

"A Birthday" Analysis

In the poem "A Birthday", by Christina Rossetti, the speaker describes her enthusiasm towards her "love's" forthcoming birthday. By the use of different poetic techniques such as similes, imagery, metaphors and anaphors, this poem can be classified as a really complicated piece of work, regarding, especially, to where the subject is headed.

It can be deduced that the speaker is Rossetti, firstly, because the poem is written in first person; and secondly, because it is not addressed to anybody in particular. So it could be seen as if she had written the poem for herself; as if she was writing on a journal, or a personal diary; just thoughts that wanted to be said.

In the first stanza, the speaker compares her heart with some pleasant things from nature. She does that by repeating the words "My heart is like..." on the beginning of every comparison she makes. This anaphora creates the atmosphere that she cannot describe what she feels with exact words, so she repeats the same thing as if trying to improve what she had previously said.

Both on the first and the second stanza, the author is constantly using imagery, which of the majority are visual images. But, in the first stanza, there is more diversity regarding imagery. For example, when on the first two lines, she says: "My heart is like a singing bird / Whose nest is in a water'd shoot", she is using auditory imagery; but also, as she is referring to the nest as somewhere where water is constantly falling, the author is trying to make us, readers, feel the freshness of the nest. Subsequently, she compares her heart with an apple tree, "Whose boughs are bent with thickset fruit", and a rainbow shell, "that paddles in a bay you see", both in which she is now only using visual imagery. She ends the first stanza by saying that her heart was "even gladder" than all of the comparisons she had made before so as to allow us to know that she feels short with her descriptions, because her love has come to her.

But, on the second stanza, everything changes. The heart is no longer out in space by the feeling of excitement, now she is demanding. The use of imperative verbs demonstrates her demands towards what apparently is the creation of a platform. She wants the podium to be perfectly decorated with expensive materials and beautifully complicated details. This can all be seen when she starts describing in detail how she wants this dais to be made. These words she uses form visual images as well as in the first stanza. Also, by the use of imperatives such as "raise me", "carve it", and "work it", she is giving a sense of superiority, and the feeling that she wants the work to be finished as soon as possible. This shows her loved one deserves everything.

Even though the poem, at first glance, transmits then message that the author is referring to a birthday, it is thought that she was actually writing in religious terms. As an Anglican Christian, who has a strong feeling of attachment towards her religion, she has written several religious themed poems through her life. Still, "A Birthday", is not entirely known as a theological poem. But, thinking about it through a religious point of view, it could easily mean that the author is writing about the second coming of Christ. This can be seen in the symbols put on the dais: the colors purple, gold and silver are associated with royalty and divinity. The dove is the Holy Spirit, and the pomegranate is a symbol of resurrection and hope of eternal life (also symbolizes royalty and church). The "peacocks with hundred eyes" represent omnipotence and immortality; the grapes symbolize abundance, and the fleur-de-lis is a symbol of purity.