

Three Poems  
Alessandra Bava

They Talk About Death

To Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton

Turning the yellowed  
pages of *The Paris Review*  
of 1971, you can almost  
hear

them talk of the Pale  
Rider as if they were  
chatting about an old  
acquaintance,

drinking their aperitif  
that is more like poison,  
discussing it with meticulous  
angst,

wearing an existentialist  
smile painted red.  
Magnetic words uttered,  
crackling sparks of

golden moths dancing  
their *Totentanz* around  
burning bulbs, till  
the endlessness.

Sylvia talks of her  
first attempt. Anne  
listens attentively.  
Her lucid,

blue stare  
beautifies the dark  
suicidal words:

the sweet,

terrible act dissected  
with loving details  
as on a morgue  
table,

between a glass of  
wine and free potato  
chips. A hollow,  
unimaginable

tale, followed by an  
infectious laugh.  
Yes, they talk about  
Death.

But, they mean it.

## The Agony

*"Dying is an art, like everything else"*  
Sylvia Plath

Sylvia fills  
two glasses with  
milk to the  
rim and  
heads upstairs  
to worship her kids  
in their sleep, to leave  
food to her two small  
pharaohs. She heads  
back to the kitchen  
—the empty milk  
bottle lies still as  
a sarcophagus.  
She cellotapes  
everything  
and turns  
on the  
oven.

## Reading Plath in New Mexico

As you speed the car along the desert  
I pick up my old worn copy of "The  
Bell Jar" and read. I look at all the  
dog ears and trace the contour  
of the thin purple lines that I  
underlined eons back.

Everywhere I turn, every page I turn,  
poetry beckons. "This will be the  
death of you," you tell me. I  
know you don't mean  
it, but I nod.

Deep within me I sense fluttering  
wings, howling coyotes and  
polished skulls. I close my  
eyes. I feel the iron of  
our car melt in the  
searing heat.

Sylvia is dying again.