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 thing  So 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 work  Until 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 huge  As 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, giants  who 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. |

**Works Cited**

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

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