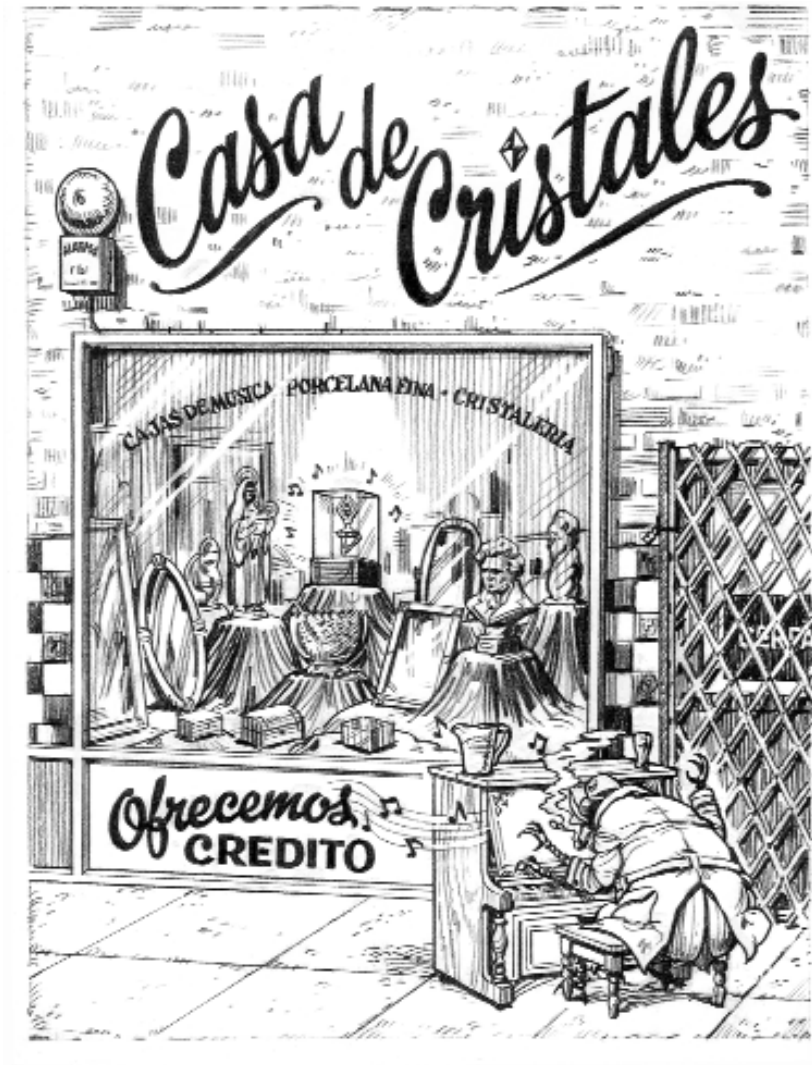


Durito V: Durito in Mexico City



In this second section of the *Book of Mirrors*, Durito wanders Mexico City after the “Exodus for Dignity” protest march and writes to Marcos about his disillusionment with the loneliness and fear of the city. He then narrates his encounter with a ballerina in a storefront window, and of the liberating effects of music.

The Day to Come: The Looking Glass to See from the Other Side

Scratched on the other side, a mirror stops being a mirror and becomes a piece of glass. Mirrors are for seeing on this side, and glass is for seeing what's on the other side.

Mirrors are for scratching.

Glass is for shattering . . . and crossing to the other side . . .

From the mountains of the Mexican Southeast
Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos

P.S. that, image of the real and imaginary, seeks, among so many mirrors, a piece of glass to shatter.

Dawn. Mexico City. Durito wanders through the streets bordering the Zócalo. With a tiny trench coat and a hat cocked like Humphrey Bogart in *Casablanca*, Durito tries to pass unnoticed. Neither his outfit nor his slow crawl is necessary, as Durito sticks to the shadows that escape from the bright store windows. Shadow of the shadows, silent walk, cocked hat, dragging trench coat. Durito walks through the Federal District dawn. No one notices him. They don't see him, and not because he is well disguised or because that little, tiny Quixote dressed as a 50's detective is barely distinguishable from the mounds of garbage. Durito walks alongside papers dragged by someone's feet or by a gust of one of those unpredictable winds of the Mexico City dawn. No one sees Durito for the simple reason that, in this city, no one sees anyone.

"This city is sick," Durito writes to me. "It is sick of loneliness and fear. It is a great collection of lonelinesses. It is many cities, one for each inhabitant. It's not about a sum of anguish (do you know of any loneliness that isn't full of anguish?), but about a potentiality. The number of lonely people that surrounds it multiplies each experience of loneliness. It is as if the loneliness of each one were to enter one of those 'House of Mirrors' that you find at the local carnivals. Each loneliness is a mirror that reflects other loneliness, that like a mirror, repels loneliness."

Durito has begun to realize that he is in foreign territory, that the city is not his place. In his heart and in this dawn, Durito packs his bags. He takes this route as if it were an inventory, a last caress, like the one a lover gives when he knows it is farewell. At times, the number of people passing by diminishes while the ululation of the patrol car sirens increases, startling outsiders. And Durito is one of those outsiders, so he ducks into a corner each time the flashing red and blue lights pass through the street. Durito takes advantage of the complicity of a doorway in order to light his pipe with guerrilla technique: barely a spark, a deep breath, and the smoke enveloping gaze and face. Durito stops. He looks and watches. In front of him, a store window is still lit. Durito looks at the large glass and what is offered behind it: mirrors of all shapes and sizes, porcelain and glass

figurines, cut crystal, tiny music boxes. “There are no little talking boxes,” Durito says to himself without forgetting the long years spent in the jungle of the Mexican Southeast.

Durito has come to say goodbye to Mexico City and he has decided to give a gift to this city that everyone detests and no one abandons. A gift. This is Durito, a beetle of the Lacandona in the middle of Mexico City.

Durito says goodbye with a gift.

He makes an elegant magician’s gesture. Everything stops, the lights go out just like candles do when a gentle wind licks their face. Another gesture, and a streetlight becomes a spotlight illuminating one of the music boxes in the store window. A ballerina with a fine lilac costume keeps a perpetual position with her hands intertwined above her, her legs together as she balances on point. Durito tries to imitate the position, but it doesn’t take long for him to become entangled with all the arms he has. Another magical gesture and a piano the size of a pack of cigarettes appears. Durito sits in front of the piano and puts on it a mug of beer that he got who knows where, but it must have been a while ago because it’s already half-empty. Durito cracks his knuckles and does some of those digital gymnastics like barroom piano players do in the movies. Durito turns toward the ballerina and nods his head. The ballerina comes to life and bows. Durito hums an unknown tune, begins to tap a beat with his little legs, closes his eyes and starts to sway. The first notes begin. Durito plays the piano with four hands. From the other side of the glass, the ballerina begins a turn and slowly raises her right leg. Durito leans over the keyboard and attacks with fury. The ballerina executes the best steps that the prison of the little music box will permit her. The city vanishes. There is nothing, only Durito at his piano and the ballerina on her little music box. Durito plays and the ballerina dances. The city is surprised, its cheeks redden like when one receives an unexpected gift, a pleasant surprise, some good news. Durito gives the best of his gifts: an unbreakable and eternal mirror, a good-bye that doesn’t hurt, that heals, that cleanses. The performance lasts only a few moments, the last notes fade off just as the cities that populate this city take shape. The ballerina returns to her uncomfortable immobility, Durito turns up the collar of the trench coat and takes a gentle bow towards the store window.

“Will you always be on the other side of the glass?” Durito asks her and wonders. “Will you always be on the other side of my here and will I always be on the other side of your there?”

“*Salud*, and until forever, my beloved troublemaker. Happiness is like a gift, it lasts as long as a flash and it’s worth it.”

Durito crosses the street, arranges his hat and continues to walk. Before turning the corner, he turns towards the store window. A star-shaped hole adorns the glass. Alarms are ringing uselessly. Behind the window the ballerina on the little music box is no longer there . . .

“This city is sick. When its illness becomes a crisis, it will be cured. This collective loneliness, multiplied by millions and realized, will end by finding itself

and finding the reason for its impotence. Then, and only then, this city will lose the gray that it wears and will adorn itself with the brightly colored ribbons that are abundant in the countryside.

“This city lives a cruel game of mirrors, but the game of mirrors is useless and sterile if there is not a clear glass as a goal. It is enough to understand it, and as I-don’t-know-who said, struggle and begin to be happy . . .

“I’m coming back, prepare the tobacco and your insomnia. There’s a lot to tell you, Sancho,” Durito ends the letter.

It’s morning. A few piano notes accompany the coming day and Durito who is on the road. To the west, the sun is like a rock shattering the clear glass of the morning . . .

Vale once again. *Salud*, and leave surrender for empty mirrors.

El Sup getting up from the piano and looking, confused by so many mirrors, for the exit . . . or the entrance?

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