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(Trad. Victoria Stenning)

THE MIRROR OF LOVE

He represented the darkness of a creative crisis, the sunset of senses, the twilight of habits... Tricks of imagination, deadlocks and a continuous stream of poetic associations. The impotent search for a gap, the darkness of memories, a morning shower of despair, revelations and frankness...

Story

*Moon, singing water, blessed night,
Trees that quiver round about us,
Your innocent melancholy
Is the mirror of my love.*

Charles Baudelaire. The Fountain (translation by William Aggeler)

I keep the mystery of the birth of my poems to myself. No one has ever seen me working. If I am, all on my own and fighting with the angel of the Lord, no one knows of my sufferings. Balzac can bear a third of a novel in one night, spending tons of coffee and ink. Picky and peevish, Flaubert rides his bike in the morning only to perfectly shout loudly a few lines from his "Madame Bovary" he has written at night. Everyone knew that, believed and discussed excitedly. The torture of creations is fully mine! Like a pregnant woman, I have been carrying the idea of a short poem for months. This torture is both hell and unusual delight! Because in the end - I know - there will be a thought and then all of a sudden an idea will be born and a whole musical phrase. Then it will turn into a wonderful melody, my soul will feel nice and easy and I will start floating. This enchanting music sounds like the singing of the Sirens, attracts you, gradually pulling an unknown artist into a dark whirlpool of happiness. You plunge into it with your head and feel neither the time nor hunger or thirst. Only there, at the bottom of the abyss, you can see the vague outlines of what is so passionately sought.

However, before this happens, you have to suffer, you suffer continuously, when you are asleep or awake. You have to seek and not find, cry from the creative impotence, look for again, argue with yourself, with your invented character, with a tree, a stone or a flower...

And God forbid to trust any friend, or even worse - a poet, writer or musician. The fragile structure will collapse and instantly evaporate from a careless touch of an amateur or a bright personality. Then the blurred contours of the structure will embody in the words, rhyme, and rhythm - the very music that has just appeared and filled all your heart. It is

happiness to know your lines are obedient to the impulses of your soul, twists of desires, shuffling of conscience! My whole life is worth it! I can and I should forget the joy of what I have created. After that I will seek again...

Wrapped in a mackintosh, under the endless rain, for some reason I keep wandering about the hideous alleys for weeks. The drops on the pavement shine, reflecting and lengthening the dim lights of the city. Thoughts don't get born. They suddenly take off like a passer-by's black shadow under a street light and disappear straight away. Like a shadow, they disappear quickly sliding on the wall and bending over the ledges... I make my way through the labyrinth of these gloomy, damp and dirty streets with crooked, rotten houses where a flower or a young girl's head would shine and illuminate my imagination...

I could stay in a pub all night to hear the only juicy and most necessary for me word uttered once by some sailor. How long have I lived without writing a single line! If the struggle with myself was dragging too long, my brain began to inflame and a neurosis with its insomnia, suffering and painful whims started. It made me hot just to realize that fact. I would get up to cool down my face with the cold water from the jug and then look in the mirror which was getting cloudy of the heat radiating from me...

At that wonderful moment my charming ginger cat Alice would creep with her gentle velvet steps, rub against my leg, then gently jump on the table and sit beside my manuscripts in her imperturbable sphinx pose. She would think together with me and look at me from the depth of

her pupils with golden flecks, being sensibly tender and mysteriously penetrating.

Expressing myself in words, I always turn to a listener. Sometimes it is a mystic companion, a friend I have not met yet or a rare sweetheart... Sometimes it is my Alice. She is amazingly patient waiting for me to finish my work and she sounds like a woman on a bed of love with her dazzling rhythmic purring. I can't help comparing her to myself. I am as sensual as she is, full in force but gentle in flexibility, with the same free and magic eye which is difficult to bear... But most often I am my own listener. This is exactly when I can reach the true split of my personality.

I have no clue why I do certain things at certain moments or why I write about certain things. I just feel like that! I feel like creating - seeking, guessing, finding and expressing myself. I am sure there is nothing aimless or unjustified in life! But this is my Love, my Truth of the world, the Truth expressed in beauty! There is no explanation in words for that. However, when someone finds themselves near it, they will surely feel it present. Maybe by a slight chill in the skin...

I have been renting a room in this ancient, short and narrow road in the Latin Quarter for several months. My room is on the first floor and steep creaking stairs are leading to it. The furniture is old and clumsy, the floor is dirty, the narrow windows are looking into the yard so it is always half dark here. I have been sitting in the armchair near the window, staring at a faintly smoldering fire and poking coals in the fireplace. I have no ideas at all in my head! Then there came one thought, trying to create the outline of an idea, but in vain.

I put a couple more logs into the fireplace. The flame swallowed them greedily. The logs were making a crackling noise. I lit a bronze table lamp with a thin sliver and black trickle of smoke stretched from it and the burning oil of beech nuts filled the room with its pungent smell. It gave special aroma to the white cloud over my heated cup of fresh “tea”...

Again and again, I return to my “condemned” poems! I simply wrote poetical verses, I made a mirror similar to the one opposite me. It showed our dreadful epoch and... caused rejection. I know that succumbing to the temptation of the devil, comprehending and revealing the beautiful and the ugly, I will not find neither happiness nor peace. Everything beautiful in life is amoral, illegal or caused diseases...

The poems are booming in my head, they are colliding and overflowing one another creating bright, attractive and frightening new images... The outside objects are distorting. They appear in unknown shapes, then they gradually lose their shapes and at last penetrate into me. The reality becomes indistinguishable from fantasy. The mirror next to me is covered in dust and looks matt. The contours of the face seem fuzzy, the colour transitions are blurred, as in a bad watercolor portrait, instead of living sparkling eyes there are light brown spots with noticeable blue under the eyelids, the hair is dyed in green, the jacket is also green, I am wearing light brown trousers and a huge chest silk bow. I admire my own reflection and trust it my secrets...

xxx

Wrapped in a dressing gown, I am sitting in my armchair and gobbling everything with my eyes... Someone embraced her. She gave a shout. Their lips are swallowing the air hungrily searching for a long kiss, their words are becoming incoherent, shameless, rude and soon only those two can understand the sounds they are making. His thin white hands don't look big any more, they moved somewhere down, slowly sliding up her tight hips. They lifted the light silk dress and petticoat and bared the stockings and cambric pantaloons with laces. A moment later the lacy underwear suddenly turned into shapeless white fabric and quickly slid down on the floor showing the desired beautiful body. The contrast of the dark stockings and suspenders and the white skin! How the beloved garden attracts to itself with a swan bend! It is hard to see all the splendour in the dim light of the dying fire, I can only guess the charming lines. The fabric of the dress just irritates me with covering the nakedness with its folds... A flurry of emotions falls on me, captivates my unlimited imagination and does not let go...

My room suddenly came to life and changed. My old dirty armchair suddenly turned into a posh bed. The stuffy still air is now glowing with subtle tones and smells of fresh flowers. The sounds, like the rainbow colours, have painted everything around, the colours suddenly sound like wonderful music...

I can see the woman's body shrink similar to thousands of nerve cells scatter and join together a moment later to take a new blow... I can see it and I am looking at it triumphally like a predator admires his prey. I

am breathing in with all my chest the aroma of desire and taking in her body. Watching the woman curve in ecstasy, I am merging with her, I am sliding noiselessly, like a snake, and it is impossible to say who is exhausted from the voluptuousness and whose feet are intertwined on the love bed...

Gradually everything is blurring before my eyes and disappearing... The moment of enlightenment struck. The shadow patterns on the ceiling of the room, adorned with a grey cobweb, suddenly begin to live a special life... The connection between the concepts has become so elusive that I can't understand myself... I became overwhelmed with an absurd and unconquerable laugh. I felt like I was a child and with my parents I went to the suburbs of Paris, wandered into an old barn and, for fun, I lay on the stumps of the sweetly smelling, freshly chopped alfalfa. And there was the bright blue sky, green grass and... a little girl In the bright aperture of the open doors. The girl was smiling, dancing and calling me. I stretched out to her...

The sky and the grass suddenly disappeared. And the girl... Instead of her there was that same woman... I can understand she felt me staring at her and she knew there was someone else there. And I liked that feeling. In the twilight of the ordinary room, like in an erotic dream of the gloomy symbolist Bosch, I retired with two sinners under the glass bell on the lake of Lust and I am creating the striking world of ephemeral desires and sensual pleasures. I can hear and guess the woman shivering of this invisible but desirable man. Desirable? Oh, yes! Because he can see but she can't, because instead of her it is he who is watching the mystery of love, and his fluids, piercing the air of the room which is stale

and heavy from the smell of sweat and burning oil, instantly subjugate her imagination. The hypnotic power of these currents swings against the bare feelings... In fact, they are just an echo of that sweet pain that has just flared up and now does not subside in the body of the invisible spectator...

He is so close. His intermittent hot breathing burns her face. His sharp chin quivering with ecstasy, his wet strands of hair overhanging his burning eyes and drops of sweat on his forehead... The drops fall on her breasts, belly, hips and make her body strain every time. Before she could only feel his body smell and his fingers touch, the salty flavour of his sweaty hands, his bewitching breaths and whispering. Now she can see! She imagines she can see! She can see with his eyes...This new world seems to appear before her in all its poetic sensual splendour! I got drunk with the feeling of giving happiness just with watching her! I was teased with not being able to do anything even though I could see everything hidden from her and everyone else! I couldn't even touch her! But I could see! I could see her see me see her! If she couldn't tear her enchanted eyes off my face... That was enough! The brightest expressions come from imagination and not the real events!

The woman clearly understands there will come a moment and that someone, whoever he is, hiding in the dark and having just touched their lust, will disappear in the bliss of their magic night.

Watching her, I hardly thought about myself. Without touching the woman, with my lips I suddenly feel her calling eyelashes, the velvet skin of her swaying breasts and her quivering damp breath. It tickles and induces my imagination... Now she is embracing me and kissing maniacally

my face, neck, chest, belly, she is pulling my dressing gown off my shoulders and goes on her knees... The time has stopped! These wonderful moments are lasting for ever! She gently squeezes her fingers, then lets go, then squeezes them again, now and then she gives a glance of her languid eyes at my trembling chin, at the charm growing and billowing higher and higher and Creation made by her hands she hasn't learned yet... At last the moment comes when all my essence, all thoughts, all visions disappear somewhere and turn into one hard alloy - a clot of nerves and flesh. Invisible life-giving currents start to charge me. They slowly slide around the whole body, like a glistening drop in the sunshine making its way under the thin crust of the spring ice... Suddenly this drop appears on the very end of my flesh. Reflecting the light of the fireplace, it is like a pearl in an open shell, it glinted a matte shine, froze and is not falling down. Something keeps it on top of the universe! As if touching the nodules on the beads, the woman's gentle fingers easily ran through the sensitive and responsive nerves, touched the pearl... It disappeared and the skin on her hand became wet and slippery...

Having felt the whole of the palm, the Creation flinched. Her hand clenched and slowly, as if lured, pulled the newly risen charm to the glowing entrance to the abyss... It is inside now! All of a sudden the gates of the paradise closed and densely squeezed it, not allowing it to move. With all of its body it feels the surrounding wet and slightly ribbed vaults begin to shrink. They squeeze the inflamed clot of nerves and flesh, release, embrace again, leading up to the intervention. But what is that? Someone has crept up unnoticed and snatched it from the flaming abyss... And now it is alone in front of the entrance to paradise, drunk from permissiveness, red from stress, tearful and breathless. Having felt the

sudden loss of pleasure, it shuddered again and immediately rushed back to the crater of delight and resentment.

Now nothing and no one can stop it. Stumbling into something inside and not believing its happiness, it bursts out... It shoots out to make sure that this is not a dream and then to go back. Teasing and comforting itself with the illusion of the infinity of this fascinating process, it took away many, many times, and then again gave itself pleasure from the delightful feeling of its first acquaintance...

It lasted a long time until the moment when once again stopping to prolong the process of enjoyment, I suddenly looked around and met the woman's open and alluring eyes. Her eyelashes looked like her playing eye rays, they would shudder to the rush of my sensations...

A cramp ran through my body. Soon, life and love will burst out of it. A wonderful cocktail of hormones of joy, tenderness and pleasure is about to plunge us into a state of bliss. There, love and voluptuousness will unite in one whole and fall into the abyss of happiness with a loud waterfall. I am on the very edge of this abyss...

At that very moment I can hear a thud, a dreadful thud.... My cat Alice flung open the door with one movement of her head and leapt to my chair with a loud purr. The paradise room - "The garden of earthly pleasures" - all the charm of the tale immediately disappeared, suddenly and rudely... A terrible noise of destruction filled my room, joy and delight instantly disappeared, everything around me collapsed and returned to its previous state. The room became a horrible home of eternal boredom. I can see the dusty and clumsy furniture, dirty floor, a pool of water from the jug that I spilled before, sad dirty window with

streaks of rain water on it, my manuscripts on the floor, crossed and unfinished, my turbid mirror which I feel like smashing...