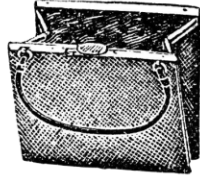


# All Over Sylvia

by Hugh Findlay



O Sylvia, poor dour Sylvia.  
Your matchless madness escapes you.  
Flanks you like your Mother Moon and Father Sea. 1  
The dark shadows of your poetry are too blue with cold. 2  
Your genius gleams like spare change at the bottom of your purse. 3

And why did you even bother with poetry?  
Such Smithian intelligence seems wasted. 4  
on time spent digging into the roots,  
the terrible horrible roots of your plaster head. 5  
through the empty black orbs of your eyes.  
But there was always the question of reflection,  
and sorting out the mirror in verse. 6  
wearing the thin veils of time. 7

The flowers bend and bow,  
laughing like indecisions in moonglow.  
The trees blacken the mind,  
hastening to employ a certain wind.  
The waves hold secrets between their crests,  
dissolving sighs that hiss through your fists.

Out of poem, Sylvia,  
I cannot help but love you,  
consternations and all, riddling in metaphors. 8  
I see your peace and can ingest it like a black bat if you desire. 9  
can send your letters on homeward journeys unopened, as your  
promises,  
can help you nurture the small doll of sublime melancholy. 10  
And we both have time, you know;  
time shed of gods, time for expelling words,  
for emptying our pockets of wishes. 11

But ach du! 12  
The colors of your space are as untouchable as your tomorrows; 13  
colors bleeding into echoes,  
red as rust, black as earth,  
and white as a blind man's eye. 13  
You sneer at the wind and cut out your own indefatigable tongue. 14 15  
A Lazarus in your own mind, 16  
stamping on your own grave,  
on the stones of your own bones.  
Enigmatic, lugubrious, obstinate in your own right. 17

In the end Sylvia,  
we all must do, we all must do. 13  
Well and ill and neither,  
your heart, your womb,  
your self and self.



You may close your lids now.  
Your lintel is fallen. 18

1. From essay *Sylvia Plath and the Death Throes of Romanticism* by Joyce Carol Oates, 1974.

2. "blue with cold" from *A Winter Ship*

3. *Wuthering Heights*

4. Plath attended Smith College

5. *In Plaster, The Lady and the Earthenware Head*, and indirectly *The Colossus*

6. *Mirror*

7. *A Birthday Present*

8. *Metaphors*

9. "bats" from *Nick and the Candlestick* and many others

10. "doll" from *The Applicant* and many others

11. *Totem*

12. *Daddy*

13. *Sleep in the Mojave Desert*

14. "sneer at the wind" from *Resolve*

15. "indefatigable tongue" from *The Courage of Shutting Up*

16. *Lady Lazarus*

17. "lugubrious" from *The Ravaged Face* and a few others

18. "lintel" from *Departure* and *Wuthering Heights*