



Symptom Recital

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“Symptom Recital” proceeds, again, to list a series of unpleasant traits or characteristics which the speaker is feeling in a parallel grammatical form and in ten couplets rhyming *aa, bb, cc*, and so on. The rhythm is virtually all iambic tetrameter in four accents per line. The speaker enumerates her bitter mind, her dislike of her legs and hands, her sneering at “simple folks,” and her inability to take jokes or find peace. She sees the world and herself as “tripe” and empty, hates herself, senses her “soul” is crushed, and she “shudders” at the thought of men. At the penultimate line, an ellipsis after “men” indicates the pause before the joke, or “turn,” as she realizes “I’m due to fall in love again.”

Again, the hidden attitude and tone of voice is in conflict with the parade of “symptoms” of disease she recites, which turn out to be those of being in love. Love is not an ecstatic state (the romantic cliché) but a raging disease, a self-torture she will again endure. She is about to go back into hell, a repetition that is also a cycle, a repetition mirrored in the line structures. Each line (with the exception of three that begin with “My” and one with “For”) starts out exactly the same: “I” plus a simple verb that shows her “diseased” symptoms. Her recital is also a public artistic rendering, like a piano recital.

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