

FAVORITE POEMS TAMUK

HYMN TO BEAUTY

Charles Baudelaire, 1821-1867

For me Hymn to Beauty holds true to what the essence of a poem is. When I see the words grip the reader with their elegance and ornate construction, it rings true to what poetry should be. The thoughts that are evoked in the poem give me an inner philosophical discussion on the way we interpret beauty. I adore the assembling of his poems and the unique ways that Baudelaire strings rhymes together. There is no sort of personal connection that I have to the poem, yet I am still drawn to the way that the poet can pull me in with his imagery. The poet can create both a well-written philosophical insight and illustrated ideas that we get to enjoy within just a few minutes. The poem truly lives up to the title.

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Did you spring out of heaven or the abyss,
Beauty? Your gaze infernal, yet divine,
Spreads infamy and glory, grief and bliss,
And therefore you can be compared to wine.

Your eyes contain both sunset and aurora:
You give off scents, like evenings storm-deflowered:
Your kisses are a philtre: an amphora
Your mouth, that cows the brave, and spurs the coward.

Climb you from gulfs, or from the stars descend?
Fate, like a fawning hound, to heel you've brought;
You scatter joy and ruin without end,
Ruling all things, yet answering for naught.

You trample men to death, and mock their clamour.
Amongst your gauds pale Horror gleams and glances,
And Murder, not the least of them in glamour,
On your proud belly amorously dances.

The dazzled insect seeks your candle-rays,
Crackles, and burns, and seems to bless his doom.
The groom bent o'er his bride as in a daze,
Seems, like a dying man, to stroke his tomb.

What matter if from hell or heaven born,
Tremendous monster, terrible to view?
Your eyes and smile reveal to me, like morn,
The Infinite I love but never knew.

From God or Fiend? Siren or Sylph? Invidious
The answer — Fay with eyes of velvet, ray,
Rhythm, and perfume! — if you make less hideous
Our universe, less tedious leave our day.

From Roy Campbell, Poems of Baudelaire. New York: Pantheon Books, 1952. 28.