

Sylvia Plath Slept Here

Dan Wilcox

You woke me last night and at first I thought it was just the cabbage:
Then I heard your voice again, remembering what you said on TV
Your voice, your conclusions, like the sound of the
spring on the oven door when it swings open.
At my age you were already dead, for years.

30, already your life work was done
30 already, down to your complete works, abandoned children
30 already and what's left are contentious executors,
the squabble of critics and professors like the
voices of bees in your poems, the questions like
the beat of Ariel's hooves.

Years ago when Mary moved in
When you were still dead for years
Mary didn't know what the sign on the door meant
"Sylvia Plath Slept Here."
For a long time she didn't ask who you were
For a long time she thought you were just an old girlfriend
She thought you were like the frayed nightshirt from
Sherry, or the table from Marcia's Brooklyn apartment

For a long time she thought you were only a picture on
the door, a picture without image or face
and when I explained the sign on the oven door she
smiled and wanted to know how long I planned on leaving it there.
Taped only at the top, it swung down at a right angle
when I opened the oven, a trap door into your
symbols, into your meaning.

So last night you woke me and scolded me with gas and
your voice reading your poems into the airwaves
Your voice quaking, English and American: at the zoo, your children, your mother
So last night when you were still dead, you woke me, in
our new house, your books quiet on my shelves, and
no sign taped to the door of our new, electric oven.