

Monodrama

Rachel Hadas

Before the phrase “dramatic monologue”
was coined, Victorian poets
seem to have had recourse to other terms,
among them many starting with “dramatic”:
as in dramatic lyrics or romances,
dramatic idylls, studies, or dramatis
personae. But my favorite of all
these labels is the shortest: monodrama.
I like the single word’s simplicity,
the asymmetrically lurching gait,
the austere paradox as of one hand clapping:
a unilateral dialogue. I don’t
exactly like but certainly acknowledge
how close to home this hits. Has not my life
felt for years now like a monodrama?
Everyone feels this, maybe, as they age.
Adolescents for that matter feel it.
And surely every woman. Every wife.
Everyone married to a person walled
into silence: mine the drama, his
the mono, as he’s sealed in, brick by brick.