

CRYSTAL HURDLE

Restoration

a new Sylvia Plath bio
crack addict
brain candy
reading for what?
the sudden rush panic bird flight to the ending
same old same old
or this time
will
it
be different

and I'll be giving Sivvy a manicure
O.P.I. shades of *Modern Family*
Back in My Gloria Days or Basking in Gloria for her
and she'll massage my feet
the air between us
equal parts baby oil and acetone

confiding fumes
Don't strike sparks

a restored Sivvy
photo by Judith (or is it Judy?) Denison
restoration by Glenda Hydlar
graces the cover

limbs splayed
the head improbably small on the collegiate body
tilting at an improbable angle
almost tacked on
from another body
pre-Photo-Shop
Sylvia was good at paper doll cut-outs

mix and match to
a better
a.k.a., happier ending?

like recovering vegetarian
recovering lawyer
shucking off an old (seemingly bad)
way of life

recovering poet?
no money in it anyhow
Sivvy knew about potboilers and the slicks
recovering wife?
Ted and his fingernail scrapings
his bloody brutery
recovering suicide?

Plath's life now as familiar as
an old chintz sofa recovered
but inside still the dry rot
corroded springs, dust mites

and outside,
despite the new colour--
Am I Making Myself Claire
trimmed in I Do De-Claire--
the febreze aura,
the cushions
show
will always show
the faint imprint
of her full body
tall, falling into mirrors,
the seeping stain
reflecting

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Blood Jet

to a lady poet dying young

dead at thirty,
Sylvia never had hot flashes
her body not a crucible over which
she had no control
an addendum to "Fever 103°"
but no rising to heaven
power surge a misnomer

critics now lap up her menstrual cycle
upcycle her old calendars
on which she marked the curse
which poems' images from the
follicular, the luteal?
phases like those of the White Goddess?
a hit, a palpable hit!

would her *Three Women* radio play
be re-issued with post-menopausal hags?
Leaky? Sleepy? Grumpy?
how would Sylvia have grown
into full womanhood
the ripeness and the season's taut rot
she wearing the baggy skin of her
very own elephant bed?

thin grief as her periods slipped away?
new mother never again?
holocaust anger?
that silent Gorgon stare
directed at what? at whom?
blood reduced to thin secretion
gruel no one wants more of
stunned, stunning aridity

if the blood jet is poetry
what then when?
(Sylvia, what now?)

CRYSTAL HURDLE

Spawn

February 1962, London

Guinness good for the breast milk
Sivvy sips and bakes
perhaps it will make her feel better
overcome her flu, her block

chocolate Guinness cake and icing
the best she's ever made
imagines tossing the delectable comestible at Assia
domestic cruise missile
who's the victim now?

she plunks down on Yeats' cold floor
cold post-Christmas
even colder post-New Year
slumps
shares it with her children
Frieda outlines a brown mustache
on a balloon creeping along
daddy face
Sylvia nurses Nick
palms besmeared, empty, open

baby Nick aware but unknowing
imbibes not sweet, but umami,
an aquanaut not long out of the womb
ghost umbilical cord still tethering
his watery beginnings, the fishy brine
he'll wish to live in when a marine biologist
his future livelihood and passion
figura in his cups

his suicide at thirty-seven already
reaching for him
with well-practiced fish-hook hands

CRYSTAL HURDLE

Sivvy to Ted: Furlough in De Chirico's *The Disquieting Muses*

De Chirico revised his own paintings
never satisfied
perfectionist
He copied himself
plagiarist of his imagination

His landscape is familiar
like my own pen and inks
of ruin and rubble
my cold, filthy, frankly **British** rendering
of your Yorkshire landscape
Why did I bother

to please you?

What is behind the cold shadows?
They stretch beyond silent suns,
they are luminous, they are eerie.
The orange only pretends to be cheerful.
An un-gridded chessboard
pawns for the taking
figures like bowling pins, how gauche!

I cannot move, I am without hands, I am without flesh,
Neck the bobble of a doll without attachment
Stone head of a decapitated mannequin
beside my castrated feet
Head and body both bell jars

Muse, this cat and mouse game wearies.
I deserve better.
Whose words are in the multi-coloured coffin,
in the locked blue chest,
archive on which you have shelved me?

In *Birthday Letters*,
you said I was better in blue.

Better?
Ted, in your slow release
of my works
in my appropriation into yours
you have been reinventing me

key

It is more than disquieting
Release me, restore me.
the proper you

the proper me

I have learned my lesson
my hands clutch each other
in a plaster muff, cuff,
useless
my heart a black square keyhole

Ted?

Ted?

(Be careful what you wish for
Mummy always said)

CRYSTAL HURDLE

Gwyneth Plath: on *Sylvia*, the film

Sivvy,
Gwyneth Paltrow will play you
and Frieda's mad about the whole damned thing
has written an angry poem
—do you follow your daughter's career?
she's more beautiful than you or Gwyneth—

Let her poem sink without a trace
a Nicole Kidman in frumpy housedress
stones in the pockets
rivers in the heart:
The Hours

prosthetic nose
middle-distance eyes
to simulate thinking and writerly visions
head cocked to one side
gremlin whispers in one ear
writerly genius as creeped-out madness
Hollywood's Virginia Woolf

For you, an earnest Paltrow
in the movie's trailer
comes into camera range
furiously pedaling a bicycle
a more handsome Margaret Hamilton
your winged monkeys
yet to appear

but maybe better than Marilyn Hasset
in the seventies' *The Bell Jar*
none of your canny narrative
you and Esther as one
shrieking at the mother
a waste of poor Julie Harris
as if a high register
spilt milk
red lipstick cipher on a bathroom mirror
could signify madness

Esther runs to Joan in a meadow
Vaseline on the lens
a soft porn focus
like in a Clairol commercial
—Gwyneth does have such pretty, pretty hair—
a B movie with a grade of C-

a new version of *The Bell Jar*
canned while still in the can
Before she played the serial killer/lover on *Dexter*
—victim gains power
what goes around comes around
you would relate—
Julia Stiles as Esther
still awaiting release

Sylvia, faux movie of you
declaiming Chaucer to the cows
but beautifully brooding,
the cinematic darkness

New Zealand for your beautiful Nauset
no Ocean 1212-W in the dialling
The Ted craggy Daniel Craig, but
even in his Bondness
not tall enough
Your mother played by Blythe Danner,
Paltrow's real-life mom
the film's only verisimilitude

Gwyneth as you, abstracted by love's loss,
little of you the writer
manic public domain quotations
elliptical chunks from *The Bell Jar*
more elusive than Ted's editing of your journals
swaths of you vanquished
the movie an *Ariel* with Tourette's
but Gwyneth's hair always shiny blonde
fastidious, fashionable

you'd probably want Marilyn Monroe
as/if you had a choice

nobody can play you, Sivvy,
like you

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CRYSTAL HURDLE is author of *After Ted & Sylvia: Poems*, from which she read as a Guest Poet at the International Sylvia Plath Symposium at the University of Oxford. Crystal Hurdle teaches English and Creative Writing at Capilano University in North Vancouver, BC. She has a teen novel in verse, *Teacher's Pets*, forthcoming from Tightrope Books.