What happens in the story?

A postpartum mother in Hvidovre wanders a liminal hospital at dawn, encounters other dazed new mothers, loses and “finds” a possibly swapped baby, and joins them whitewashing a gable with milk of lime while bleeding. Back in her room, a wrong infant is discarded in laundry; she goes home with a child her husband cannot recognize as wrong; every May, she recalls the event like happiness.

What is the theme?

Postpartum alienation and bodily trauma within institutional care; the erasure and standardization of mothers and infants; the dissolving boundary between self and tool; gender instability; and how maintenance labor whitewashes blood, grief, and identity to make motherhood appear orderly.

Does it propose other interpretations, in addition to the literal one? 5

If the above question was affirmative, Which interpretation is it?

Allegory of postpartum psychosis/dissociation: the labyrinth, doubles, and swapped infant render a mind fracturing under pain, blood loss, and sleeplessness. Institutional critique: the whitewashing ritual enacts medicine’s concealment of maternal labor and grief. Historical haunting: references to folktales and Pappenheimer implicate patriarchal violence across eras. Linguistic/ontological instability: the baby’s shifting sex dramatizes authority’s power to name bodies and the mother’s eroded identity.