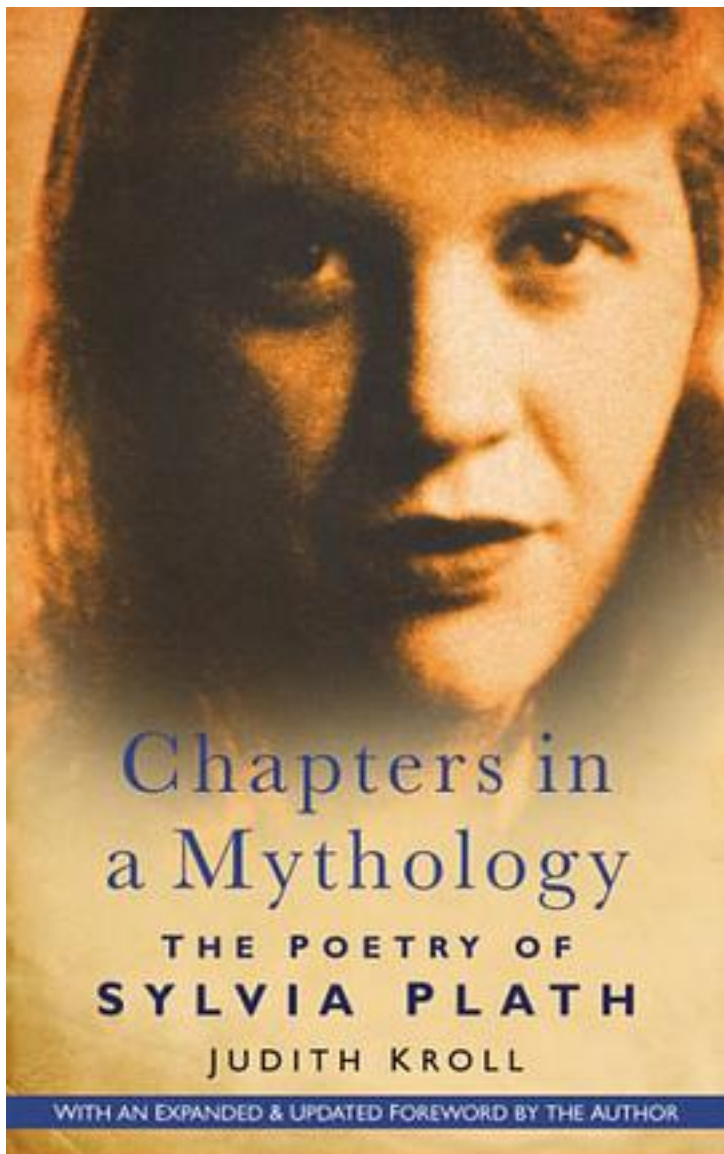


# Chapters in a Mythology



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Judith Kroll's "Chapters in a Mythology" - groundbreaking when it was published in 1976, and now a classic - is essential reading for anyone interested in Sylvia Plath. It was the first full-scale study of Plath's poetry and proved immensely influential for the flood of Plath scholarship that followed. Kroll persuasively disputed the image of Plath as a death-obsessed poet whose poems were little more than vivid symptoms, a biographical record of anguish foreshadowing her suicide in 1963. Chapters challenged its readers to confront a writer whose verse is full of tremendous complexity and nuance. Kroll shows that Plath's poems form a mythic biography, presided over by a 'Moon-Muse', in which depictions of death are nearly always matched with visions of rebirth and transformation. In a substantial new Foreword, Kroll - who entered Smith College just six years after Plath graduated - describes how, a year before Plath's suicide, she was introduced to Plath's first book of poetry by one of Plath's own teachers; six years later, after the publication of Ariel, Plath became the subject of Kroll's PhD dissertation. Kroll's Foreword also puts to rest definitively the mistaken notion that she was somehow aided in her analysis by Plath's husband, the poet Ted Hughes. Kroll's account of her meetings with Hughes, which took place after she had written her dissertation, make for intriguing reading - including Hughes' surprise that Kroll had independently identified the sources that had influenced Plath's writing most deeply. "Chapters in a Mythology" is an original work of fresh scholarship and impressive insight. It remains a compelling examination of one of the 20th century's great poets.

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