

THE DAWN OF CREATION

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September 16, 2001

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LADY OF THE DREAM

The rosy veils fluttered in the fragrance of some perfume, then slowly dissolved, dwindled, vanished and there was only the fragrance. So potent, so far, so subtle, so near. Her perfume. And there she enters, elusive as a nymph, as subtle as the scent of her perfume. She will not stay here forever. She will be sacrificed on the altar of the dream. Thoughts drift off. (she's everything), drift off and slowly fly away, slowly, slowly. The night unbraids her hair. Cascading, flowing like gentle waterfalls it flickers in the candlelight and shades through all nuances of mystery finally merging into black. As if she was here yesterday, her perfume seems to be eternal, as if. hesitatingly outlined by the silhouette of the flame, a shadow against the aroma. She is here, she will be immolated to the night. The perfume will flow from the encrimsoned heart, it will be poured upon the offering at the altar of the dream. Thoughts drift off. Love remains. Love! so potent is the odor; Love! outlined upon the heart revived; Love! burnt oblation; Love! the sacrificial altar will be satisfied. So potent is the smell.

Melting, the figure beloved disappears, her unseen face is enfolded, the rosy veils emerge to shroud the bleeding heart. My heart. An awakening from a suffocating dream. An awakening or falling asleep again? Is this reality: to wake up from a slumber? If this is an awakening, then what do we wake up to? To death, and death is a dream. Love! o mysterious figure, o beauty unseen.

She left her heart for me upon the altar of the dream. Face? She has no face. Name? Hardly. I want the dream! And here it comes, as a slender lace of hope, emerging from the depths of the dream, cut off from the web of oblivion, wrested away from the ruthless embrace of the night—her perfume. So potent, how far, so subtle, how near—here in reality. I shall find her, like Cinderella, by her perfume. The lady of my dream, by the fragrance of her perfume—so potent.

The virginity of the dream is lacerated. Three shadows hang upon the defenseless veil. I am the third one. The soft figure is lying, the innocence of the dream is ripped apart. Black on white, rough on tender. A scream sweeps away the candlelight. Lacerated is the virginity. Blood flung on dark and its scarlet gleams replace the dead now light. Spectral vermilion radiance. The second one. Covetous nails dig into the pale face. The scream fades in the choking throat, to the strangled heart—a raped heart. The third one. Eyes blurred in a frenzy of lust. The third one—the last—the candlelight. And then Passion removes her ghastly cloak. I am able to see again, terrified, terrified, terrified. This gentle figure. it's her. and in a deadly embrace I whisper silently my dream, the dream where I met her. She quietly seals my ghostly words with tears. She. her heart is still mine, her perfume—dead, murdered by me. I cut the lace, she dies in my arms, in my deadly embrace, a lethal embrace that raped my dream, my dream. The other two lie dead, they had profaned my sacred dream, they had violated my relic.

The virginity of the dream is lacerated. The dream is gone, like the fading breath of the wondrous perfume. She is gazing at me: o, unseen face, how could you let it happen?

Sofia, 1989

This mystical "story" has two versions, this one and one in Bulgarian. They are quite different (as with most of my dual-language work). The story of a mental rape is frighteningly real. It never happened, of course, but the panic induced by the mere possibility is overwhelming.

THE BLUE SKY

The blue sky is what engulfs us. The cloudless void around in peaceful melancholy and imperceptible calm silently presses us down to the ground, to the kingdom of these very creatures that are always busy preparing death for life. The cobweb, suffocating mantle, wreathes around our breasts and with a tight clasp prevents our lungs from getting fresh air. The air we breathe is the air that stifles us. Evaporating poison from our mouths:

Blue, blue, blue is the venom, blue is the sky
Blue is the day on which we will die.
Blue is the spring, blue is the ocean,
Blue are our half-dead mental emotions.

Worm-eaters, crawling in the dust, quivering under the blue smile of the sky. A sullen smile of a patient sky. "Aroint thee, witch!" I want to see a single cloud. We sink due to unpredictable calamities at sea! God-willingly, I would not drown in a calm ocean.

I want cold to stiff my brain,
I want waves to crush my head,
I want gulls to eat my eyes,
I want a thunder in the mighty sky!

I don't want the peaceful death in my own creaking bed. I don't want to have my head buried in the hollow chest of some nurse. I don't want to spew my lunch on sheets no longer white. I don't want the people lie that they don't want to see me die:

I want a feast on my funeral hour,
I don't want anyone sobbing and crying.
Rejoice! There's always death in life,
Sing a bridal ballad to my wife!

Sofia, 1989

This short piece does not ring any bells, Pavlov's or otherwise. I am happy I have not lost it all these years as it is still refreshing to read. Oddly enough, I do share the same sentiments still except maybe it's all tainted by the hope that dying day won't be anytime soon.

THE SECRETS OF A SMALL COUNTRY TOWN

The earth here knows the darkness, the earth here also knows the light. And it is here, even at night, between you and your wife, on the creaking bed. During a strange and awkward instant, you become aware of the fact that the one you've been making love with, is not your wife. But the soil, which sucks your vigor, takes your most intimate secrets and in return it gives you nothing except stronger chains. And you know that tomorrow it will all happen again, the same.

All the secrets are now in the soil, guarded in a jealous way. It knows the answer to the ancient riddle but conceals it behind a pure face, hides it from you behind an expressionless face. When you die and enter the earth, it will have you too. To it you will surrender even the little you've been left with. You will enter the treasure house of the small country town. You will realize how little you have known about it, it knows you better than you do. It knows everything—deceit and baseness, love affairs, fornication, thefts, onanism, arson, hatred, gossip, torture, madness, rape, all perversion, all that's evil.

Well, now you think, "Had I known this, I would have left," but you forget that you are tightly woven into the shroud of the small country town, that the earth has chained you and you cannot go, you cannot leave. No, you could not, even if you knew the secrets of the small country town.

Somewhere on the road between Sofia and Dupnitza, June 4, 1992

I have always wondered what life would be in a small town (or village). The sense of curiosity was not strong enough to induce me to really try it... but I have always wondered nevertheless.

THE DAWN OF CREATION, 1348 A.D.

“And here we are, all of us, abysmally afraid of the light.”

H. Ibsen, *Ghosts*

A Proem

The Moon, jagged by the castellated summits of the eerie buildings, vainly tried to establish its domain over the deteriorating earth. Its pall of feeble light was unevenly laid between the turrets and only the dusk-driven holes in it partly managed to conceal the hideous look of the charnel. Ah, unmade be thy cerements, o Augur ill of ages past! It was the peremptory silence that prevailed the dismal fight between Darkness and Light. But what Light - it was not the one so often admired and extolled by many a presumptuous poet who without a profound knowledge (indeed, even without a vague notion) of Darkness boldly claims to unravel the mystery of Light; it was not the one that emaciates the morning twilight to caress softly the earth huddled in waiting for some warmth; nor it was the Light in the metaphysical sense, conveying the idea of initial goodness, redemption, forbearance and beatitude; it was not the Light which was to eradicate Evil, nor it was the one to render the divine purpose and will. It was just Light, the same which impartially stares at happiness and woe, joy and pain, life and death; the same which equally imbues love and hatred, and favors both the killer and the victim; the one whose doting affection grants the same garish bouquet to the glutton and the starving blind man - the pugnacious and always whimsical pulchricide. This was the Light wrestling with Darkness, the latter being quite a bit more merciful for she tended to hide from the grieved eye of an improbable visitor the horrid devastation of Her, with whom every mortal has his date. But Light, with its perverse perception of justice strove to unveil the painful reality and take delight in the riveted glass eyes of the scattered bodies in which still lingered both apprehension and comprehension in that awful mixture that always precedes death. The air was cold and damp, the soft wind brought smells of stagnation and putrefaction from the Thames.

I strode down the streets with nothing to accompany my lonesome progress but the muffled ruckle of the gravel. I ventured into some of the ruined pubs in search of some refreshing drops of liqueur, but sallied out even more dejected by the gloomy and lifeless atmosphere which prevailed within. Without was even worse for the only verdure to be observed was the pallid imitation of vine now transformed into a loathsome devouring mould. The cobbles, dislodged from their usual beds, lay scattered like the toys of a capricious child who suddenly had conceived against them hatred beyond all expression.

I persevered in my reckless march through the glazy dark ignoring the bloodless carcasses of some nocturnal monsters which wallowed in the pestilential dust. O, clamor, how I miss thee! And so, deeply engrossed in meditation and resenting the residua which the raging Incendium of the Black Death was not able to engulf, I beheld (or, rather, the creaky sound drew my attention to) a half-rotten half-broken plank of wood which read: “Disinherited.” It seemed so familiar, that name, that I indulged in the uneasy labor of pulling up a bucket of recollection from the darkened recesses of my memory. Eventually I managed to restore the pieces, fit them into their altered frame and get the words: “Turn left, find peace.” So I did, but there

was nothing there, just another empty street.

Blagoevgrad, Winter 1992

The Plague fascinates me. I don't know why. I realize this is sick, but it holds a strange attraction for me. It was a dark time for Europe, which nearly saw the end of the Western civilization. This short snapshot is an attempt to convey the gloomy feeling of someone walking down a decaying cobble-stone street. The text was meant to be longer and I did add some weird and disgusting scenes of reality, later removed. I just kept the simple observatory nature of the walk, with the horrors extracted and stored for later usage.

SUCH A BEAUTIFUL DAY

The unknown future is marching towards us and for the first time I can face it with a sense of hope. The horizon is calling us, when the blast wave of inertia sweeps the numb figures off the road. And though dark is the sky and castles drown in quicksand, though the roof of our home is leaking and the doors are firmly sealed, still we persevere, surviving through the eons of glutting. And though stagnation is enticing, still we defy time and space. But now we're blinded by the dim sentience of our existence, painfully aware of our faults.

Yes, it is possible to live with a set of different masks and wear many different faces, but will this mimicry prevent Death from recognizing us and inviting us to her deadly dance? Slowly the castles disintegrate and we groan over the blank pages where we were to write the history of Future. Page one: breaking of the dam walls. A madness born of our instincts, of our nature where self-destruction is entrenched, madness: a surge of total devotion of Man to Death.

The blackened lifeless creatures cannot see the sunrise obscured by hellish clouds. There's a scream frozen in the air, a scream never heard before on Earth. Even the sun is destroyed in the radiation fire and then the flood begins. This time there will be no survivors to live on. It is better to break our hands than to write down this page.

Lost in the bacchanalia of Progress, the moral orgies end in one final grand decline and fall. If we aim towards the stars, should we let the anti-life in us survive? No machine can count the stars within. We shape today the future of our own reincarnation. There is no fate, we can change the way it goes. In this life our own life shall start!

Sofia, March 23, 1992

Mankind! A hope I dare not pronounce as if the mere verbalization of it would invoke the spirits of destruction from their dormant and uneasy state of perpetual readiness. I lived in Kiev for four years (1980-1984) when Ukraine was still a republic of the Soviet Union. I vividly remember how we were trained for surprise American attacks. I knew all there was to know about nuclear winter and H-bombs and I can still take a Kalashnikov apart in seconds!

THE CURSE OF ART, PART ONE: POETRY

“Inspiration comes uninvited, in moments of pain or dream, and there you stay: a silent and impartial observer of your own agony.”

Ad Avis, year unknown

It has been three years now since I wrote “Art: The Magic of Synthesis,” where I argued that Art has meaning and power only when it is not a mere subsection of the whole, like music and poetry, but an integration, a syncretism wherein the interaction of its multifarious elements produces the mystical divinity that accompanies Creation. I contended that only this faculty of Art, when correctly employed, can make the Perceiver envisage the world beyond, the world of forms and ideas, the world uncontaminated by degraded passions, the world of harmony and beauty...

It has been three years now and a lifetime for I have grown to be a cynic. It has been three years now and eternity for I rejected the only hope that Man has ever had: that of Eternity. So let me freely speak of Art now, when the only passion I have is the struggle against it. Let me defend Poetry and then murder it, for it is a sickness, a plague that feeds on the immortal coils of a mortal soul, a harlot that solicits strangers with the vain beauty of her well-bred body, a profaned altar that has never been sacred. Let me send it into oblivion, knowing that it will emerge from thence again, knowing that I will be the one to bring it back again when the curse of Inspiration waves its beckoning hand at me.

It is irresistible as the hope of prayer, yet futile for I mutter an orison to a dead God. It is a temptation that I cannot choose but yield to, as an ascetic that longs for Eleusinian mysteries, assiduously staring at the Crucifixion of his own beliefs, yet strangely enthralled by his crime. It is the yearning of a coward that dreams of asphodel, it is the anguish of a hero that resents his Elysian destiny.

According to at least one serious discussion of Poetry, there are two distinct faculties of mind that participate in its composition: reason and imagination, where “the former may be considered as mind contemplating the relations borne by one thought to another, however produced; and the latter, as mind acting upon those thoughts as to color them with its own light, and composing from them, as from elements, other thoughts, each containing within itself the principle of its own integrity.” Shelley also says that “reason is to imagination [...] as the shadow to the substance” and poetry is “the expression of imagination.”

I argue that reason and imagination cannot act as two distinct principles, just as there is no conception without the Male and Female, and no Light without Darkness. Only the vulgar can see limitation and divinity in the same mind. Logic? There is no such thing! It fails when encountered by Infinity. Can anyone measure the vastness of space? Can anyone explain the Beginning? Once Man tried and thus Art was born, and it was called Religion. What is God, if not one of the most sublime and tyrannical creations of Man? And what is the Devil, if not the last sparkle of Man’s own nature? Reason and Imagination, God and Devil, Good and Evil... all children of the same mind: Poet’s envenomed vision and Priesthood’s shelter.

There is no such thing as Reason apart from Imagination, and the latter cannot thrive without the former. If Imagination is the body, then Reason is the blood: one without the other is lifeless. Their unity is Art, and Art is what chained us in the bonds of Creation, reduced us to

inferior, small, naked shadows of our own glory by giving it to God and stripping Man of his shining beauty. Art enslaved us. From the mud of our delusions we created our dim illusions in the image of our dreams: the Secret God, the Passion, the Lie, the Door, the Choice. Addicted to our frustration, we refuse to let it go, we cannot let it go... no, not even I can do this.

Art is a curse and Poetry—one of its Emanations, an embalming for the decaying corpse of Man's dignity and pride. How can we seek Freedom in the realms of Poetry? All it has is the sedation of unreal but seductive answers that make "beautiful that which is distorted" and then claim to be "the image of life expressed in its eternal truth." A mirror that obscures exposes the truth?

Inspiration, the envoy of Art. It is an infliction that descends on those infelicitous creatures called Poets. The pain it brings will not ease until they write it down: the only medicine are the paper and the quill. Angry at the Muse, they will paint her in colors of beauty for all they wish is for her to go away... and never to come back. Poets are normal people. Normal but sick, for the balance of Reason and Imagination is disrupted by the intrusion of a third element: Fantasy.

What is Fantasy? Reason is the ability to reproduce scenes already seen, feelings already felt, and establish connection between them. Imagination is the faculty of mind that creates worlds unseen by the eye, inspires thoughts previously unknown to Reason, and finds similarities in things where Reason cannot. Thus, the tandem forms that sphere of comprehension that allows the mind to contemplate on things that the eye can and cannot see. What is created by Imagination is processed by Reason, assimilated and amalgamated into the web of experience.

Fantasy is somewhat similar to Imagination in that it will see more than the physical abilities of the body would permit. It differs from Imagination in respect to what it produces: a wild chaos of forms and ideas, as alien to the mind, as to be completely impossible to be rendered by it. It cannot be integrated into the experience, it cannot be learnt from, it cannot be understood. Poetry, once a child of Reason and Imagination, is now Fantasy's bastard. What the Poet sees in his Fantasy and tries to digest in his work, and what the Reader sees in it, are dissimilar, for the Poets are ill with Fantasy of their own, and the Readers are either well or their sickness differs. Thus, it is improbable that anyone ever understood what the Poet's Fantasy created. It is foolishness to assume that anyone ever will, for if it is readily available for anyone to see, then it is not Poetry, it is not Fantasy... it is dull reality, someone's reality, just like the first God was someone's reality too.

Thus, it will be vain to argue about the role of Poetry in society, except maybe in the sense of my hope that someday someone will restore the balance of Reason and Imagination in Art and banish Fantasy forever. Then, and only then, can Art become the true face of Man. There has to be some uncorrupted human being. I hope there is for I know that I am not. I was touched by Fantasy's leprous hand, I was bewitched by her spell and now I don't have the power to let her go. I don't have the will. I love her...

San Angelo, 1993

This is a semi-instinctive reaction to Shelley's "Defense of Poetry". While I do admire his work, I passionately disagree with his view of what poetry is/should be. Admittedly, less dramatics and more logic would be more appropriate in the account below. All quotes are from Shelley's work. And yes, me be Ad Avis too!