

Addressing Sylvia

A comic by Ernesto Priego

Early January 2019. It was Winter here.

They have propped my head between the pillow and the sheet-cuff
Like an eye between two white lids that will not shut.
Stupid pupil, it has to take everything in.
The nurses pass and pass, they are no trouble,
They pass the way gulls pass inland in their white caps,
Doing things with their hands, one just the same as another.
So it is impossible to tell how many there are.

My body is a pebble to them, they tend it as water
Tends to the pebbles it must run over, smoothing them gently.
They bring me numbness in their bright needles, they bring
me sleep.

And it is so close on, finally, I imagine
It is what the dead close on, like a Communion table
Shutting their mouths on it, like a baby.
The tulips are too red in the first place, they hurt me.
Even through the gift paper I could hear them breathe
Lightly, through their white swaddlings, like an awful baby.
Their redness talks to my wound, it corresponds.
They are subtle: they seem to float, though they weigh me
down,
Upsetting me with their sudden tongues and their colour,
A dozen red lead sinkers round my neck.
Nobody watched me before, now I am watched.
The tulips turn to me, and the window behind me
Where once a day the light slowly widens and slowly thin
And I see myself, flat, ridiculous, a cut-paper shadow
Between the eye of the sun and the eyes of the tulips,
I wanted to efface myself.

I had by then completed the set
of the complete Letters of
Sylvia Plath, two mighty
volumes.

The Letters of Sylvia Plath Volume II: 1956-1963

Edited by Peter R. Stead and Karen V. Kukil

The Letters of Sylvia Plath Volume I: 1940-1956

Edited by Peter R. Stead and Karen V. Kukil

I did know she had lived at 3
Chalcot Square, Primrose Hill,
London NW1 8YB, from January
1960 to August 1961... there is an
English Heritage Blue Plaque
there.



I had always been intrigued, however, by the last days
of her life. Reading the second volume of her letters I
took note of her last address, 23 Fitzroy Road, London
NW1. It was from there she sent her last letter.

October	Writes twenty-five poems; records 'Beck's' and fifteen poems for British Council Room.
November	Rents flat at 23 Fitzroy Road, London, for residence of W. B. Yeats.
10 December	Moves with Frieda and Nicholas into Fitzroy Road.
1963	
January	Dubbed the 'Big Freeze of 1963', London experiences its coldest winter of the century.
10 January	Records review of Donald Hall's <i>Complete American Poetry</i> for BBC.
14 January	Heinemann publishes <i>The Bell Jar</i> under the name 'Sylvia Plath'.

(name), Smith College

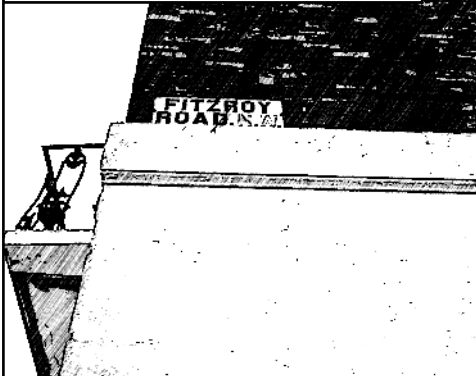
23 Fitzroy Road
London N.W.1
February 4, 1963

& an au pair and can
not get an unfurnished

10 Ruth Tiffany Barnhouse Bouscher
Monday 4 February 1963¹ TJS (aerogram)

Dear Dr. Bouscher,
I write from London where I have found a flat
for about £100 a month for a year. I thought

So I decided to take a walk
and take a look at her last
address. Pay my respects.



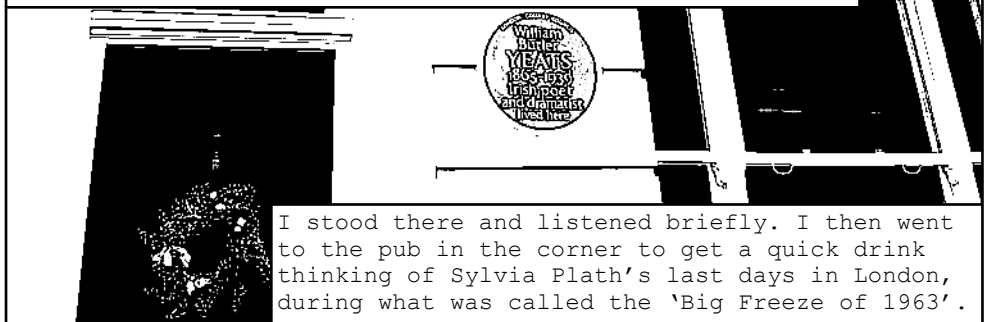
Fitzroy Road, London NW1. It was a cold day.
The sky was concrete grey, almost white.
It did feel ghostly. What's in an address?
What is there where it is no more?



23 Fitzroy Road. It is always
weird to go and look at a
stranger's house. It is even
weirder, truly uncanny, to go
searching for an absence. What
do we hope to see? What do we
hope to feel?



Sylvia had known W.B. Yeats had lived there. A passerby
learns this from the blue plaque by the door. There is no
mention, no trace of Sylvia. Do the folk who live there
now know Sylvia Plath died there? I looked up. That day
Fitzroy Road was very quiet. The day was still.



I stood there and listened briefly. I then went
to the pub in the corner to get a quick drink
thinking of Sylvia Plath's last days in London,
during what was called the 'Big Freeze of 1963'.