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INHABITED BY A CRY: A thematic study of
Sylvia Plath's Ariel.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in English at
Massey University

Patrick Spillane

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PREFACE

This thesis will mainly concern itself with a thematic study of Ariel tracing motifs and imagery in the hope of a deeper understanding of the poetry of the volume. Emphasis, then, will be on the artistry and objective control of a poet such as Plath, while at the same time not ruling out the elements of extremism, and the threatening dangerous element contained in poetry of this nature. Along with this emphasis on artistic merit there will be an effort made to 'place' the poet and to discuss her positive value in literature for our present age. Above all the thesis will concern itself with Sylvia Plath's authenticity both as an artist, and as a person with individual and unique perception.

All quotations and references to the poetry will be taken from the American, Harper and Row, edition of Ariel, an edition not normally sold in New Zealand. This volume, unlike the Faber edition, contains an interesting preface by Robert Lowell, and several poems, such as 'Lesbos' which are not contained in the English edition. There are some textual discrepancies such as the singular noun being used in the 'Lady Lazarus' line 'Gentleman, ladies'. The English edition reads 'Gentlemen, ladies', but here, and elsewhere, the Harper and Row version will be followed.

I wish to thank Mr. Peter Alcock for his perceptive comments and advice regarding the manuscript of the thesis and particularly for his introducing me to the poet's work. His help with reference texts, his knowledge of the modern literary scene, and arrangements to supervise the thesis have been an immense help. Thanks also to Del, my wife and all who encouraged me in completing this thesis.

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