

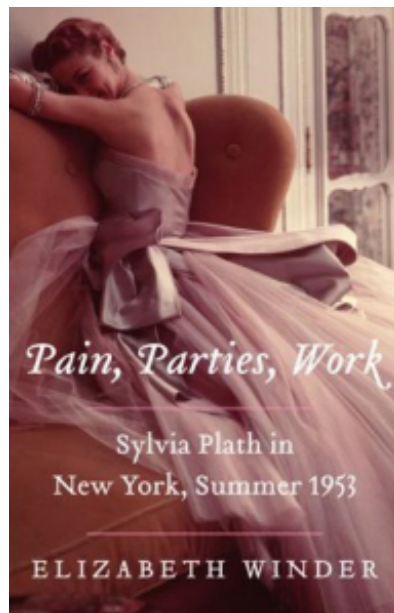
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Posted on [March 31, 2013](#) by [Melissa](#)

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# Pain, Parties, Work: Sylvia Plath in New York, Summer 1953

*Women's History Month giveaway: Win a copy of this book!*



You might have noticed all the Sylvia Plath talk going around the internet as of late. That's because this year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *The Bell Jar*, a novel about a young woman named Esther Greenwood who earns an internship position at a magazine in New York City; when she returns home, she suffers a breakdown and is

subjected to various treatments for her depression.

But ten years before Esther was introduced to the world, twenty-one-year-old Sylvia Plath was excited about her upcoming summer internship at *Mademoiselle*. As one of twenty young women chosen for this highly competitive internship, Plath and her peers would spend one month in New York City working as guest editors on the magazine's annual college issue. All of the young women would stay at the Barbizon Hotel, working hard during the day and soaking in as many experiences as they could in their spare time. It was a life-changing experience, but by the end she was exhausted and questioning the direction of life. Like Esther Greenwood, Plath would also suffer a breakdown soon after returning home.

Refuting the usual image of Plath as a depressed and troubled young woman, however, Elizabeth Winder sets about proving the opposite. In her introduction, Winder writes that her book is, "a story of an electrically alive young woman on the brink of her adult life. An artist equally attuned to the light as the shadows, with a limitless hunger for experience and knowledge, completely unafraid of life's more frightening opportunities."

Incorporating the interviews and reminiscences of several of the other *Mademoiselle* interns who lived and worked with Plath during her month at the Barbizon, Winder is able to establish much of what went on during that summer of 1953. The Plath those women remember is an educated, fashionable young woman who loved to have fun. She went out on dates almost every day during that month and thought nothing of staying out all night drinking and experiencing the city (in fact, on one such night she stayed out at the Chelsea Hotel stalking Dylan Thomas). Yet she was starting to crack by the end of her month in New York. A lot of the ideas she had come with had been challenged, and like many people who are nearing the end of their college life and the beginning of The Real World, Plath was struggling with that perennial question: what now?

I enjoyed the book. It's been years since I've read *The Bell Jar*, and though I knew it was semi-autobiographical, I'd had no idea that so much of it came from Plath's experiences. Since the book focuses mainly on that one month Plath stayed in New York, it's mostly organized as a week-by-week look at each stage of the internship. It's a fast-paced book with short chapters and lots of side bars, making it easy to dip in and out of. Whether you're a longtime Plath fan or not, this book offers an interesting glimpse at this period of Plath's life.

*Pain, Parties, Work: Sylvia Plath in New York, Summer 1953* will be published on April 16, 2013 by Harper Books, an imprint of HarperCollins.

[Goodreads](#) | [Amazon](#)

**I read it as a(n):** ARC

**Source:** Publisher

**Pages:** 288

In honor of Women's History Month, Harper Books was kind enough to provide one copy of *Pain, Parties, Work* for a giveaway! To enter, fill out the form below by April 6, 2013 at 11:59 p.m. CT (US only). Good luck!

# Pain, Parties, Work

Giveaway closes on April 6, 2013 at 11:59 pm Central Time.

\* Required

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## About Melissa

I love donuts. Chocolate iced, hold the sprinkles.

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7 THOUGHTS ON "PAIN, PARTIES, WORK: SYLVIA PLATH IN NEW YORK, SUMMER 1953"



**stackwanderer** on **March 31, 2013 at 9:32 am** said:

Oh, this sounds really good! I liked "The Bell Jar" quite a lot, and would love to read more about the experiences that inspired it.

[Reply ↓](#)



**Cheryl** on **March 31, 2013 at 2:51 pm** said:

This book sounds fantastic! Thank you for writing this and providing the opportunity. 😊

[Reply ↓](#)



**Nadia** on **March 31, 2013 at 5:35 pm** said:

This book sounds fantastic! I've been in the mood for some Plath and this sounds like it would be perfect! Thanks for the great review and the giveaway 😊

[Reply ↓](#)



**Jeanne** on **April 1, 2013 at 2:12 pm** said:

I'm supposed to get this one at some point, and was thinking I wouldn't have time to read it, but am encouraged that you found it a quick read.

[Reply ↓](#)

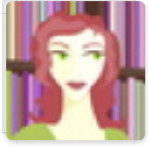


**Melissa**

on **April 3, 2013 at 11:58 pm** said:

It's easy reading. I got through it a lot faster than I thought I would.

Reply ↓



**Marie (@bostonbibliophl)** on **April 2, 2013 at 8:52 pm** said:

It sounds really interesting. She died so young, and yet there's still so much to say about her life/ Thanks for the great review.

Reply ↓



**Melissa**

on **April 3, 2013 at 11:59 pm** said:

I knew she died young, but I didn't realize she died at 30! That blew my mind.

Reply ↓

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