Mía, Crossroads 2023

**Constance Rooke, “‘The First Day’s Night Had Come’: An Explication of**

**J.410/F.423,”**

Cornell Notes & Blog Post

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| Title | “An Explication of ‘The first Day’s Night had come’”  |
| Genre of Poem | “[A] lyric projected as a drama” (80).  |
| Time | * Starts on the first day of the narrator’s new life.
	+ “[W]holly formed as the aftermath of “a thing / So terrible” that it made a radical discontinuity in the life and personality of its endurer” (80-81).
 |
| Tone of Voice? | “[C]rucially ironic and naked at the same time;” (81).  |
| Simple Context | * Characters are created inside the speaker, by the speaker, for the purpose of fixing or deconstructing a painful future.
	+ Though, the actions they are commanded to do are meant to be performed in, “dialogue and protective, ironic gesture” (81).
 |
| First Stanza | The first Day’s Night had come–And grateful that a thingSo terrible–had been endured–I told my Soul to sing– |
| What’s So Terrible? | * Presents itself to the reader’s imagination.
	+ It could be anything
		- Loss of lover
		- Psychosis
		- Heart Failure
		- Menstruation
 |
| Problematic Questions | * “Is it likely that she should be grateful for only this brief and bare endurance? And out of what mood, given the situation, does one tell one’s soul to sing?” (81).
	+ She could be grateful that, in any way, she survived what has come so far.
	+ Or, talking to her own soul may be the start of a, “mad game” (81).
	+ “Her gratitude may be a mocking of her own deprivation . . .” (81).
 |
| Telling Her Soul to Sing? | * “Souls, furthermore, do not ordinarily need to be commanded into song; they are supposed to do that spontaneously” (81).
	+ “[H]er order to the soul a grim recognition that free song is past” (81).
 |
| Second Stanza | She said her Strings were snapt— Her Bow—to Atoms blown—And so to mend her–gave me workUntil the next Morn |
| Personified Soul | * “[P]oet’s toy” (81).
	+ As an effort to stay in anguish
 |
| Was the soul put together by the next morning? | “It is a tidy little image for such an ultimate task, its limitations suggesting a patchwork job at best” (81).  |
| Third Stanza | And then—a Day as hugeAs Yesterdays in pairs,Unrolled its horror in my face—Until it blocked my eyes—  |
| Did the work pay off?  | * “If she had thought her night work effective, she rose to find it far otherwise” (81-82).
 |
| Dollmaker and Doll Soul | * Tried to govern her pain with minimal “patchwork”
	+ “[W]ithin the play world established between herself and a doll soul” (82).
		- “But daylight brought monstrous twins to threaten the dollmaker” (82).
 |
| “Yesterdays” | * No possessive apostrophe
	+ Allows the day to be seen as pairs.
 |
| Malicious Footmen | “Perhaps as malicious footmen, giantswho unroll their horror as if at the start of a carpet which will only be unwound at her life’s end” (82).  |
| Duplication of Pain? | * Bad on the first day, then “fixed”, then really bad the next.
	+ “each day will it be twice as bad as the day before?” (82).
 |
| Blocked Eyes | “She is so appalled by the vision of her anguished situation that her eyes are blocked and she turns inward” (82).  |
| Fourth Stanza | My Brain—begun to laugh—I mumbled—like a fool— And tho’ ‘tis Years ago— that Day—My Brain keeps giggling—still.  |
| Why is the Brain Laughing? | * Laughter turns on after the shock of withdrawal.
	+ It could be another person laughing in a way, “to reveal the prison and foolishness of struggle” (82).
		- “The sickened brain, bereft of intellectual power by this departure from reality, diverges from the speaker to become a separate character” (82).
 |
| Giggling and Mumbling | * The narrator’s speech is “reduced to mumbling in the face of the brain’s superior laughter” (82).
	+ In a way, she “mumbled” the brain character into existence and created her own tormentor.
 |
| “—like a fool—” | * Pertains to laughing and mumbling
	+ “[U]ltimately to the schizophrenic retreat which deprives her of reality and the faint hope of renewal” (82).
 |
| Years later | The laughter is gone, but there are still a few giggles, and the hideous joke persists.  |
| Fifth Stanza | And Something’s odd—within—That person that I was—And this One—do not feel the same—Could it be Madness— this?  |
| “That person that I was” | * The person mentioned is remote.
	+ There’s a vague remark of the fact that “Something’s odd”, and the pause before saying “within” gives a hint that she is afraid to admit that she is who was mentioned before.
		- “[A] distinction no longer valid” (82).
			* It suggests, “the seriousness of her discontinuity.
			* There’s also, “a childishness in her expression of the sense that these two persons do not feel the same” (82-83).
 |
| Madness | * The narrator is fading out now.
	+ Pretty good sign of madness.
	+ The reader’s horror is most likely greater at this point than any other where the narrator still wrestles with her demons.
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**Works Cited**

**Constance Rooke, “‘The First Day’s Night Had Come’: An Explication of**

**J.410/F.423,” *Emily Dickinson Bulletin, vol. 24 (1973).***