

## The Magic Mirror: A Cento

Anne Gorrick

Note: The title of this poem comes from Sylvia Plath's thesis at Smith College on the "study of the double in two of Dostoevsky's novels."

A wisp of your hair, your ring, your watch, your nightgown.  
One cry, and I stumble from bed, cow-heavy and floral  
You were gold jacketed, solid silver,  
A wedding-cake face in a paper frill.  
5 I had not even confided my theft of you

Between the yellow lettuces and the German cabbage  
Of those women. I felt their frailty, yes:  
Faint, undulant watermark.  
I meet on the page of your journal, as never before,  
10 Pale eyes, patent-leather gutterals!

It was grab his neck and adore him  
Cold folds of ego, the calla,  
Dream-maimed and dream-blind.  
He tells me how badly I photograph.  
15 I dropped a file across the electrodes

Stars stuck all over, bright stupid confetti.  
For serious astrologers to worry  
The stars are flashing like terrible numerals.  
That day the solar system married us  
20 Angels swim in it, and the stars, in indifference also.

Were you among them? I studied it,  
And money the sperm fluid of it all.  
I remember that thought. Not  
Of Japanese paper, my gold beaten skin  
25 I could hardly believe how delicious.

Sugar is a necessary fluid,  
Calmer than you, had a suggestion. So,  
Open your handbag. What is that bad smell?  
Anything wild, on legs, in your eyes  
30 The box is only temporary.

What did they mean to you, the azalea flowers?  
The sun rises under the pillar of your tongue.

Flinging your old selves off like underthings  
In a quarry of silences.  
35 I brought you to Devon. I brought you into my dreamland.

The narcissi look up like children, quickly and whitely.  
The crop thickened faster than we could thin it.  
Even through the gift paper I could hear them breathe  
Baby-cries from the thaw,  
40 There is a dignity to this; there is a formality –

Somewhere on the coast, an exploration –  
The paths narrowed into the hollow.  
Blue push of sea-wind. A gorse cliff,  
I tasted the malignity of the gorse,  
45 That cared nothing for rabbits. You were locked

In a sort of cement well  
You did not want to be Christlike. Though your father  
Arches over us. O father, all by yourself  
I hypnotised calm into you,  
50 To dredge the silt from your throat.

It meant your Daddy had come up out of the well.  
Shh! These are people you play chess with,  
In the nunnery of the bees.  
I have whirled the midwife's extractor,  
55 Marking the target.

Chinese yellow on appalling objects –  
White, with crimson hearts and flowers, and bluebirds.  
Her wings torn shawls, her long body  
With its blood-sticky feet. Each night  
60 I am the magician's girl who does not flinch.

Both of us drenched in a petroleum  
Effacement at the wind's hand.  
This was America's Delphi. You wanted a sign.  
All night your moth-breath  
65 Into our yard, crying: 'Mother! Mother!'

You are the one  
Of her body. Even  
In you, ruby.  
As succulent as she is. Too late  
70 Solid the spaces lean on, envious.

- Warily, you cultivated her,  
Now the room is ahiss. The instrument  
Kept you company, weeding the onions.  
So I poke at the carbon birds in my housedress.  
75 A glittering blackness, Europe's mystical jewel.
- My Japanese silks, desperate butterflies,  
In flame-orange silks, in gold bracelets,  
It is he who has achieved these syllables.  
And assembled us, inert ingredients  
80 O mud, mud, how fluid! –
- How I listened to our absence,  
Do you do no harm?  
The road unnatural and familiar,  
But it shimmers, it does not stop, and I think it wants me.  
85 Twenty miles an hour, over fallen heaven.
- And I, nearly extinct,  
Even the dogs were stunned. And the same flash  
Mirror safe, unredeemed  
In your steel helm. Helpless  
90 The old story.
- You had no other logo.  
There is no terminus, only suitcases  
Devoured you.  
Notions and tickets, short circuits and folding mirrors.  
95 Is your heart-coloured book – the empty mask
- The brown arc  
In your fist –  
Berries cast dark  
In the Atlantic.  
100 Shadows.

1. Ted Hughes "The Shot"
2. Sylvia Plath "Morning Song"
3. TH "The Shot"
4. SP "Berck-Plage"
5. TH "A Pink Wool Knitted Dress"
6. SP "Burning the Letters"
7. TH "Caryatids (1)"
8. SP "A Secret"
9. TH "Visit"
10. SP "Burning the Letters"
11. TH "Sam"
12. SP "The Night Dances"
13. TH "9 Willow Street"
14. SP "Death & Co."
15. TH "The Tender Place"
16. SP "Years"
17. TH "St. Botolph's"
18. SP "An Appearance"
19. TH "St. Botolph's"
20. SP "Apprehensions"
21. TH "Fulbright Scholars"
22. SP "Amnesiac"
23. TH "Fulbright Scholars"
24. SP "Fever 103°"
25. TH "Fulbright Scholars"
26. SP "Kindness"
27. TH "Fate Playing"
28. SP "The Other"
29. TH "The Owl"
30. SP "The Arrival of the Bee Box"
31. TH "Child's Park"
32. SP "The Colossus"
33. TH "Child's Park"
34. SP "Poem for a Birthday"
35. TH "Error"
36. SP "Among the Narcissi"
37. TH "Daffodils"
38. SP "Tulips"
39. TH "Daffodils"
40. SP "Among the Narcissi"
41. TH "The Rabbit Catcher"
42. SP "The Rabbit Catcher"
43. TH "The Rabbit Catcher"
44. SP "The Rabbit Catcher"
45. TH "The Rabbit Catcher"

46. SP "Lesbos"
47. TH "Being Christlike"
48. SP "The Colossus"
49. TH "Dream Life"
50. SP "The Colossus"
51. TH "The Bee God"
52. SP "The Swarm"
53. TH "The Bee God"
54. SP "Wintering"
55. TH "The Bee God"
56. SP "Wintering"
57. TH "The Bee God"
58. SP "Stings"
59. TH "Dream Life"
60. SP "The Bee Meeting"
61. TH "Suttee"
62. SP "Morning Song"
63. TH "Grand Canyon"
64. SP "Morning Song"
65. TH "The Afterbirth"
66. SP "Nick and the Candlestick"
67. TH "The Dogs Are Eating Your Mother"
68. SP "Nick and the Candlestick"
69. TH "The Dogs Are Eating Your Mother"
70. SP "Nick and the Candlestick"
71. TH "Dreamers"
72. SP "Words heard, by accident, over the phone"
73. TH "Dreamers"
74. SP "Burning the Letters"
75. TH "Dreamers"
76. SP "Kindness"
77. TH "Dreamers"
78. SP "Words heard, by accident, over the phone"
79. TH "Dreamers"
80. SP "Words heard, by accident, over the phone"
81. TH "Robbing myself"
82. SP "Poppies in July"
83. TH "Robbing myself"
84. SP "A Birthday Present"
85. TH "Robbing myself"
86. SP "Brasilia"
87. TH "Brasilia"
88. SP "Brasilia"
89. TH "Brasilia"
90. SP "Brasilia"
91. TH "Totem"

92. SP "Totem"
93. TH "Totem"
94. SP "Totem"
95. TH "Totem"
96. SP "Ariel"
97. TH "Night-Ride on Ariel"
98. SP "Ariel"
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100. SP "Ariel"

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