Two Poems and an Art Piece

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These two pieces of writing see Sylvia Plath in the context of "honor" and in the context of "hint." The gestural parts rooted in honor attempt to include some of the details of Plath's life (confession, bees, the oven light). The gestural parts rooted in hint are Plath in bent inclusions (more abstract in articulation/ more subsumed in approach) in order to attempt to touch Plath and her life by way of insinuations in the unspeakable or impossible (grilling sliced cherries, achromic achronics). I approached the writing by way of this dual method because throughout her life while publishing widely, Plath "remained anxious about writing confessionally, from deeply personal and private material" (wikipedia.com). I feel that in order to touch Plath's life in a manner that is at least attempting wholeness, there should be discussion of her suffering. I feel that so much of the ache that is felt by the public regarding Plath has to do with how she left us. She left a space in us (a place of longing) and she left by way of an interval (an after-the-fact latch).

The method articulated above as "hint," is the relation between my writing and the art piece: yet another version of pouring upward. In this art piece I worked with both collage and photography. The central image in the piece is a literal physiological heart, juxtaposed against a slice of melting ice. There are salt crystals placed on the physical form of the heart. There is also an implanted miniature rose at the top portion of the heart. Creating this piece felt like a fitting gesture to honor Plath. An extracted heart itself is inherently confessional. I see this as the act of making what Plath refers to as the "deeply personal and private," visible. Then the addition of salt (which had to be added by hand)—and the placement of the heart in correlation with the slice of melting ice—(both of these gestures so much like the addition of internal and external weight: the baring and rearing of children (Frieda and Nicholas), teaching at Smith College, Ted Hughes cheating on her with Assia Wevill, an ongoing accumulating/ ever impending depression, etc). So—the parts of a life that are her (salt) and the parts of a life that are imposed on her (slice of melting ice) adding to her own death.

I see the manual addition of the rose as acknowledgement of Plath's relation to her own death. Not the death itself, but her relation to her death—to the edges and intervals between Plath
and what she describes as "whirling blackness that [she] honestly believed was eternal oblivion" (wikipedia.com). The beautiful and tragic methods of her "calling out" for help—from her hiding under the house and attempting to overdose on her mother's sleeping pills—to the note she left for whomever would find her with her head in the oven (in the kitchen after the fact) instructing them to call her doctor. My art piece (yet another version of pouring upward) relates to the multiple and many layered difficulties and demands of Plath's life. Oh how much effort it would take to pour upward. Plath did her due share of attempts at pouring upward and I also feel that Plath successfully poured upward. Plath did her due share even if we are both invigorated by her presence and adversely altered by how she left us.

Works Cited

we glued thorns to the book
so that each touch of it would bring
blood

bold

like trying to grill sliced cherries

like an effort to stain

achromic     achronics

oh to be turned into_______

oh the unbearable yen for
color

for frequenting frequencies

for sound as non-falsifiable form
forms for unresolvable

night

oh sudden fodder

oh studded heap

or in the low-lit oven
where

was trying to find
another way to name

the uncertain ascertaining

but so by way of
such after-the-fact
latch
yet another version of pouring upward

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