

## These Ghostly Archives, Redux

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In "These Ghostly Archives," we discussed our experiences of working with documents Sylvia Plath left behind, documents that are now held in different archives, in different countries. We attempted to communicate the thrill of planning an archival research trip and to show that despite decades of researcher use, new materials are still to be found.<sup>1</sup> On working in the archive, Anne Stevenson beautifully expresses the magic of handling original Plath documents: "[T]hese breathing pieces of paper brought [her] to life for me as the memoirs of the witnesses I had talked to had not" (Malcolm 77). It is similar to the "spark [that] flew off Arnold" and shook Plath in "Ocean 1212-W" and lead her to poetry (Plath, *Johnny Panic* 124). Stevenson's reaction continues: "Perhaps I was responding to the unselfconsciousness of the evidence, none of it trimmed for publication to biographers, all of it conveying the contingent, as-yet-unfictionalized, still-happening present" (Malcolm 77). In other words, it is the immediacy and untampered with nature of these documents that strikes Stevenson so forcefully.

Our initial conversation focused on those archival materials housed in the BBC Written Archives Centre in Reading, England, and in the Mortimer Rare Book Room at Plath's alma mater Smith College. We gained new insight and appreciation into Plath's business sense, particularly with regard to her affiliation with the BBC between 1960 and 1963. Plath read her own poems, other poet's poems, and had her poems read by read by others as well for BBC programs. This means that a British audience heard both her voice and more of her poems than critics had previously known.<sup>2</sup> Also, we found that Plath submitted a batch of poems to the BBC for a proposed broadcast in which she intended to read some of the bee poems.

However, in excitement we discovered was that between November 1962 and February 1963, Plath was working with the Leonie Cohn of the BBC's Talks Department on what would become "Ocean 1212-W." The weekend before she died, Plath received a constructive, but

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.iun.edu/~plath/vol2/Crowther\\_Steinberg.pdf](http://www.iun.edu/~plath/vol2/Crowther_Steinberg.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> See "These Ghostly Archives," pages 197-198.



critical letter from Cohn accepting the essay that she had titled "Landscape of a Childhood." Cohn requested minor changes since she regarded the piece as "too verbless" (Cohn, February 8, 1963). Plath's original manuscript of this story, which Cohn subsequently titled "Ocean 1212-W," went missing in the mid-1960s. In a pre-broadcast internal memorandum from April of 1963, Cohn indicated that Plath's manuscript, "needs small, simple verbal adjustments which I feel I can do without qualms" (Cohn, April 10, 1963).

Armed with the knowledge that Plath's original script was missing and that the broadcast and published version contained alterations not sanctioned by Plath herself, we decided to follow the trail of "Ocean 1212-W" to see if it would lead us back to Plath's own "Landscape of a Childhood." Below, we continue our conversation as we conduct additional research in the archives. However, making one discovery often leads to another and so in addition to recounting our ongoing attempt to unearth the story of this missing manuscript we would like to share with you our new findings regarding a book of poems Plath abandoned and a typescript of new poems she submitted to the BBC.

In our previous piece we explored the magical nature of Plath's archives; finding handwritten or typed manuscripts, torn pieces of paper, check stubs, menus, letters and photographs. All scraps and pieces of someone's life left behind and preserved. We claimed: "Archive work is a little like detective work, trying to piece together an incomplete and slightly fuzzy puzzle" (Crowther & Steinberg 201). Here, you can see how we tried to fit this puzzle together, despite the missing pieces.

PKS: In the ongoing attempt to locate Sylvia Plath archival material, it is necessary to check and re-check sources. As I continue to research Plath and learn more, these archival materials take on a special significance. They tell a potentially new story, or (re)present a familiar narrative in a different light.

Browsing the British Library's manuscript catalogue in April, I read the following description in the Alvarez Papers (Add 88589): "11. 'Landscape of childhood', transcript of a radio broadcast for the B.B.C. Home Service; n.d. *Typewritten*" (bl.uk).<sup>3,4</sup> Based

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/manuscripts/DESC0000.asp>

on the research Gail conducted at the BBC Written Archives Center, this document appears to be related to Plath's prose piece "Ocean 1212-W."<sup>5</sup> Could this be the transcript that June Tobin read for the BBC broadcast in August 1963? Or could it capture an earlier state of Plath's script which pre-dates that August 1963 broadcast? I wrote to Gail to let her know of my discovery.

GC: I suppose in many ways part of the attraction of delving into archives is seeing the suspension of time, the preservation of the past in the present. If the "Landscape of a Childhood" script in the British Library was an earlier version of Plath's story, then could this be the missing manuscript we discussed in "These Ghostly Archives?"

The British Library is placed in a quiet courtyard just off the busy Euston Road near Kings Cross and St. Pancras railway stations in London. It houses over fourteen million books, 920,000 journals and newspapers as well as three million sound recordings. Opening time at the Library is a curious affair. Researchers all line up, very English-like, in a single-file orderly queue waiting for the doors to open. When you enter the building you are met with a clear, bright, white hall and a large marble staircase. There are rooms – rooms everywhere and lockers and hangers and see-through plastic bags to fill with your pencils and paper and laptops. Everything must be visible. The Reading Room I needed was on the third floor – Rare Manuscripts - and consisted of wide rows of desks, exactly how you would imagine. Creaking wood paneling and red leather table tops. Files full of unattached papers have to be viewed in large, padded wooden boxes. The first file I requested was the Alvarez papers Add: 88589: the file containing the typescript called "Landscape of a Childhood."

PKS: Catalog descriptions give and take. They provide varying amounts of information. However, their main function is that they are a point of access. They do not tell us everything. The Alvarez papers are well enough described, and the presence of this

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<sup>4</sup> The British Library catalogue titles this document "Landscape of Childhood." However, the typescript actually reads "Landscape of a Childhood." In this paper, we refer to this work as it appears on the typescript: "Landscape of a Childhood."

<sup>5</sup> See "These Ghostly Archives," pages 190-195



BBC typescript for "Landscape of a Childhood" was enough to send Gail hurtling to London. What is she going to see on the page? What else does the British Library hold in its formidable collection? My mind is ablaze with wonder at what she will find. The archival itch gets the better of me and I head west from Boston to Northampton.

In my years of visiting the Mortimer Rare Book Room, I have read or perused most of their Sylvia Plath collection. These materials are all cataloged and a detailed finding aid is in production. In addition to the catalogued materials, there are also new accessions that have yet to be fully processed and will continue to shape Plath scholarship.

Gail is at the British Library looking at the Alvarez papers. She feels optimistic that I might stumble on something wonderful. I am just happy to re-examine these materials with the advantage of time and knowledge and shifting foci. In browsing through a box of her "Personal Papers," I found a torn sheet of paper. Just a torn sheet of paper.<sup>6</sup> How many other researchers would just pass this by? While I do not possess the ability of total recall, I do not ever remember reading about what was on this half-page. On the recto of this sheet at Smith is the last stanza, typed, of her October 1960 poem "Leaving Early." There are autograph annotations, cancellations, and a set of lines Plath failed to develop. On the verso, however, is a gem. There are two columns in Plath's hand which includes a list of poems that she temporarily sought to include in an unrealized poetry collection, "Tulips & Other Poems."

GC: Unrealized typescripts are one of the treasures of archival work. Unearthing plans, even if those plans do not come to fruition, is still a privilege to see how they were formed and then abandoned or changed. I knew faced with the typescript of "Landscape of a Childhood" that I was at least looking for a piece that still held Plath's intended title. This document was housed in an oversized, beige-coloured, thick cardboard folder with the file name and number on the front and down the side. Even though I knew this typescript originated from the BBC, I still illogically held out hope for an original Plath

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<sup>6</sup> Experience at the Lilly Library in January 2010 taught me that torn sheet of paper can have valuable information. In that experience, I found two stanzas from Plath's "Song for a Summer's Day" that do not appear in either *The Christian Science Monitor* (August 18, 1959) or *The Collected Poems* (30). At the Lilly Library, see Plath Mss. II, Box 13: Cambridge, Newnham College, Folder 5: Notes.

manuscript. I knew this did not make sense and that at the most I would be looking for a BBC version which existed before Leonie Cohn made the changes. The first documents in this folder *were* original Plath manuscripts.<sup>7</sup> But the BBC version of "Landscape of a Childhood" was not. Perhaps I should explain. There is something very familiar to me now about a Plath original manuscript. It is almost intangible and hard to describe, but the paper tends to be quite thin and creamy. I have grown used to the typeface she used. Sometimes there is the shock of pink typed Smith College memorandum paper, while other times there is her distinctive handwriting. There were more obvious reasons, however, why this "Landscape of a Childhood" was not an original typescript. Apart from obviously being sourced from the BBC, it was titled: NOT CHECKED IN TALKS DEPT WITH "AS BROADCAST" SCRIPT, meaning this was a typed up version, usually from the author's original, of something that was to be (or had already been broadcast). Upon first reading it was not possible to know the extent to which this essay differed from the one in *Johnny Panic*. Therefore, armed with my published version of "Ocean 1212-W"<sup>8</sup> and the typescript version of "Landscape of a Childhood," I began to compare the two versions word by word, line by line.

PKS: The suspense of textual comparison! In drafts of Plath's poetry and prose, we see ideas conceived and canceled. We are accustomed to analyzing Plath's textual decisions: we trust them. We trust them implicitly. Scholars Jacqueline Rose, Nancy Hargrove, and Tracy Brain, to name a few, have thoroughly considered Plath's editing and the editing of her work. However, Gail is reviewing a document upon which no previous scholar has acknowledged as containing differences.

There is a history of posthumous perfecting that far exceeds what was done to the body of Plath's works. We read and admire her posthumous collections, such as *Crossing the Water* (1971) and *Winter Trees* (1971/1972). *However*, these were assembled by Ted Hughes.

The poems in *Crossing the Water*, written primarily between late 1959 and 1961,

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<sup>7</sup> For a full list of the contents of each of the folders in the Alvarez papers please see <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/manuscripts/DESC0000.asp>. Click "Find a Specific Manuscript (by Number)" and enter 88589.

<sup>8</sup> See "Ocean 1212W" in *Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams* London: Faber and Faber, 1977.



were widely published during Plath's lifetime. They bring together a range of poems that largely connect the poetry of *The Colossus* to those of *Ariel*. Yet their absence from her *Ariel* vision is not surprising. I am not the first to note this, but how would a selection of these poems have looked and read by Plath's own design?

Plath, of course, wrote many more books than she saw published. Arranged may be a better word than wrote. From the mid-1950s, she actively marketed different collections of her work to publishers and entered numerous first book poetry competitions. As soon as a rejection came back, she reviewed the contents, shifted the order, examined pairings and themes, and took out older poems and replaced them with newer ones. How differently those pre-1960 orderings read from what ultimately became *The Colossus*!

As Plath continued to write poetry in 1960 and 1961, it is only natural that she began to organize these poems into a collection. She had seen *The Colossus* published in England and awaited its release in the United States. With "Tulips & Other Poems," we see a snapshot into Plath's creative process. We see her moving on and glimpse her vision, however fleeting, of the poetic identity that would eventually make her name.

GC: With an abandoned book idea, such as "Tulips & Other Poems" we can feel confident that for whatever reason, Plath was not happy with her list of poems or that something did not quite work for her in the arrangement. Looking for changes not sanctioned by Plath is a different thing altogether. There is something painstaking and exciting about comparing two documents ("Ocean 1212W" and "Landscape of a Childhood") word by word, looking to see if the order has been shifted, commas moved or removed, words replaced. Each time I found a difference between these two texts I felt a physical jolt. It was so exciting – and the first difference arrived early, right there on page one. In fact, by the time I reached the end of comparing these documents, there were fifteen differences between the published "Ocean 1212-W" and the BBC typescript of "Landscape of a Childhood."<sup>9</sup> There is evidence that Cohn had inserted the

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<sup>9</sup> These differences are located in the BBC typescript on the following pages: two on page 1, three on page 2, five on page 3, two on page 4, one on page 5, one on page 7 and one on page 8.

odd verb,<sup>10</sup> and there were some grammatical changes; an exclamation mark replaced with a full stop, a comma replaced with a semi-colon. However, the most radical change was the removal of a whole section in which Plath's speaker reminisces about a story she was told as a small girl. Although she does not name the story, it is clear that she is writing about "The Little Mermaid," the Hans Christian Andersen story of a beautiful mermaid who fell in love with a land prince and traded her tongue to a sea witch for a pair of legs. This appears to be a well-loved story by Plath's speaker who exclaimed it did not matter if she had never seen a mermaid, she still adored the story!

This missing section from the published "Ocean 1212-W" appears to be the strongest indication that "small minor changes"<sup>11</sup> had been edited from Plath's original manuscript. However well meaning Leonie Cohn was in adapting Plath's piece, (and there is certainly evidence that she was very respectful and supportive of Plath's work),<sup>12</sup> as a reader I am intrigued to see what Plath regarded as her finished version. It is a privilege to see inside the creative transformation that turns a series of words into a piece of prose, a list of poems into a potential book. In fact, being given an insight into this transformation and process of selecting, deselecting, arranging and rearranging can allow us, at a distance, to almost engage in some form of surrogate authorship.<sup>13</sup> This is especially true of a writer like Plath who crafted her work repeatedly and diligently. How does such a writer make decisions and revisions?

PKS: It is difficult to know exactly when Plath ordered the poems for "Tulips & Other Poems." In the left-hand column of the torn sheet there is a submissions list of thirty-one poems Plath wrote from 1959 to 1961.<sup>14</sup> As is typical of her submissions lists, she has underlined in red pencil those poems accepted for publication and noted, using

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<sup>10</sup> In Cohn's final letter to Plath dated February 8, 1963, she accepted "Landscape of a Childhood," but asked Plath to make some changes since she felt the piece was too "verbless" (BBC WAC and Smith College).

<sup>11</sup> Internal memo, Cohn April 10, 1963, BBC WAC.

<sup>12</sup> The April 10, 1963 internal memo (BBC WAC) also shows that Cohn was concerned to choose an appropriate reader for Plath's script. While discussing Plath's participation in the program, it was Cohn's intention to have Plath herself read the script. After Plath's death, Cohn sought advice from Al Alvarez and George MacBeth, two critics who were very familiar with Plath's work.

<sup>13</sup> This is an idea that has been explored by Lynne Pearce (2007) and Francis Wilson (1999)

<sup>14</sup> The first poem is "Private Ground;" the last "The Surgeon at 2 a.m."



abbreviations, in which periodical the poem was to appear. She also wrote "BBC" to highlight those poems heard on the British airwaves. Some poems have a large black circle next to them, some a capital A.

The right-hand column has three sets of data: a list of periodicals, a list of poets and critics and the contents of "Tulips & Other Poems." At the top of this list is the header "Book." The contents are as follows:

Magi  
Small Hours  
Morning Song  
Face Lift  
Parliament Hill Fields  
A Life  
Candles  
Sleep in Mojave Desert  
The Hanging Man  
You're  
Tulips  
Widow  
Insomniac  
The Rival

Three poems are struck-through ("Face Lift," "Widow," and "Insomniac"). Six are wrapped in parentheses ("Face Lift," "Parliament Hill Fields," "A Life," "Candles," "Insomniac," and "The Rival").<sup>15</sup> Two poems appear alongside the list, "The Surgeon at 2 a.m." and "The Moon and the Yew Tree." It is difficult to determine if these were to be included, but it can help us to narrow down the date when Plath created this collection

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<sup>15</sup> Plath intended to use only part one of "The Rival."



to late 1961.<sup>16</sup>

"Tulips & Other Poems" does not feel complete; it appears neither to have grown nor matured. However, in the first few months of 1962, Plath the poet did. A number of these poems survived Plath's 1962 poetic outbreak and were to be included in her *Ariel*. But how do the poems, in the order above, read? What is the story they tell? The manuscripts for these poems survive. These were all poems Plath saw through to completion unlike, to a degree, the prose piece she titled "Landscape of a Childhood."

GC: This "Landscape of a Childhood" at the British Library is a version – perhaps *the* version – of that work Plath sent to Cohn on January 28, 1963. Certainly, at the very least, this version differs from the finally published story in *Johnny Panic*.<sup>17</sup> However, to claim that this is the "missing" manuscript would be premature and inaccurate. Without Plath's original manuscript, we cannot know what she regarded as her finished version of "Landscape of a Childhood." We do not know whether she approved the title change to "Ocean 1212-W" and we simply cannot speculate what negotiations might have taken place regarding changes to the text between her and Leonie Cohn if Plath had not died. What we can say with some certainty is that this is a different, and clearly earlier version of the story. There are two pieces of evidence to support this. One, the use of Plath's original and earlier title before it was changed by Leonie Cohn; and two, the existence of paragraphs and sentences which were subsequently edited out. It is unfortunate that this BBC document is not dated. For example, if it was typed up before April 1963, we know that Leonie Cohn had not made her changes at this point and therefore the chances are greater that this would be a direct copy of Plath's original script.<sup>18</sup> If it was typed after April 1963, then it is possible that it had already been through at least one editing process.

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<sup>16</sup> The drafts of these poems are held at Indiana University (Plath Mss. I). It is likely that Plath ordered these poems just prior to selling her "scrap paper" to Ifan Kyrle Fletcher in October/November 1961 (see *Letters Home* 434 and 437).

<sup>17</sup> Based on the documentation held in the BBC Written Archives Centre, particularly Plath's letter of January 28, 1963 to Leonie Cohn, it should be noted that the date assigned to "Ocean 1212-W" in *Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams* – 1962 – is incorrect.

<sup>18</sup> Al Alvarez recalls (email to authors) that the BBC sent him this typescript shortly after Plath's death to help him research a radio program he was producing on Plath. Alvarez's "The Poetry of Sylvia Plath" aired on July 10, 1963.



Therefore, once again, the archives leave us with a tantalizing glimpse into possibilities, alternatives. They allow us to solve the puzzle, but only so far and never completely or in any tidy fashion. While we feel we have crept a little bit closer to Plath's original piece of prose, it is still, nevertheless, just out of reach. Like a set of Russian dolls, there is always just one more piece to find, each much smaller and infinitely more complex than the last.

PKS: The complexity of Sylvia Plath's physical manuscripts – separated by time, by accident, by distance, theft, or other for reasons – limits our complete comprehension of their actual bulk and serves, in many instances, to disrupt examining them in their original order.<sup>19</sup> There are writings on the backs of writings. Bold, inky cancellations bleed through ideas across the pages. While occasionally we are able to determine which came first, the incompleteness of some of these documents feeds our archival fever.

The theory of original order is a backbone of the archival profession. Richard Pearce-Moses defines original order as, "[a] fundamental principle of archives. Maintaining records in original order serves two purposes. First, it preserves existing relationships and evidential significance that can be inferred from the context of the records. Second, it exploits the record creator's mechanisms to access the records, saving the archives the work of creating new access tools" (archivists.org).

It is not always possible or practicable to maintain original order, or, conversely, to reconstruct it in spite of factual evidence. In "These Ghostly Archives" we briefly discussed how in December 1962 and January 1963, Plath had a submission of "New Poems" out to the BBC for consideration for a radio program. In the paper we speculated on two submissions based on documents held by Smith College and the BBC Written Archives Centre.<sup>20</sup> We now know some of the information we presented to be potentially erroneous. Speculation where data is foggy is an accidental necessity. However, we are fortunate to have the opportunity to correct ourselves with these new

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<sup>19</sup> Plath's papers are very widely dispersed. For a list of repositories holding Sylvia Plath's papers, or other related materials, see Sylvia Plath Archival Materials at <http://www.sylviaplath.info/collections.html>.

<sup>20</sup> See "These Ghostly Archives," pages 196-197, and 199-200.

findings.<sup>21</sup>

Smith College holds an eight page typescript carbon for a proposed "New Poems" broadcast.<sup>22</sup> This can be dated approximately to December 13, 1962, based on a letter Plath wrote to her mother on the following day: "I spent last night writing a long broadcast of all my new poems to submit to an interested man at the BBC and have a commission to do a program on the influence of my childhood landscape – the sea " (Plath, *Letters Home* 490).<sup>23</sup> Plath sent the program to Douglas Cleverdon at the BBC on December 15, 1962.<sup>24</sup> In this letter she comments that her poems are so new that she has not yet published any of them, save for "The Applicant" and "Ariel" by *The London Magazine* and *The Observer*, respectively. On December 20, Cleverdon responded and stated how much he liked Plath's "New Poems," that he had placed them in the necessary channels, and was hopeful that the Third Programme would take them.<sup>25</sup> The same day, in an internal memo, Cleverdon sent the typescript to a person with the initials A.H.F. to ask he or she to put Plath's program submission for consideration by the Poetry Committee.<sup>26</sup>

Interestingly, another item in the catalog entry for the Alvarez papers (Add: 88589) reads, "'New poems'; n.d. Typewritten, with brief commentaries" (bl.uk). Gail tells me that this document swells to thirty-eight unnumbered, undated pages. In "These Ghostly Archives," we mention an internal BBC memorandum that exists on Plath's program. Dorothy Barker was interested in them and mentioned liking, in particular, Plath's bee poems. As is clear from Smith College's holdings, Plath's bee poems were not included in that submission. According to the Alvarez papers, however, Plath proposed to read the following "New Poems": "The Applicant," "Fog Sheep ["Sheep in Fog"]," "Lady Lazarus," "Death & Co.," "Nick and the Candlestick," "Letter in

<sup>21</sup> The information on "New Poems" in this document should supersede that which we discussed in "These Ghostly Archives."

<sup>22</sup> The poems introductions Smith College holds are: "The Applicant," "Daddy," "Lady Lazarus," "Fog Sheep ["Sheep in Fog"]," "Ariel," "Fever 103°," "Nick and the Candlestick," and "Death & Co." These introductions were printed in *Ariel: The Restored Edition*. See Appendix II, pages 193-194.

<sup>23</sup> We thank Karen Kukul for bringing this quote to our attention. Note that the end of the quoted sentence shows that Plath was thinking about the text that would become "Landscape of a Childhood" at this time.

<sup>24</sup> Letter held at the BBC Written Archives Centre, Reading.

<sup>25</sup> Letters held at the BBC Written Archives Centre, Reading, and Mortimer Rare Book Room, Smith College, Northampton.

<sup>26</sup> Correspondence, RCONT 12 Sylvia Plath, BBC Written Archives Centre, Reading, England.



November," "Daddy," "Fever 103°," "The Bee Meeting," "The Arrival of the Bee Box," and "Wintering."<sup>27</sup>

GC: The typescript for these poems in the British Library is a Plath original.<sup>28</sup> I know this as soon as I turn the loose pages in the folder and see the thin paper, the typeface, the Fitzroy Road address in the top right hand of the page. By January 18, 1963, internal memos at the BBC discuss the typescript of "New Poems," with MacBeth stating how much he likes them, but that there are too many for broadcast. His suggestion is a twenty minute program.

Therefore we are left with certain questions. The typescript at Smith is shorter than the one at the British Library. Did Plath, as we previously thought, resubmit a longer version of "New Poems?" It is hard to imagine that her first submission was rejected since in this longer manuscript she not only retains the same poems and introductions but adds even more. Is it possible, then, that her poems were so liked that she was asked to submit more? While this is a compelling argument, it is hard to overlook Macbeth's suggestion that the broadcast be reduced to twenty minutes. Faced with these oddities, Peter and I returned to re-examine and compare the version of "New Poems" held at Smith and the longer version of "New Poems" held in the British Library.<sup>29</sup> It was upon revisiting the archive material that a totally new possibility occurred to us.

The first thing we noticed was that the shorter introduction to poems held at Smith were a carbon copy. This immediately led us to speculate where the original might be. Could it be possible that what Smith held was an incomplete carbon copy of the original manuscript I saw in the British Library? In other words, were these two versions of "New Poems" one and the same, with the carbon copy at Smith missing the four additional poems? Such an idea prompted Karen Kukil to re-read the original

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<sup>27</sup> The contents are listed in the order Gail viewed them. It is unknown if this was their original order. However it is worth commenting here that excepting "Fog Sheep ["Sheep in Fog]" this order corresponds to their order in Plath's *Ariel*.

<sup>28</sup> There is a clear difference between an original typescript and a carbon copy, the latter often having a slightly "fuzzy" quality.

<sup>29</sup> We are indebted to Karen Kukil for her help here.

description of the manuscript prepared by Sotheby's before Smith purchased the collection from Ted Hughes. Amazingly, in this description, it states there are introductory notes to some of the poems Plath prepared for broadcast, along with some of the typescripts of the poems and, as an add on, a copy of "Letter in November."

This seems to us the strongest evidence that the copy Smith owns is incomplete. Furthermore, having seen the original typescript in the British Library and a scanned copy of Smith's carbon version, the two are remarkably similar; and although I do not have each version side by side, I would go as far as to say, identical. Consequently, it seems fair to conclude that there were not two submissions to the BBC by Plath of her "New Poems," but simply one. Furthermore, the Poetry Committee's discussion of Plath's poems in January 1963 did not relate to a second, longer submission, but rather to that original submission made via Douglas Cleverdon in December 1962.

Therefore, what this longer script in the British Library gives us, is a restored version of Plath's "New Poems" along with some newly found, unpublished text. Significantly, Plath wrote the introductions to these poems to explain how she wished them to be received. As Kukil states, in all probability, this document is the last authorial version and commentary that we have before Plath's death.<sup>30</sup> Although it is not possible to reprint these introductions, or the poems, here, it is worth noting that the unpublished commentaries to these poems are especially delightful. "Letter in November" is simply described as a love letter, something which can brighten and transform the dullest season. For "The Bee Meeting," Plath explains that she has recently started keeping bees and that the poem describes all the regalia connected to this tradition as it appears to a novice. "The Arrival of the Bee Box" is presented as a descriptive poem which uses a wonderful genie in a bottle metaphor to describe trying to keep something too lively in too small a space. Finally, "Wintering" is a poem about the recent poor bee season. Having taken six or so jars of honey, Plath was feeding her bees on tins of syrup until they slowed into their winter sleep.

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<sup>30</sup> A point raised in an exchange of emails between the authors and Karen Kukil, May 2010.



It is with Plath's unpublished words that we end our latest conversation. With the "New Poems" typescript, the "Landscape of a Childhood" transcript, and the unrealized "Tulips & Other Poems," the archives, once again, have not disappointed. As Carolyn Steedman states, working in the archive "is about something that never did happen in the way it comes to be represented" (154). It is telling a story across time and in many ways it is an ephemeral story linked only by the continuing physicality and existence of these manuscripts. And these documents do have one thing in common: "As stuff, it just sits there until it is read, and used, and narrativised" (Steedman 68). These papers have their own identity and their own story to tell. Each time we found ourselves opening one folder, we found another thread to follow and another story to be told: new questions, new spaces and new wonder at the sheer volume of work Plath produced and reproduced. We feel, as Kukil states, that one of the most important lessons to be learned about handling these documents is "how much the physical manuscripts themselves reflect the personality of their authors" (4). An original Plath manuscript is bold, ordered, and striking. These ghost-like words appear to us across the years, unveiled in a new light, unpublished and yet as fresh as the day Plath wrote them.

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