. Early in their marriage, Plath wrote in her notebook, "It is as if [Hughes] is the perfect male counterpart to my own self: each of us giving the other an extension of the life we believe in living: never becoming slaves to routine, secure jobs, money: but writing constantly, walking the world with every pore open, & living with love & faith" (Kukil, 271). Because the couple agreed to share responsibility for the more mundane aspects of married life, they could both concentrate most of their energy on their individual writing careers.

Quickly, though, the couple's egalitarian relationship began to fall into the patterns they had so vehemently rejected. The beginnings were so subtle that Plath herself did not recognize them. Right around their marriage day, Hughes told Plath that he was appointing her his "official literary agent" (Alexander, 189). Because she so admired Hughes' work, Plath looked upon the "position" as one of honor. In reality, the job was much more tedious. She ended up typing innumerable copies of Hughes' poems and submitting them to various literary magazines and journals. It was up to her to keep track of which poems had been sent to which publications, which was no easy feat considering both the size of the body of Hughes' work and the large number of periodicals they were both contacting at the time. Plath would spend her mornings focused on writing her own poems and stories and devote the afternoons to typing and distributing both her and her husband's writings. She would collect the day's mail and check for rejections and acceptances, then either send the rejected poems out to more publishers or remove the

accepted ones from the list of potential markets. It was a complicated, time-consuming process, but Plath accepted the responsibilities of her new 'position' without complaint.

Similarly, other household responsibilities that the couple had originally agreed to share eventually became Plath's sole responsibility. Though they decided early on to do the cooking together, Plath's journals note several poor attempts by her husband, after which she quickly took up the bulk of the kitchen efforts, which she typically enjoyed but sometimes viewed as a distraction from her work. Similarly, the young author continually took the time to do basic laundry and household duties, which Hughes would often let pile up for days, even weeks at a time. Plath was far more focused on cleanliness than her husband, and these things bothered her more quickly than they did him. Despite their goal of sharing responsibilities throughout every aspect of their lives, Sylvia Plath found herself in a marriage very similar to the bourgeois ones she had rejected.

With each of them owning such divergent views of what their marriage should be, the couple began to quarrel more and more frequently. Ted Hughes followed another traditional male pattern and began eyeing other women, eventually embarking on extramarital affairs soon after Plath gave birth to the couple's second child (Alexander, 277, 292). The pair separated soon thereafter (Alexander, 297-98). Plath's juggling of responsibilities intensified, for she could no longer rely on what little help Hughes had provided, yet she found herself in the midst of a surge of creativity. While the couple's separation was Plath's most creative period ever as a writer (she was working on the poems that would eventually comprise *Ariel*, her second volume of poetry), it was also a difficult one emotionally as she struggled to come to terms with her failed marriage and

support herself and her children on the meager income she earned from writing. Hughes provided her with some financial assistance (Stevenson, 276), but basically, Plath was on her own and ill-equipped to deal with the divergent demands placed upon her. On the morning of February 11, 1963, Plath placed her head in a gas oven and killed herself, thus ending the cycle of never-ending expectations that had been placed on her throughout her life (Wagner-Martin, x).

After Plath's suicide, Hughes made the decision to rearrange the *Ariel* poems and released the collection in 1965 (Wagner-Martin, 140). At the time of her death, Plath was in the final stages of preparation of her second volume of poetry, and had spent considerable time arranging the poems in an order she felt was coherent and compelling. Hughes, however, reorganized the poems, removing many that he felt were too aggressive. Jacqueline Rose points out that "the 'more aggressive' removed from *Ariel* were in large part the ones whose aggression has since been interpreted as direct at Hughes...." (71). Those who read the book when it was released in 1965 had no knowledge of Hughes' reordering of the poems. Approving of what they read, though, critics hailed *Ariel*, and it went on to become one of the best-selling volumes of poetry of the 20th century (Alexander, 341, 344). In addition to the silence surrounding Hughes' covert editorial choices, critics also initially concealed the details of the poet's death in their reviews of *Ariel*. When audiences learned of Plath's suicide, their curiosity further increased sales of the author's work. She was quickly becoming an iconic figure, but Hughes knew that in order to keep the public intrigued with Plath, he would have to release new material by her. From Janet Malcolm's work, we learn that the publication of

The Journals was part of an elaborate tug-of-war pitting Ted Hughes against Plath's mother Aurelia over what would be *the* public image of Sylvia Plath. In 1971, Hughes released *The Bell Jar* for publication in the United States. His reasoning was two-fold: Hughes needed money for a new house at the time; he also felt that since Plath's celebrity was beginning to wane, the book would not be marketable after a few more years (Malcolm, 39-40). If Hughes hoped to capitalize on Sylvia Plath's notoriety, he would have to do it soon to maximize the financial impact, even if readers might conflate Plath with her fictional character, Esther Greenwood. *The Bell Jar's* Esther shared a tumultuous relationship with her mother, a relationship similar to the one between Sylvia and Aurelia Plath; Aurelia was afraid that Plath's admirers would perceive her as a heartless woman who never really understood her daughter. Aurelia reluctantly agreed that Hughes could publish *The Bell Jar* under the author's real name.¹ Upon further consideration, Aurelia then asked Hughes if she might publish her daughter's *Letters Home* as a means of 'correcting' the skewed image *The Bell Jar* had presented of Sylvia. *Letters Home* would portray Sylvia Plath as a cheerful, good-natured young woman who shared a close and happy relationship with her mother. In response, Hughes then published Plath's *Journals* because he felt that the *Letters* did not give an accurate picture of his wife (Malcolm, 39-41). Highlighting Plath's dark side (and her strained relationship with her mother) would diminish the scrutiny Plath loyalists had focused on Hughes and allow for the possibility that other factors had contributed to her suicide. Throughout

¹*The Bell Jar* was originally published under the pseudonym Victoria Lucas in London in 1963; Plath chose the pseudonym as a means of protecting herself and her

their battle over whose portrait of Sylvia Plath would prevail, it appears to have mattered very little to either Ted Hughes or Aurelia Plath that the ‘true’ portraits they presented were each manipulated through the editorial process—or perhaps it mattered a great deal. Without the power to cut and arrange Plath’s words and insert their own judgments throughout the text, would either of them have been interested in giving the literary public access to the ‘real’ Sylvia Plath?

Ted Hughes needed to release his estranged wife’s journals to regain control of how the public would perceive her, but he couldn’t publish a complete edition of them without raising questions about his own character. Plath admirers were already wary of the fact that Hughes was her literary heir in spite of the fact that the two were separated when she died; if he did not tread carefully, he could risk further blemishing his own reputation. His editorial strategy would have to be one of balance: Hughes had to be forthcoming regarding the fact that he was making cuts, but present his work in such a light that made it appear as though his editorial work was done solely for Plath’s benefit. Frances McCullough, an editor at Harper & Row who had been instrumental in getting *Ariel* and *The Bell Jar* published in the United States, would join Hughes in editing Plath’s private journals for publication (Schwiesow, 2). In their respective introductions to *The Journals of Sylvia Plath*, both Hughes and McCullough explained their rationale for the editorial process. However, while these editors were forthcoming about the fact that they are making cuts from the body of Plath’s private writings, they did not tell the complete story of their work. McCullough noted, for instance, that “some of [Plath’s] more mother from the public scrutiny the book would bring. (Stevenson, 227)

devastating comments are missing-- these are marked '[omission]' to distinguish them from ordinary cuts—and there are a few other cuts—of intimacies—that have the effect of diminishing Plath's eroticism, which was quite strong" (Plath, *Journals*, xii). Both McCullough and Hughes neglected to mention that many of the cuts marked "[omission]" were made in an effort to temper Plath's depiction of Hughes during the couple's marriage.²

McCullough also informed readers that within the pages of this volume, "Commentary is at a minimum" (Plath, *Journals*, xii), but as the reader turns the page to Hughes' own "Foreword," evidence of commentary abounds. While he made relatively little comment throughout the journal entries themselves, Hughes' introduction shaped readers' perceptions of what they were about to read. Was he writing with the authority of a husband, an editor or a literary critic, for instance, when he said that "*Ariel* (the collection of poems which made Plath the literary icon she is today) and the associated later poems give us the voice of [Plath's true] self...*All her other writings, except these journals, are the waste products of its gestation*" (Plath, *Journals*, xiv, emphasis mine)? Whatever role Hughes might have seen himself in as he wrote those words, it is clear that his observations worked as a means of shifting readers' opinions of Plath as an artist and a human being in both the private writings they were about to read *and* in Plath's published poetry. At the end of his foreword, Hughes casually mentioned that two key notebooks of Plath's writing are missing: one has "disappeared"; the other was destroyed by Hughes

²Those cuts marked [omission] were ones made at the request of the Plath Estate, headed by Hughes' sister Olwyn; McCullough's cuts are sometimes (but not always) indicated by

himself in an effort to protect “*her children*” (Plath, *Journals*, xv, emphasis mine). With all of these discrepancies apparent in only the introductory notes to *The Journals of Sylvia Plath*, it becomes obvious that what the reader is about to encounter will be a complex and often contradictory portrait of the artist as a woman, a portrait grounded in authenticity but manipulated by its editors in order to alter the way in which the public would view Plath—and her relationships with others.

As one reads *The Journals of Sylvia Plath*, s/he may be struck by the fact that the “[omissions]” noted by McCullough seem to increase in frequency after Ted Hughes begins to appear in Plath’s journal entries. While other omissions do appear in the earlier sections of *The Journals*, particularly in entries concerning Plath’s relationships with men, the omissions marked in Plath’s entries on her relationship with Hughes provide the fodder for much speculation, since Hughes now plays the double role of character in the narrative and its editor. Plath chronicled her first meeting with Hughes in her notebook with a lengthy entry. When the two met at a party in Cambridge in 1956, Plath was already familiar with Hughes’ poetry, and was no doubt as much attracted by his status as an author as she was by his dark good looks. Though Plath describes herself as quite drunk that night, the attraction was mutual, and soon the two were kissing in the bathroom. The text of this incident in *The Journals* reads like this:

...And I was stamping and he was stamping on the floor, and then he kissed me smash bang on the mouth [omission]....And when he kissed my neck I bit him long and hard on the cheek, and when we came out of the room, blood was running down his face. [Omission]. And I screamed in myself,

ellipses. (Rose, 72)

thinking: oh, to give myself crashing, fighting to you. The one man since I've lived who could blast Richard. (Plath, *Journals*, 113).

Many things are striking about this passage. For one, though McCullough told readers that many passages regarding Plath's eroticism were cut, this one remained in the published text of the journals. Another is the violence Plath does toward Hughes; if Hughes sought to protect Plath's children (who were also his children) from the darker parts of her psyche, why make the choice to include this entry, filled with disturbing images?

The full relevance of this passage, however, is not understood until the reader sees Karen V. Kukil's unedited version of the entry in *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath*. Here, readers can understand what Plath truly remembered and recorded about this encounter. The first omission marked in the original edition cut the following words: "then he kissed me smash bang on the mouth [*and ripped my hairband off, my lovely red hairband scarf which has weathered the sun and much love, and whose like I shall never again find, and my favorite silver earrings: hah, I shall keep, he barked.*]" (Plath, *Unabridged Journals*, 212). This omission removes Hughes' own violence from the couple's encounter and presents him as a rather innocent victim of a strange woman's uncontrollable passions. Plath becomes a woman unable to repress her own emotions, and thus, a woman unable to fit into her prescribed gender role. In the 1950s, men were supposed to take charge in sexual situations while women passively responded to male sexual aggression; the omission of Hughes' role in this situation serves to present him as

an innocent gentleman, while Plath is depicted as something of a madwoman. The second omission removes Plath's musings on their tryst:

(A)nd when we came out of the room, blood was running down his face.
[His poem 'I did it, I.' Such violence, and I can see how women lie down for artists. The one man in the room who was as big as his poems, huge, with hulk and dynamic chunks of words; his poems are strong and blasting like a high wind in steel girders.] And I screamed in myself, thinking....
 (Plath, *Unabridged Journals*, 212)

This omission deletes Plath's rather complicated motives for her violent behaviors.

Hughes' own passion and powerful presence allowed Plath to be swept away in the intensity of the moment in a way that she might have otherwise avoided. Also, the deleted passage might have been offensive to Hughes because Plath articulates why women often fall into affairs with artists like him; such an affair with another woman eventually ended the pair's marriage. The removal of these important details modifies the way a reader might view Plath. She is transformed from someone involved in a mutually passionate encounter to a woman inflicting violence upon a man whom she has just met—a man who has not provoked Plath's behavior in any way.

The removal of such details is troubling in and of itself, but the manner in which they were removed provides even more reason for speculation at the editorial process undertaken by Hughes and McCullough. As Jacqueline Rose notes in her book *The Haunting of Sylvia Plath*, the editing of this passage was done after the galleys of the text had been sent to reviewers but before the final publication of the text (88). In other words, these cuts were made at the last possible moment before publication. In fact, Rose tells us, Hughes and the Plath Estate wanted the entire passage removed at the last minute,

but McCullough refused; they compromised by cutting the sections specifically on Hughes (88). Janet Malcolm, author of *The Silent Woman*, took Hughes' side in this debate on Hughes' role as editor much more than most Plath scholars do; she noted that readers are lucky that Ted Hughes (so keen on protecting his own privacy) allowed any sort of access to Plath's personal writings, for it was there that readers would get the truest sense of who Plath really was (39). Malcolm added that since even the expurgated version of this entry is highly intimate, readers were fortunate that Hughes allowed readers to see Plath not as literary icon, but as a real woman, complete with flaws and faults (39). She does not mention, though, that Plath's flaws were highlighted at the same time that Hughes' were downplayed. While the original version of *The Journals of Sylvia Plath* added another piece to the puzzle of who Plath was, the volume ultimately raised more questions than it answered. Readers are allowed to see Plath only as Hughes wanted her to be seen. Hughes simultaneously used the editorial process to distort the author's image and enhance his own persona.

In another infamous passage, dated May 19, 1958, Plath describes an incident in which she finds Hughes with another woman. This is one of the longer entries in *The Journals of Sylvia Plath*, but it still resounds with omissions. Upon an initial reading, it may appear that Hughes has generously allowed the audience insight into one of the darker points in his marriage to Plath, but upon deeper investigation, it becomes clear that Hughes and McCullough have again manipulated Plath's version of the events, shifting the writer's voice away from authenticity and toward an artificial presentation of Plath's

perspective on Hughes and their marriage. The journal passage is prefaced by an italicized note from the editors which tells readers that:

About this time, and for months afterward, Plath began to feel an upsurge of rage, an emotion she rarely allowed herself. In the passage that follows it is a rage against her husband *in which a small incident takes on enormous proportions*, and is quickly transferred to some girls in a public park. As Plath notes eight months later (December 27), the real source is her father, though it would be several years before she could make the connection in any deep way. Feeling the rage was tremendously important to her work... (Plath, *Journals*, 227, emphasis mine)

Though Hughes noted in his introduction to *The Journals* that this publication would serve as Plath's "autobiography, far from complete, but complex and accurate, where she strove to see herself honestly and fought her way through the unmaking and remaking of herself" (Plath, *Journals*, xv), he and his partner nonetheless felt compelled to note that Plath's version of the following incident was not entirely truthful. Similarly, though McCullough noted in the volume's opening pages that commentary will be kept to a minimum, this short passage editorialized and psychologized Plath's emotions *and* her work—telling readers that Plath was overly emotional, but that she needed that influx of emotion in order to create her most powerful art. Placing such statements at the beginning, rather than the end, of the entry, Hughes and McCullough inhibited readers from bringing their own interpretations to the section. The editors have already told their audience that whatever they are about to read in the following entry, it was inaccurate and blown completely out of proportion; they even point readers to an entry that will lay to rest any doubts as to why she was so upset. Their efforts may appear helpful, but are actually violations done toward both Plath and the reader; through what might be viewed

as helpful background commentary, McCullough and Hughes rob Plath of the chance to tell her story herself while also robbing readers of the opportunity to interpret for themselves the events Plath describes.

As the reader progresses to the entry itself, the memory of the preceding interpretation still looms large. Plath wrote page upon page of recollections of the events of the past several days, and at first, it may seem surprising how much of himself Hughes allowed to remain in this entry. There are omissions, of course, but by and large the editors appear to have left the entry uncut, and readers are able to see Hughes as Plath saw him on that day, a flawed man who fell from the pedestal upon which his wife had placed him. Though the entry mentions many recent events that had caused Plath to question her relationship with Hughes, the published version of what Plath witnessed that day reads as follows:

As I came striding out of the cold shadow of the library, my bare arms chilled, I had one of those intuitive visions. I knew what I would see, what I would of necessity meet, and I have known for a very long time, although not sure of the place or date of the first confrontation. Ted was coming up the road from Paradise Pond, where girls take their boys to neck on weekends. He was walking up with a broad, intense smile, eyes into the uplifted doe-eyes of a strange girl with brownish hair, a large lipsticked grin, and bare thick legs in khaki Bermuda shorts. I saw this in several sharp flashes, like blows....She saw me coming. Her eye started to guilt and she began to run, literally, without a good-bye, Ted making no effort to introduce her.... (Plath, *Journals*, 231)

This description goes on for some time, with no noted omissions, giving the appearance of Plath's original notebook entry, of her authentic voice. Here, one might believe, is certainly proof that we can trust the editors. If they could show Hughes in an unflattering

light here, then the rest of their editorial decisions must have been made benevolently, with only Plath's best interests at heart.

However, while McCullough and Hughes did not make cuts from Plath's description of that infamous day, they *did* curtail her voice at other points in the entry, particularly when Plath shared her own commentary on what she saw that day. Apparently, it was not enough to warn readers that what they were about to encounter was not entirely true; now the editorial team seeks to eliminate what they earlier referred to as Plath's "nasty bits" (Plath, *Journals*, xii). Plath questioned everything she once took for granted in her marriage to Hughes, and the entry is filled with pain and anger, but Hughes and McCullough eliminate much of that emotion. Examining Kukil's unabridged version of the same entry, readers get a much clearer sense of the emotions felt by Plath as she described that day.

I do not want to ask for what should be given before the heavy hammy American cheap slang 'let's make up.' The heavy too jocular-jocularity. [*This is the vain, selfish face & voice I first saw and the Yorkshire Beacon boy, the sweet & daily companion is gone. Why should he be proud of my recent nastiness to Hecht & Van Voris if it isn't a judgment on his own inner corruption. For I smell it. The house stinks of it. And my vision fills in the blurred latenesses with oh yes Frank Sousa. I know. I know worse for knowing all myself & he not telling me or understanding what it is to know. His picking his nose, peeling off his nails & leaving them about, his greasy unkempt hair-- what does this matter?*] Why did I make his concerns my own & wish to see him at his best & finest? (Plath, *Unabridged Journals*, 392)

Here we find several elements of Plath's record of that day that were omitted from the original version of *The Journals*. Readers learn that Hughes never gave Plath an explanation for his actions that day. If, as the editors suggested, Plath recorded what was

really a “small incident” in “enormous proportions,” then why did Hughes not attempt to correct Plath’s interpretation of what she thought she saw at the time? Plath was obviously waiting for some sort of rationalization for the incident she witnessed, but her husband made no effort to help her understand. When Hughes later published Plath’s *Journals*, he also excised her record of the fact that she never received an explanation; such an omission might lead readers to assume that the couple later discussed the entire incident, further cementing the editors’ contention that Plath overreacted to what she saw that day.

In this passage, readers also witness Plath’s critique of Hughes’ unkempt appearance. While *The Journals of Sylvia Plath* include many entries about Plath’s near-obsessive concern with her own cleanliness, the publication left out many of her observations that Hughes would not bathe for days at a time and that his hair was perpetually greasy. In another deleted line from the same entry of May 19, Plath writes of her attempts to get Hughes to pay more attention to his appearance that “I won’t bother now; [Hughes’] dirt is too deep for Halo shampoo & lux soap, the raggedness too far-frayed for the neat nip of trimming shears” (Plath, *Unabridged Journals*, 392). Here the author comments on both the external and internal carelessness she found in her husband, but McCullough and Hughes silenced that observation. Whether Plath’s words are grounded in a factual reality or an opinion formed through the contrast of his casual attitudes with her own meticulous attention to cleanliness, they represent what was, for her, the truth of the moment. The strategies of omission and commentary employed by the editors serve to tell the audience what is worth knowing about Plath as a woman, what

of her body of work is worth reading and what should be considered the 'true' portrait of

Plath. Jacqueline Rose asks readers of Plath's *Journals*:

Who defines a 'real' self, which can surely have meaning only as *self*-definition, as a self-defining of self? Isn't this one of the clearest instances, therefore, of Plath owning nothing of herself...What Hughes's editing reveals, or lays bare, is, however, only a general property of editing—a so-called neutral activity weighed down by the heaviest of psychosexual, aesthetic, and ethical investment. (Rose, 74)

Though Hughes assumes an air of objective literary authority, his double role as character and editor belies any claims he might make toward a benevolent editorial process. He was far too involved to put Plath's best interests at heart; having witnessed unflattering images of himself in the portrait his wife had created, Hughes worked to highlight his good features while downplaying his negatives, and it mattered little how Plath was affected in the process.

A third journal entry helps reveal that the editors of *The Journals of Sylvia Plath* were more concerned with protecting those mentioned by Plath than with protecting Plath herself. In December 1958, Plath began to again visit Dr. Ruth Beuscher, who had previously been her therapist. On December 12, 1958, Plath charted a very long journal entry in which she described the first of her renewed sessions with Beuscher. Like the previously mentioned entry, this account was prefaced by commentary from the editors. Unlike the previously mentioned entry, this one included a *second* disclaimer, this one from Aurelia Plath, Sylvia's mother. Both prefatory notes stress the fact that, despite what readers are about to encounter, Plath's relationship with her mother was an extremely close and healthy one. Aurelia Plath wrote, "I have no doubt that many readers

will accept whatever negative thoughts [Sylvia] reveals here as the whole and absolute truth, despite their cancellation on other, more positive pages....in the interest of furthering understanding of her emotional situation, I have given my consent to the release of this material" (Plath, *Journals*, 265). These notes again undermined the fact that even if Plath wrote contradictory statements at other points in her private writings, what she wrote at this time must be considered truthful of how she felt at this time. The journal is an organic text whose shape shifts with each new entry, and Plath's journals should be treated as such, even when the material covered is painful to read, as is the case of Plath's notes from this meeting with Beuscher.

At the beginning of her December 12 entry, Plath noted, "If I am going to pay money for her time & brain as if I were going to a supervision in life & emotions & what to do with both, I am going to work like hell, question, probe sludge & crap & allow myself to get the most of it" (Plath, *Journals*, 265). Plath's desire to truly work through the issues she was dealing with in therapy is evidenced by the sheer length of the notebook record she wrote to describe that initial session—over nine pages in the original edition of *The Journals*. Therapy was not something Plath took lightly, and neither were the issues she hoped to explore in her sessions with Beuscher. She wasn't writing unpleasant things in her journals in an effort to hurt her mother and her husband, but rather in an effort to heal herself. Though this entry is again tempered by outside commentary, it also provides readers with a look at Plath's dark side—including some harsh words aimed at both Plath's mother and Hughes. On the surface of the published version of Plath's journals, it again appears that the editors have done their job honestly and ethically. After all, they

have shown readers parts of the more uncomfortable places in Plath's private writings, leading many to believe that *The Journals of Sylvia Plath* will give them access to Plath's authentic voice.

Comparing the original publication with Karen Kukil's latest edition of *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath*, however, readers discover that through the many subtle cuts made to Plath's original manuscript, the audience's perception of Plath and her relationships with others has been manipulated. Consider the following omitted passage: "‘Doctor, can I still go on hating my mother?’ ‘Of course can (sic): hate her hate her hate her.’ ‘Thank you, doctor. I sure do hate her.’ What do I do? I don't imagine time will make me love her. I can pity her: she's had a lousy life; she doesn't know she's a walking vampire. But that is only pity. Not love" (Plath, *Unabridged Journals*, 429). In the 1982 version of *The Journals*, in fact, every mention of Plath's hatred for her mother is omitted. The editors kept Plath's references to her hatred for all the other mother figures in her life (with the exception of Beuscher, whom she refers to as RB), but in removing all specific instances of Plath's articulation of her feelings toward Aurelia Plath, McCullough and Hughes left readers with a rather choppy and inaccurate depiction of all that Plath hoped to work through in her therapy sessions. Also removed are instances in which Plath wrote that her mother killed her father; though Plath writes this in a metaphorical sense (she elucidated that it was Aurelia who told her that Otto Plath had died, and thus, being the bearer of bad news, served as a murderer in Sylvia's mind) the words are still left out so that readers have no option but to take Plath's musings literally.

Another major point of omission in this journal entry is those moments in which Plath discusses her own sexuality:

It was [*Aurelia's*] daughter's fault partly. She had a dream: her daughter was all gaudy-dressed about to go out and be a chorus girl, a prostitute too, probably. [*(She had a lover, didn't she? She necked and petted and flew to New York to visit Estonian artists and Persian Jew wealthy boys and her pants were wet with the sticky white filth of desire. Put her in a cell, that's all you could do. She's not my daughter. Not my nice girl. Where did that girl go?)*] (Plath, *Unabridged Journals*, 432)

This particular excerpt leaves readers to consider two possible reasons why the bracketed passages may have been cut. One likelihood, of course, is the fact that Plath's description of her sexuality was too graphic. Aurelia Plath and Ted Hughes may have agreed that Sylvia's portrait of herself was too explicit for those who did not know her (or even more so, for those who *did* know her) to witness; a respectable young woman in the 1950s couldn't possibly have been as sexual as Plath claims to be. Another possibility is that Aurelia Plath may have been hesitant for the reading public to see her as her own daughter perceived her, as a judgmental woman who wanted nothing more than to live vicariously through her daughter.

At another key point in this section omitted by Hughes and McCullough, Plath chronicled her mother's low assessment of Plath's choice of Hughes as a husband. It is ambiguous who the omissions serve to protect here, Ted Hughes or Aurelia Plath.

Recalling conversations with her mother regarding Hughes, Plath wrote:

What doesn't he have? A steady job that brings in seven thousand a year. A private income. All the stuff that lots of money buys. He has his brains, his heat, his love for his work and his talent for it and no fortune and no steady income. How ghastly. He can and he will make money when he

wants it and needs it. He won't put it first, that's all. Too much else comes first for him. Why should he put money first? I don't see why. (Plath, *Unabridged Journals*, 434)

Why this particular passage was cut remains unclear. Was Hughes ashamed of the fact that he did not provide a steady income by which to support his wife? Was Aurelia Plath concerned that she would appear unsupportive of her daughter and son-in-law's art? Whatever the case, the exclusion of this passage negates the fact that Plath herself did not care that her husband had no steady job. She was proud of the fact that, as an artist, Hughes lived life on his own terms, but the editors have chosen to delete this and other sections of this entry in which Plath discusses how comfortable their marriage was without money. In other entries, though, Plath's desire for more money remains in the 1982 version of the *Journals*. Whether Hughes and McCullough deliberately sought to present Plath as being overly concerned with money is unclear, but there is no doubt that their editorial strategy did, in fact, affect the way Plath would be seen by her audience in respect to her attitudes toward her husband and her mother.

When critics reviewed *The Journals of Sylvia Plath*, most noted the editorial process employed by Hughes and McCullough, and few were happy with the results. In *Maclean's Magazine*, Marni Jackson wrote, "The decision to publish [Plath's] journals should respect her contradictory selves; instead, the editing makes us feel that Plath's husband, mother and editor are peering over our shoulders as we read, much the way Plath hallucinated them peering over hers as she wrote" (57). Hughes may have hoped that removing many of what McCullough terms "nasty bits" in her Editor's Notes (Plath, *Journals*, xii) would minimize controversy around the book, but the glaring use of the

word “omission” appears to have had the effect of raising even more questions about Plath’s life and her marriage to Hughes. Everyone seemed to want to know what was missing, particularly from the notebooks that should have been at the end of this volume, notebooks that Hughes admitted he had alternately destroyed and “lost” (Plath, *Journals*, xv). Writing about the editors’ decision to include random prose pieces from 1960 to 1962, Linda W. Wagner said “their inclusion may have been a mistake because they call attention to the absence of journals from these important years” (522). Since everyone, including Hughes, recognized these last years as the most fruitful of Plath’s career as a poet, the desire for knowledge of her private writings at this time was particularly great. Wagner closed her critique by pointedly addressing this issue: “For most readers, the value of such a book as this lies in its ability to reveal the reciprocity between Plath’s journal writings and the more formal work she was doing simultaneously. To see valuable literary material purposely destroyed saddens us all” (523). For readers of Hughes’ version of *The Journals*, it must have been doubly frustrating to know that not only had important sections of Plath’s private writings been lost forever, but that even those that remained had been cut so that it was difficult to tell the author’s real intent at any given time.

Finding the public scrutiny of her editorial choices difficult to bear, Frances McCullough wrote a letter to the editors of *The New York Review of Books* in 1989, defending her position and asserting that Ted Hughes had altered the journals before she even had access to them. “I never saw the original journals; what was sent on to America by the Hugheses was a new typescript, presumably already thoroughly edited by the

family, but without any acknowledgement of that fact” (McCullough, 1). After she made her editorial decisions, the editor then sent the manuscript back to England for Hughes and his sister Olwyn. A few minor points of inclusion were contended, but Plath’s family and McCullough managed to agree upon a final text. However, in her letter, McCullough noted that when the book was at the galley stage of publication, she received word that the Estate was suddenly demanding new, extensive cuts. Many of these passages featured adulatory praise of Hughes, passages which Hughes was uncomfortable releasing. Others described the birth of Plath’s son and the infamous first meeting between Plath and Hughes (1, 2). McCullough insisted that at least portions of the last entry be included in the published text, with the Hughes’ omissions clearly marked. McCullough remained convinced that the passages Hughes excised were cut to protect those who had known Plath, but in the end, she and the Estate could not reconcile their creative differences; as a result, McCullough lost the \$2000 she had been promised by the Estate (2).

McCullough’s letter was only one part of a long-running public quarrel over who was responsible for the skewed portrait of Plath that the *Journals* had given. For years, Olwyn Hughes and A. Alvarez, a poet and friend of Plath’s, had attacked each other’s interpretations of who Sylvia Plath really was. Feminist scholars had long speculated over what the missing journal entries might say, but it wasn’t until Karen Kukil released *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath* in 2000 that they could begin to understand the extent of his control over Plath’s public persona. Shortly before his death in 1998, Ted Hughes unsealed two previously unavailable journals written by Plath, and their children made the decision to publish a fuller edition of their mother’s private writings (Kukil, ix).

Critics and students alike seized on the opportunity and began to fill in many of the missing pieces that had plagued them for so long. In his essay “The Eloquent Wrath of Sylvia Plath,” Greg Johnson compared the two editions, observing that McCullough and Hughes’ editorial strategy was largely successful in doing what it set out to do. The editors had hoped to downplay both the poet’s sexuality and what was often animosity toward her mother and her husband. Johnson noted that Plath’s sexuality *does* come out much stronger in the unabridged version than it had in the original edition, and that acerbic remarks about Plath’s mother and Hughes himself turn up in far greater frequency than they had before. But while Hughes and McCullough perceived these as subjects that could be damaging to Aurelia and Hughes’ reputations (and above all, that of Plath herself, as they argued in their respective introductions), Johnson applauded their inclusion in the new edition as instrumental in creating a far more even-handed portrait of the artist than the one previously available to readers. On the whole, the reviewer found that “The uncensored journals reveal a far more complex personality than readers have known before: intense, supercharged, by turns rhapsodic or raging, humorous or tender” (751). *The Unabridged Journals* provide readers with a far more accurate presentation of how Plath perceived herself and her world than the skewed one Hughes had once allowed readers.

Examining *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath*, readers can witness for themselves the violence done to Plath during the publication of the original volume of *The Journals*. Comparing the two editions, it is easy to see that Plath’s self-portrait was manipulated through the editorial process of Frances McCullough and Ted Hughes. What

is less visible, though, is why *The Journals of Sylvia Plath* were ever even published. As far as we know, Plath never had any desire to publish her journals; she wrote in her daily notebooks for herself, not in an attempt to damage her husband's reputation or hurt her mother's feelings. If Plath's private writings were felt to be so personally destructive, then why were they published at all, even in a highly edited format? Further, one cannot help but wonder why, if Hughes has always been so concerned with his own privacy, he would be willing to expose himself through the publication of his wife's *Journals* at all. And why does he privilege his own privacy through the use of "omissions" but think so little of Sylvia's right to privacy that he would release portions of her private notebooks? With his double role in this portrait of the artist, Hughes could play the card both ways; he could present *The Journals* as Plath's authentic voice while also giving himself the power to determine which parts of her were authentic enough to present to the literary public.

Chapter 4: Editorial Politics

The diaries of Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath are only two of the most prominent examples of private writings published by a female writer's family in efforts to reap financial rewards and/or the benefits of controlling the way the 'characters' in the text (including the author herself) were portrayed. Since the diaries' authors were writers already known for their creative works, the publication of their diaries could add to Woolf and Plath's fame by purporting to permit readers a glimpse of the woman beyond the printed page. At the same time that these published diaries tantalized readers with the promise of an intimate glimpse into the lives of their authors, such volumes also allowed the authors' literary executors the ability to fashion these portraits in ways that were most beneficial to their own gains. In the instance of *A Writer's Diary*, Leonard Woolf presented his wife as a literary genius, but he also made certain that readers would know that he was the source of all stability in Virginia Woolf's life. Within *The Journals of Sylvia Plath*, portraying Sylvia Plath as a volatile woman would allow Ted Hughes to capitalize on his wife's suicide and increase her notoriety while also downplaying his own role in the narrative of her self-destruction. Presenting his deceased wife as a madwoman and himself as the gifted author caught in her path would then allow him to better market both her works and his own in ways that would be profitable to him, in terms of both economic and social status. These are not unique examples, but rather, similar to the editorial strategies employed by other families who have sought to gain control of a woman's public persona through the carefully edited release of her private writings.

For instance, John Middleton Murry, a contemporary of the Woolfs', used a similar strategy to the one utilized by Leonard Woolf when he decided to market and disseminate a specific image of his wife, Katherine Mansfield. Mansfield and Virginia Woolf shared a casual friendship based largely on their respectful competition as writers (Johnson, 140). The Woolfs' Hogarth Press published many of Mansfield's short stories, and the two reviewed each other's work at various times (136, 139, 154). The women shared a similar writing style (though Woolf channeled her energies into longer works of fiction while Mansfield focused on short story writing), shared regular correspondance, and even came up frequently in each other's private writings (147). When Mansfield died of tuberculosis in 1923 at the age of 34, Murry, her estranged husband, decided that she was too important an author to chance being forgotten with time. He embarked on an ambitious endeavor to make certain that Katherine Mansfield would remain in the public eye long after her death. Murry's first step was to publish *The Journal of Katherine Mansfield* in 1927. In his Introduction to the volume, Murry described the difficulties Mansfield encountered while trying to publish many of her stories; at the same time, his portrayal also went to great lengths to render the misery of the author's constant struggle to create a meaningful life in the face of illness. Together, these images depicted Katherine Mansfield as the ultimate tragic genius, a woman who fought against innumerable odds to create her art, which Murry felt was superior to any other created during the Modernist period.

From the outset of his work as Mansfield's editor, Murry acknowledges his inability to remain neutral when dealing with his wife's work. In his Introduction, Murry

stated: "It is difficult for me to attempt a critical valuation of Katherine Mansfield's work. All my life I was involved in it. I believed in it, published it, and for one brief moment even printed it with my own hands. And now, and always, it is and will be impossible for me to be wholly detached from it" (xiii). But while Murry conceded that it was difficult for him to remain unbiased toward his late wife's writing, he did not disclose just how far his adoration had taken him—and the text he was now editing and publishing—away from the reality in which Mansfield had lived and written. Murry's publications of Mansfield's *Journal* and other writings were a well-received and successful undertaking at the time of their release; in particular, the *Journal* provided many readers with an introduction to Mansfield that made her other work more accessible (Meyers, 36). But for all the success of the *Journal*, critic Judy Simons reveals that Mansfield never actually kept a regular diary at all:

Katherine Mansfield never kept a journal systematically....the volumes that Murry produced were compiled from the voluminous mass of his wife's extant manuscripts, which incorporated her rather scrappy diary entries for the years 1914, 1915, 1920 and 1922 with about thirty exercise books containing 'journal' type entries, as well as some sheets of paper showing work in progress and miscellaneous private jottings. (150)

Further, Simons posits, even the dates by which Mansfield's 'entries' are distinguished were not her own, but rather the product of Murry's sleuthing (150). He pieced together the author's scraps of writings and assigned dates based either on contextual clues or simply his best guess as to when Mansfield would have jotted them. Assigning dates where there were none allowed Murry to conceive a unified narrative in which Katherine Mansfield chronicled her joys and frustrations with writing, as well as her constant battles with illness. Chronologically arranging Mansfield's jottings added to the illusion that

these fragments were part of a real diary, though the author's fragments do not have either the consistency of form or the daily regularity typically associated with diaries. Knowing that a title like *The Journal of Katherine Mansfield* would entice readers who associated diaries with intimacy, Murry instead released a volume that gave readers little insight into Mansfield's private life.

Murry's editorial work did not end with creating a journal where there had been none, however. Philip Waldron's study of the original manuscript of Mansfield's "journal" found that Murry also omitted entries that he deemed uninteresting to readers, toned down statements in which Mansfield might be perceived as catty, and frequently replaced standard prose for the author's attempts at free verse (Waldron, 14, 15). This last instance is especially troubling, for Mansfield's play with sentence structure in her informal writings would later influence the short story style upon which her reputation was built. It remains unclear why Murry chose to negate this part of Mansfield's stylistic development; perhaps he was unable to recognize that Mansfield's sentence fragments were not simply grammatical errors or a form of shorthand, but rather an effort to vary her writing style. In any case, this occurrence provides yet another example of how Murry's editorial work would influence how readers and critics would perceive Katherine Mansfield.

Mansfield's *Journals* were not the only thing Murry published after his wife's death. Like Ted Hughes, Murry re-released many of his deceased wife's writings in posthumous publications of stories and fragments that the author herself almost certainly would not have released, and also published many critical evaluations of her work. Like

Hughes, Murry thus presented himself as both a vital character within the narrative *and* as a knowledgeable observer of it. In each instance, Murry portrayed himself as Katherine Mansfield's biggest supporter—both in her literary career and in the bouts with the tuberculosis that would eventually take her life. Within the narrative he constructed after his wife's death, Murry appears to have been the perfect support system for the author. This portrayal is similar to the one Leonard Woolf would later use to thrust himself irrevocably into the narrative of Virginia Woolf's life and art. But while Murry continually presented himself as obsessively devoted to his wife's art and health, their history tells a different story. Murry's introduction to Mansfield's *Journal* noted that the couple spent a great deal of time apart as the author traveled the Continent in search of a climate that would be conducive to her recovery (xii-xiii). He fails to mention, however, that the reason he did not join his wife on this voyage was because he was often revolted by her illness and impatient with her inability to recover (Gilbert, 1462).

Scholar Jeffery Meyers contends that Murry's guilt over his behavior toward Mansfield during her final years led to his efforts to canonize his wife after her death. While Mansfield published only three volumes during her life, Murry released 11 others posthumously (Meyers, 17). By publishing the *Journal* and numerous other works, Murry could alleviate his guilt toward his wife with the knowledge that, even if he could not love her earthly body, he could make certain that, with him to guide them, the literary world would love the body of her work.

As high priest of Katherine's cult, Murry wrote an *apologia pro sua vita*; glorified his own role, image, and importance; exploited her tragic death at the age of thirty-four; created a sentimental and idealized portrait which obscured her literary qualities; and make a good deal of money by

publishing her posthumous works. (Meyers, 16-17, italics in original)

Through his release of *The Journal of Katherine Mansfield*, Murry could refashion his wife's story in a way that could be beneficial to him on a number of levels. He could position Mansfield as a woman who fought incredible odds to become an artist, while also integrating himself into the narrative as Mansfield's only champion. Such a portrait of the couple would ensure their position in the public eye long after Mansfield's death. This same portrait could then be used to effectively market Mansfield's other works, which would allow Murry a comfortable income for the rest of his life. At the same time, establishing Mansfield's place in the study of serious literature would serve as a suitable penance for Murry's guilt regarding his wife's loneliness during her struggles with tuberculosis. Murry's editorial strategy for the publication of Mansfield's *Journal* accomplished all these goals. But Murry's cult of Katherine Mansfield did not last. While immensely popular with readers in the 1920s and 1930s, *The Journal of Katherine Mansfield* soon fell out of favor with audiences and has been out of print for many years. However, many of Mansfield's short stories have been rediscovered in recent years, thanks to the growing popularity of postcolonial literary theory.

While not as extreme as the editorial tactics used by John Middleton Murry, the ones Otto Frank employed while publishing Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl* were no less insidious. Anne Frank's diary is one of the most popular books ever released. Both the story of a girl's maturation to adolescence and the chronicle of a Jewish family's efforts to escape extermination during the Holocaust, *The Diary of a Young Girl* has been reprinted in millions of copies and translated into over 50 languages since it was first

published in Holland in 1947 (Enzer, 1). The volume is regularly included in syllabi for courses ranging from history to literature, and has been the basis for plays, films and countless instructional materials. Anne Frank's private writings were released for public consumption by her father, Otto Frank, who knew that his daughter's greatest dream was to become a published writer (Lee, 223). The diary's author was never able to see her dream become a reality; she died at Bergen-Belsen in 1945, just weeks before Allied forces liberated the concentration camp (Frank, 334). When Otto Frank decided to publish his daughter's diary, he had a couple of different versions from which to choose. The Foreword to the definitive edition of *The Diary of a Young Girl* tells readers that in 1944,

Anne Frank decided that when the war was over she would publish a book based on her diary. She began rewriting and editing her diary, improving on the text, omitting passages she didn't think were interesting enough and adding others from memory. At the same time, she kept up her original diary. (vii)

Thus, Anne Frank's diary began as a private notebook meant only for its author's eyes but eventually evolved toward a document she fully intended for public consumption. Lynn Z. Bloom posits that "It is the audience hovering at the edge of the page that for the sophisticated diarist facilitates the work's ultimate focus, providing the impetus either for the initial writing or for transforming what might have been casual, fragmented jottings into a more carefully crafted, contextually coherent work" (23). Otto Frank knew of his daughter's desire to publish her journals and was able to locate both of her versions, but rather than release one version or the other, he instead chose to weave a narrative that would use portions of each of Anne's versions of her diaries.

Otto Frank had picked and chosen from Anne's extant diary versions with assembling the typescript on which the original (1947) Dutch edition....would be based. He had added some of the vignettes she had written separately....made several rearrangements and corrections, while omitting some passages which he deemed either too irrelevant or too personal to include. (Nussbaum, 24)

Among the entries Otto Frank excluded were several pertaining to Anne's burgeoning sexuality and ones describing her often-tumultuous relationship with her mother. The resulting volume, *The Diary of a Young Girl*, left readers to ascertain that the diary's author was a young teenager who, despite the turmoil going on outside the Secret Annex, managed to live a life that was full of optimism and goodness—one that even bordered on saintliness.

Most critics maintain that Otto Frank did not edit *The Diary of a Young Girl* in a malicious manner. They contend that as a father, he only wanted the world to know the best parts of his deceased daughter, the parts that he wanted to remember. "He wanted to preserve the image of his daughter not only for her readers, but also for himself. He knew perfectly well that Anne was no saint, but, as her father, he followed his instincts in excluding those passages where Anne's anger was most vehement...."(Lee, 259). Still, whether or not Otto Frank's intentions were good, readers cannot ignore the fact that he spliced together two very different versions of his daughter's diary, taking away her autonomy as a writer. Most diary theorists recognize Anne Frank's revised diary as the one most representative of her vision as an author, yet the version Otto Frank published actually employed more entries from Anne's original diary than from her modified text. "There are more parts in [the published version] that Anne had chosen not to incorporate in her revised version...but which were taken from [the original diary] and published

anyway” (Waaldijk, 114). Anne Frank’s plan to become a great writer framed her decision to create a text that would resonate with larger social issues and themes, a volume that would be her introduction to the world. When the author undertook her own editorial work on her diary, she removed much of what she felt was too trite, too immature for publication. After Anne’s death, Otto Frank hoped that her diary could serve as a portrait representing the best his family had to offer, even in the bleakest of circumstances; to that end, he focused his editorial efforts more on content than style, which had been Anne’s chief editorial concern. As a result, the text Otto published relied more on the original diary, which Anne felt was often naïve and poorly written. In his efforts to project an image of Anne Frank as an angelic young woman, Otto Frank infantilized his daughter by removing her musings on her burgeoning sexuality and silencing the resistant voice she was developing. In so doing, Otto undermined many of the strengths of his daughter’s literary style, the very thing for which she had hoped she would be recognized and remembered.

It seems that when women’s diaries are published, there can be no pleasing all the parties involved; writer, editor, diary theorist, critic and casual reader all might have differing perspectives on the format of the text. Some diary writers would prefer that their private words were never opened up to public interpretation, while others might allow their diaries to be published—if the author could clean up the diary in terms of both usage and content. When the decision is made to publish a diary, however, it is almost always done after the author’s death, when she is no longer able to voice her opinion as to what editorial stance should be taken. At that point, it is up to the editor to determine how

the text should be arranged. Some prefer to leave the text largely untouched and leave the words as written; others feel that historical context and standardized usage are additions necessary for readers to understand what the author was trying to say. Ultimately, the editor's stylistic and content preferences will have the most influence on the narrative form a published diary will take.

Though diary editors may play a major role in determining the shape of the published version, they will not have the final authority on how the diary and its author will be perceived; when diary theorists, critics and readers enter into a relationship with the text, they, too, have differing perspectives on how the manuscript should have been treated. Some argue that in order for a published text to best represent the rhythm of diary writing, no editorial work should be undertaken; every spelling and grammatical error should be preserved in order to give readers insight into who the author was and how she wrote. Others are aghast by the possibility that an already-established author should have to submit herself to the humiliation of giving readers access to an unrevised text. In her review of *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath*, Joyce Carol Oates mourns,

One can be sympathetic with Kukil's project of correcting Hughes's editing of Plath's journals with retaining some doubt as to the wisdom—and the ethics—of exposing a major writer's unrevised, inferior work. Poor Sylvia! Even her grammatical errors and misspellings are faithfully preserved by the adulatory Kukil, as if Plath hadn't been a living, vulnerable young writer eager to present her best work but a mummified goddess. (7)

Even the foreword to the definitive edition of Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl* (which somewhat ironically notes on the copyright page that "Not one word has been omitted")

casually informs readers that, “Naturally, Anne’s spelling and linguistic errors have been corrected. Otherwise, the text has basically been left as she wrote it, since any attempts at editing and clarification would be inappropriate in a historical document” (x). How is it ‘natural’ that the editors have altered some of the language Frank herself used, but still claim that they have omitted nothing?

As for the Frank editors’ assertion that any other editorial intervention would be improper in a historical text, is any diary *only* a historical document? Obviously, readers have to recognize the historical value of diaries, but what about their literary value? Anne Frank did not keep her diary merely as a historical account of her life and times. Frank hoped to eventually become a published author, and her diary entries reflect the development of her craft. The Frank editors’ treatment of the diary solely as a historical document negates much of the complexity of the text, but they are by no means the only editors to oversimplify a diary’s nuances. In her essay “Editing a Woman’s Diary: A Case Study,” Elizabeth Hampsten critiques the editorial position employed in *Vinegar Pie and Chicken Bread: A Woman’s Diary of Life in the Rural South, 1890-1891*, the University of Arkansas’ publication of the diary of Nannie Stillwell Jackson. Hampsten contends that Margaret Bolsterli, who edited the diary for publication, places far too much emphasis on the text as a historical document and not enough on its literary value. As editor, Bolsterli regularly interrupts Jackson’s text with editorial commentary meant to clarifying terminology and events with which contemporary readers might not be familiar. Hampsten argues for less editorial intrusion. “I would prefer that the editing concentrated on the diary as a self-contained work of literature, elucidating as necessary,

instead of searching for historical applications” (233). She later voices her disappointment over Bolsterli’s decision not to correct Jackson’s spelling and punctuation errors, declaring that as an author, Jackson deserves to have her work read for its content, which could be undermined by those errors (234-35). Hampsten wants diary editors to remove contextual commentary from their publications so that readers can involve themselves with the text without encountering an editorial bias, yet she fails to recognize that her demand for regularized spelling and grammar will still prevent readers from encountering the text as it was written. Like many diary editors, Hampsten fails to acknowledge that in privileging the editor’s voice, she undermines—and in many ways silences—the voice of the diarist.

Other diary theorists recognize that editing a diary might better prepare it for publication but simultaneously prevent readers from understanding the author’s perception of her experiences.

(T)he scholars who would bring these brave new texts to light have themselves been socialized by years of learning to have conventional, limited, and limited standards for a readable text. Since most diary manuscripts do not meet these standards, scholars edit, cut, footnote, and otherwise manipulate the text in order to arrange its debut. What scholars, including myself, do to diaries in the name of love and / or promotion, has both gained acceptance for our field of study while at the same time delaying the inevitable face-to-face meeting between readers and actual diaries. (Temple, 77)

The very editorial work that allows diary studies legitimacy in the larger field of literary criticism can actually undermine the autonomy of an author’s writing.

Frustrated with the barriers that diary publication can put between author and audience, some readers might turn to biographies to give them the ‘truth’ of an author’s

life, but does a biography have any more claim to subjectivity than a diary? Just as liberal humanist literary theorists assume that their readings are free of cultural and personal bias, some biographers and their readers believe that if the author has no personal connection to his/her subject, a biography will be free of any bias (Klage, 3). Feminist biography theory explodes this assumption by acknowledging that the biographer is more than just a storyteller; instead, this perspective sees the biographer as both teller of the story and character within that story. In *Writing a Woman's Life*, Carolyn G. Heilbrun notes that for many writers (if not necessarily for readers), “the understanding that biographies are fictions, constructions by the biographer of the story she or he had to tell, has become clear” (28). For those biographers who do not recognize the ways their own life might help shape the narrative, any deviation from the standard detached third-person narrative might appear to weaken the entire structure of their composition. Instead, feminist theorists working with life-writing (be it diaries, letters or biographies) comprehend that every writer and editor *does* bring a bias to her/his work; for them, disregarding this partiality can weaken the narrative because it ignores often-powerful points of connection between author and subject.

Where traditional biographers might see any insertion of themselves into the narrative as tainting the story, theorists of feminist biography understand that ignoring the fact that the author is *already part* of that story can do far more damage to the narrative. Feminist biography theory finds value in recognizing that research necessarily leads to a relationship between the author and the story's focal point (Long, 69). “Feminist researchers do not view their personal attributes as contaminants. Instead, they recognize

the contribution of their own qualities to a unique and situated account....A more peer-like self-presentation of the narrator in turn facilitates reciprocity in the subject-narrator relationship” (Long, 119). The shared authority over the narrative in such a relationship then allows us to recast women from mere objects in their life stories to powerful subjects who actively participate in the storytelling process.

In many biographies, however, the presentation of the subject can be dramatically shifted through the way their story is presented. Perhaps more than any other component of the biography writing process, biography subtexts shape how the book’s subject will be perceived. No biography can ever tell all the events of its subject’s life; biographers thus have to pick and choose among all available resources to create a narrative that will be compelling, yet remain accurate in terms of its subject matter. Whether they do so consciously or not, biographers create a narrative based on the aspects of the subject’s life that they find most fascinating. Biographers of Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath, for instance, regularly present them in variations of a couple of different themes: they are either feminist heroines who struggled to overcome their social positions, writers whose sole focus was their art, or madwomen whose genius eventually caused them to self-destruct. Subtexts like these provide gripping narratives for both readers and writers, but at the same time, the omission of any information that does not align with a particular subtext can distort how readers understand the biography’s subject.

The same can be said for published versions of diaries. Because most published versions contain only a percentage of the total diary manuscript, it is up to the diary’s editor to determine which entries will be most representative of the entire journal. In an

attempt to create a linear narrative out of seemingly random diary entries, a subtext similar to the ones found in biographies will often surface during preparations for a diary's publication. As the editor prioritizes which entries will be most compelling for readers, her/his own bias will inevitably come into play. "Although the diarist writes the diary, the editor or editors determine which diary entries (all, some, a few) will be included in the edited text of the manuscript diary. Not surprisingly, the exigencies of an editor's personal and professional life have a bearing on her or his preparation of the text..."(Bunkers, 4).

While such bias is nearly always unavoidable, it is not necessarily problematic. Similar to feminist biographers, some diary editors can recognize their partiality and use it to create a narrative that remains respectful to the diary as a whole, even if they are only able to publish portions of the manuscript. However, when the diary editor has a vested interest in how its subject will be perceived by readers, the diary's narrative can be distorted in a way that barely resembles the original manuscript. *A Writer's Diary* was not representative of Virginia Woolf's diary as a whole, which actually dealt very little with her musings on works written specifically for publication. Because Leonard Woolf was determined that his wife would be remembered as a great writer, he released a volume that had the appearance of showing readers what the author was 'really' like, and the segment of Woolf's reality that he presented was that she was a woman solely focused on the craft of writing. When Ted Hughes published *The Journals of Sylvia Plath*, it must have crossed his mind that emphasizing Plath's idiosyncrasies would detract from those who blamed Hughes for Plath's suicide. These are extreme examples,

but they are illustrative of how diary publication restrains women's voices.

Even if an editor works to preserve the author's text as authentically as possible, publishers might constrict the body of the diary. In a conference paper entitled "Whose Diary Is It, Anyway? Issues of Agency, Authority, Ownership," Suzanne Bunkers charts many of her own experiences with diary publication. Describing the lengthy process a diary editor undertakes in preparing a volume for release, Bunkers notes that final decisions on content are often out of even the most conscientious editor's hands:

Considerations such as the press's publication budget, for instance, often dictate the number of pages to be included in the finished book. Many published editions contain only 10 to 20% of the entries in the unpublished manuscript diary....[Production costs] ultimately influence not only the ways in which a manuscript diary is transformed into an edited, published text but also how widely the text is advertised and reviewed—and how well it sells. (4)

Thus, almost any published version of a diary does not represent the text created by the author. We have to ask ourselves whether part of a diary is better than no diary at all. As readers and diary enthusiasts, our response might be an emphatic yes; as scholars, we have to consider the fact that when we read only parts of a diary, we're probably losing more than we're gaining. A more important consideration is the fact that the diarist is losing autonomy over her own voice.

Conclusion: Where Do We Go from Here?

By now, it is clear that the public's perceptions of Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath were shaped, in large part, through the way their public words were edited for public consumption. When Leonard Woolf and Ted Hughes chose editorial strategies for their deceased wives' diaries, they opted for ones that would maximize public interest in their wives and also minimize public criticism of themselves. These editorial decisions drastically altered the way readers understood these authors.

Leonard Woolf's editorial work in *A Writer's Diary* reduced Virginia Woolf to a one-dimensional character whose life singularly revolved around her writing. Many of the author's important relationships, relationships that profoundly affected Woolf's personal and professional life, were minimized or completely omitted from *A Writer's Diary*. This depiction of the writer allowed Leonard to come across as the sole intimate of Virginia's life, to be perceived as the starting point for much of her art. Presenting Virginia Woolf as an individual precariously balanced between genius and madwoman would provide beneficial to Leonard Woolf in three key ways. First, by marketing his version of Virginia's private writings as *A Writer's Diary*, Leonard could capitalize on the tantalizing allure of all the illicit images that audiences perceive as synonymous with diaries while minimizing the actual potential for scandal by excluding anything that did not fit the narrowest of criteria. Second, Leonard presented *A Writer's Diary* as a behind-the-scenes glimpse at Virginia Woolf's writing process, which would reignite interest in her novels; thus, this publication would provide Leonard, as executor of Virginia's literary estate, with a significant income. Third, by focusing on those entries which

featured Leonard as the great steadying influence in Virginia's life and minimizing her other important relationships, Leonard could make certain that he would not spend eternity in anonymity; instead, depicting himself as Virginia Woolf's savior allowed Leonard to write himself into Virginia's story—indeed, into literary history—with indelible ink.

In contrast, when Ted Hughes released *The Journals of Sylvia Plath*, he worked hard to remove his presence from the narrative of Plath's life. Hughes published his volume as a means of proving that Plath's suicide was the result of her long-term battles of depression and was in no way influenced by her tumultuous relationship with Hughes. Hughes' editorial choices reflect his efforts to portray his estranged wife as a woman ruled by her uncontrollable passions, passions that were sometimes violent. At the same time that Hughes overemphasized Plath's passions, he downplayed Plath's descriptions of his own passionate nature. Presenting himself as an unbiased editor and literary critic, Hughes manipulated the way Plath's poems were read and interpreted. He arranged the poetry of *Ariel* to suit his preferences rather than Plath's and wrote literary criticism of Plath's poems that used his intimate knowledge of the author, even though he wrote under the guise of an impartial reader. Hughes used a similar strategy when he published *The Journals of Sylvia Plath*, writing his foreword from a detached perspective that belied the complexity of his relationship with the author. At points within the *Journals* where editorial omissions might seem suspicious, Hughes chose to temper perceptions of what they were about to read with explanatory notes that interpreted Plath's words before readers even encountered them. Through the publication of his volume, Hughes made

certain that readers would understand that Sylvia Plath was a flawed woman and that he was a mere bystander on her path to self-destruction.

We cannot change the way that Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath's reputations were affected by the publication of their private writings, but we can use what happened to them as a guide for similar endeavors in the future. Looking at these examples, it becomes clear that an author's intimates cannot detach themselves from the subject at hand when editing personal documents. Leonard Woolf and Ted Hughes' editorial work cannot be dismissed as two isolated incidents, either; John Middleton Murry and Otto Frank also used the editorial process to limit the public's understanding of Katherine Mansfield and Anne Frank, respectively. Many readers have accepted such editorial work without question, presumably because they believed that the intimate-editors were acting in the authors' best interests. However, when an editor has a vested interest in how the story is told, s/he cannot remain faithful to the author's original text. In many cases, the intimate-editor can stand to gain in terms of both finances and literary reputation with a carefully edited diary. Such diaries are typically edited in one of two ways. Minimizing negative portrayals of either the author or her family and friends might make a volume more marketable to those who idolize the author and do not wish to see her weaknesses. Conversely, focusing a published diary on the unpleasant aspects of an author's life can also boost sales by tantalizing readers with the promise of seeing an icon's failings. Neither of these editorial patterns allows readers to understand authors on a complex level; the author is reduced to little more than a caricature, exaggerating some features and devaluing others. When a diary's editor has a personal stake in how the

diary's author will be perceived, s/he will usually manipulate the text in a way that will be beneficial to her/his needs, regardless of how accurate their depiction of the author really is.

We understand that the ways audiences read Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath (both their diaries and the works they wrote specifically for publication) were affected, in large part, by the inaccurate portraits resulting from their husbands' editorial strategies. While the publication of unabridged versions of their diaries could not completely erase readers' existing perceptions of Woolf and Plath, the later volumes *did* give readers additional knowledge about the authors. Those later volumes were key to augmenting the public's understanding of these women and in many ways counteracted the images created by Leonard Woolf and Ted Hughes. However, it is also important to remember that these are examples of famous women; interest in their private lives is great enough to warrant multiple editions of their diaries. What happens to the reputations of ordinary women whose families authorize the publication of their private writings? Their diaries are likely to be released in smaller printings; because fewer readers will have access to these diaries in the first place, we can only imagine that there will be little demand for newer, more complete editions of these women's writings. Their characters will forever be marked by the way their diaries were edited, their words manipulated to create a skewed image of the complex lives they lived.

For this reason, then, I contend that personal documents should not be edited by anyone who shared a relationship with their author. Too much is at stake for a family member or close friend to edit the book in the author's best interests. Inevitably, the

author's intimates will shape the diary into a text that is beneficial to them, rather than an accurate representation of what the author wrote.

It may appear, then, that I am arguing that if women's diaries are published at all, they should be prepared by an editor unaffiliated with the author's literary estate. With a smaller stake in how the author is perceived, it might appear that an outside editor might be less biased and thus, more capable of editing the volume in a way that honors the author's original text. However, even an impartial editor cannot know what the author would do with the text if she were publishing it herself. At various points in her life, Virginia Woolf planned to use her diaries as the basis for her memoirs or hoped that Leonard would make up a small book from them and burn the rest (*DVW 1*, 234, *DVW 3*, 67). Her suicide note, however, asked that Leonard destroy all her papers (Leaska, 439). With all these possibilities, we cannot accurately guess which one—if any—the author actually would have chosen. If she did opt to publish her diaries, would she have released the full text, or only excerpts? If abridged, which entries would she have chosen? Would she correct her few spelling and grammatical errors, as Leonard did, or leave the text as it had been organically written? Similarly, we cannot know whether Sylvia Plath would have ever released her private notebooks at all. Her journals never even hinted at the possibility of publication, as Woolf's did. When Ted Hughes released Plath's journals, he edited them in a manner of which we can be almost certain the author would not have approved. Though Karen Kukil helped repair the damage done by Hughes when she published the bulk of Plath's surviving diaries, she still cut 12 lines that might have been painful for some of the author's acquaintances. In addition, Kukil

reordered the diaries so that they would form a more cohesive narrative; entries dealing with Plath's writing (which did not fit with this chronological narrative) were relegated to indices at the back of the book; would Plath have arranged her diaries in this way? If editing her own text, would Plath have cut only 12 lines? Joyce Carol Oates' review of *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath* bemoaned the fact that Kukil did not correct the author's spelling and grammar errors, but does Oates know for certain that Plath would have been upset by Kukil's decision? Again, because Plath left no instructions where her journals were concerned, we cannot be certain that either Hughes or Kukil edited the author's words in a way that was respectful to her vision.

Because we cannot know what a deceased author would have done with her diaries, I think we have to take an 'all or nothing' approach with diary publication. That is, literary heirs have to make the decision to either cut nothing from the text and present it to readers exactly as it was written, or not publish the diary at all. Obviously, neither of these approaches is ideal: most publishers cannot afford to print the full text of a diary can be several years and thousands of pages long, and many will argue that it is better to know something of the diarist than nothing at all. An approach such as mine may seem extreme, but I believe that anything in between is disrespectful to the author's work. Whether they do their job innocuously or not, editors should not have the power to determine how a diarist will be portrayed when her diary is released. Editorial strategy must reflect the diary as a whole, not just those sections that make for a compelling storyline.

In a perfect world, authors and editors would collaborate on the editorial decisions made when preparing a text for publication. Diary publication poses a special problem, however, for the decision to release a diary typically comes after the author's death, when she no longer has a say in what will happen to her written words. Few diarists have the foresight to determine what will happen to their journals after their death, and as in the case of Virginia Woolf, we can see that her foresight was too shortsighted to come up with a definitive future for her notebooks. Even if an author makes clear her intentions for her diaries, it is difficult to determine whether the literary estate will honor those wishes. Because diary authors are unable to participate in the editorial process that comes with publishing their private words, editorial intrusions must be minimal (i.e., the use of footnotes or a glossary to explain terms or individuals that might be unfamiliar to readers). If heirs do decide to release a woman's diary, they must think about the full range of consequences that could come with such a release. The diarist might be perceived negatively, or the diary might present secrets and opinions that family and friends would rather keep hidden. If an author's heirs are unwilling or unable to accept these outcomes, they should reconsider their decision to publish the diary. Excising a diary fragments the author's voice and leaves her with no way to define herself and her experiences. Publishing only portions of a woman's diary creates a false portrait of the artist. Whether the editor shared a relationship with the author or not, s/he cannot get inside the author's head to determine which parts of the diary the author would have released. Whether authors are canonized or demonized as a result of the misleading portraits constructed by the expurgation of their diaries, the end result is the same: a

distortion of author's words will invariably distort our understanding of the author herself.

It is my hope that this analysis will be a catalyst for future research on how editorial decisions have restricted women's voices and lead to a transformation of the way diaries are currently published. Now that readers can recognize how editorial strategy has affected their perception of Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath, I hope they will bring the same critical analysis to other diaries and begin to question the role of the editor. Readers must read between the lines and ask two important questions. Who constructed this portrait of the artist? What did they have to gain? These questions are crucial if we are to understand how the editor's voice, while seemingly silent in a text like this, actually tells us a great deal about what we're reading. At the same time that I hope this analysis will lead us to reexamine diaries that have already been published, I also hope that it will play a role in determining how editorial decisions regarding diaries are made in the future. Though we cannot change how diarists have been edited in the past, my hope is that other women's reputations will not have to endure the same consequences suffered by Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath's reputations. We must give diarists the opportunity to create their own self-portraits; if we respect them enough to publish their words, we can give them nothing less than the opportunity to tell the truth as they saw it.

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