

Some of Ted Hughes's poems will almost certainly survive as among the most distinctive of the period. But what is yet to come is a full assessment of his life with Sylvia Plath, and of what followed her death.
—obituary in *The Telegraph*
published October 30, 1998

Sylvia

by Katharyn Machan

Her life began with him and his, he thought;
before then she drew shadows as her breath
and sipped white sky for wine. What time had taught—
that mirrors shriek, that nothing smiles but death—
she'd put away, he knew, when his sure arms
encircled hers within the marriage bed
and his dreams gave her children, all old harms
dark fantasy, dismissed, unfounded dread.
To listen to her nightmares, dare believe
her days dawned jagged, turned to icy stone,
a cave where wingless dragons writhed to heave
harsh cries of what it is to fly alone?
Impossible: she was his wife, his home.
He needed her in every shining poem.

*This poem first appeared in *The Poets' Touchstone*, 61, No. 1 as first-prize winner in the Poetry Society of New Hampshire contest.*