

the self is returned to ongoing reality, to the matter-of-fact. The process of recuperation is silent, transpiring in the space between the poem's closing stanzas:

Then I was back in it. The War was on. Outside, in Worcester, Massachusetts,
were night and slush and cold, and it was still the fifth of February, 1918. (161)

Whatever psychic processes are enacted within that trans-stanzaic silence, the outcome is a return to the quotidian, the facticity of dailiness that orients the speaker in her world. Aggression and destruction which have carried the speaker to the brink of dissolution are now contained enough to permit the reemergence of identity, the continuation of ordinary consciousness. The mystery surrounding this mental process remains unsolved. What substitutes for that solution is the repetition of a sequence of facts that establishes a reassuring connection with external circumstance. Although the poem excludes any explanation of how this transition is made, the verbal testimony of the final stanza itself offers a kind of answer. For, it is the world of the matter-of-fact that stands in for other, more disruptive, potentially catastrophic realities. Bishop's oft-noted devotion to the matter-of-fact, when contextualized psychoanalytically, might be seen as a willed orientation toward the external as an act of defence against the blurring of ego boundaries. Paradoxically, attentiveness directed toward the external enables the writerly ego simultaneously to align itself empathic ally with the outer world while the iteration of facts, the very process of naming, inscribes a continual sense of difference between those facts and the imagining subject. Thus, in an ironic gesture of self-assertion, the poet strengthens self-other boundaries through an investment in attending to outward fact.

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