



Charles Baudelaire

Les
Fleurs
du Mal

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Préface

La France traverse une phase de vulgarité. Paris, centre et rayonnement de bêtise universelle. Malgré Molière et Béranger, on n'aurait jamais cru que la France irait si grand train dans la voie du progrès. – Questions d'art, terræ incognitæ.

Le grand homme est bête.

Mon livre a pu faire du bien. Je ne m'en afflige pas. Il a pu faire du mal. Je ne m'en réjouis pas.

Le but de la poésie. Ce livre n'est pas fait pour mes femmes, mes filles ou mes sœurs.

On m'a attribué tous les crimes que je racontais.

Divertissement de la haine et du mépris. Les élégiaques sont des canailles. Et verbum caro factum est. Or le poète n'est d'aucun parti. Autrement il serait un simple mortel.

Le Diable. Le péché originel. Homme bon. Si vous vouliez, vous seriez le favori du Tyran ; il est plus difficile d'aimer Dieu que de croire en lui. Au contraire, il est plus difficile pour les gens de ce siècle de croire au diable que de l'aimer. Tout le monde le sent et personne n'y croit. Sublime subtilité du Diable.

Une âme de mon choix. Le Décor. – Ainsi la nouveauté. – L'Epigraphe. – D'Aurevilly. – La Renaissance. – Gérard de Nerval. – Nous sommes tous pendus ou pendables.

J'avais mis quelques ordures pour plaire à M.M. les journalistes. Ils se sont montrés ingrats.

Préface des Fleurs

Ce n'est pas pour mes femmes, mes filles ou mes sœurs que ce livre a été écrit ; non plus que pour les femmes, les filles ou les sœurs de mon voisin. Je laisse cette fonction à ceux qui ont intérêt à confondre les bonnes actions avec le beau langage.

Je sais que l'amant passionné du beau style s'expose à la haine des multitudes ; mais aucun respect humain, aucune fausse pudeur, aucune coalition, aucun suffrage universel ne me contraindront à parler le patois incomparable de ce siècle, ni à confondre l'encre avec la vertu.

Des poètes illustres s'étaient partagé depuis longtemps les provinces les plus fleuries du domaine poétique. Il m'a paru plaisant, et d'autant plus agréable que la tâche était plus difficile, d'extraire la beauté du Mal. Ce livre, essentiellement inutile et absolument innocent, n'a pas été fait dans un autre but que de me divertir et d'exercer mon goût passionné de l'obstacle.

Quelques-uns m'ont dit que ces poésies pouvaient faire du mal ; je ne m'en suis pas réjoui. D'autres, de bonnes âmes, qu'elles pouvaient faire du bien ; et cela ne m'a pas affligé. La crainte des uns et l'espérance des autres m'ont également étonné, et n'ont servi qu'à me prouver une fois de plus que ce siècle avait désappris toutes les notions classiques relatives à la littérature.

Malgré les secours que quelques cuistres célèbres ont apportés à la sottise naturelle de l'homme, je n'aurais jamais cru que notre patrie pût marcher avec une telle vélocité dans la voie du progrès. Ce monde a acquis une épaisseur de vulgarité qui donne au mépris de l'homme spirituel la violence d'une passion. Mais il est des carapaces heureuses que le poison lui-même n'entamerait pas.

J'avais primitivement l'intention de répondre à de nombreuses critiques, et, en même temps, d'expliquer quelques questions très simples, totalement obscurcies par la lumière moderne : Qu'est-ce que la poésie ? Quel est son but ? De la distinction du Bien d'avec le Beau ; de la Beauté dans le Mal ; que le rythme et la rime répondent dans l'homme aux immortels besoins de monotonie, de symétrie et de surprise ; de l'adaptation du style au sujet ; de la vanité et du danger de l'inspiration, etc., etc. ; mais j'ai eu l'imprudence de lire ce matin quelques feuilles publiques ; soudain, une indolence, du poids de vingt atmosphères, s'est abattue sur moi, et je me suis arrêté devant l'épouvantable inutilité d'expliquer quoi que ce soit à qui que ce soit. Ceux qui savent me devinent, et pour ceux qui ne peuvent ou ne veulent pas comprendre, j'amoncelerais sans fruit les explications.

Ch. Daudet

Comment, par une série d'efforts déterminée, l'artiste peut s'élever à une originalité proportionnelle ;

Comment la poésie touche à la musique par une prosodie dont les racines plongent plus avant dans l'âme humaine que ne l'indique aucune théorie classique ;

Que la poésie française possède une prosodie mystérieuse et méconnue, comme les langues latine et anglaise ;

Pourquoi tout poète, qui ne sait pas au juste combien chaque mot comporte de rimes, est incapable d'exprimer une idée quelconque ;

Que la phrase poétique peut imiter (et par là elle touche à l'art musical et à la science mathématique) la ligne horizontale, la ligne droite ascendante, la ligne droite descendante ; qu'elle peut monter à pic vers le ciel, sans essoufflement, ou descendre perpendiculairement vers l'enfer avec la vélocité de toute pesanteur ; qu'elle peut suivre la spirale, décrire la parabole, ou le zigzag figurant une série d'angles superposés ;

Que la poésie se rattache aux arts de la peinture, de la cuisine et du cosmétique par la possibilité d'exprimer toute sensation de suavité ou d'amer-tume, de béatitude ou d'horreur, par l'accouplement de tel substantif avec tel adjectif, analogue ou contraire ;

Comment, appuyé sur mes principes et disposant de la science que je me charge de lui enseigner en vingt leçons tout homme devient capable de composer une tragédie qui ne sera pas plus sifflée qu'une autre, ou d'aligner un poème de la longueur nécessaire pour être aussi ennuyeux que tout poème épique connu.

Tâche difficile que de s'élever vers cette insensibilité divine ! Car moi-même, malgré les plus louables efforts, je n'ai su résister au désir de plaire à mes contemporains, comme l'attestent en quelques endroits, apposées comme un fard, certaines basses flatteries adressées à la démocratie, et même quelques ordures destinées à me faire pardonner la tristesse de mon sujet. Mais MM. les journalistes s'étant montrés ingrats envers les caresses de ce genre, j'en ai supprimé la trace, autant qu'il m'a été possible, dans cette nouvelle édition.

Je me propose, pour vérifier de nouveau l'excellence de ma méthode, de l'appliquer prochainement à la célébration des jouissances de la dévotion et des ivresses de la gloire militaire, bien que je ne les aie jamais connues.

Note sur les plagiats. – Thomas Gray. Edgar Poe (2 passages). Longfellow (2 passages). Stace. Virgile (tout le morceau d'Andromaque). Eschyle. Victor Hugo.

Projet de préface pour Les Fleurs du Mal

(À fondre peut-être avec d'anciennes notes)

S'il y a quelque gloire à n'être pas compris, ou à ne l'être que très peu, je peux dire sans vanterie que, par ce petit livre, je l'ai acquise et méritée d'un seul coup. Offert plusieurs fois de suite à divers éditeurs qui le époussaient avec horreur, poursuivi et mutilé, en 1857, par suite d'un malentendu fort bizarre, lentement rajeuni, accru et fortifié pendant quelques années de silence, disparu de nouveau, grâce à mon insouciance, ce produit discordant de la Muse des derniers jours, encore avivé par quelques nouvelles touches violentes, ose affronter aujourd'hui, pour la troisième fois, le soleil de la sottise.

Ce n'est pas ma faute ; c'est celle d'un éditeur insistant qui se croit assez fort pour braver le dégoût public. " Ce livre restera sur toute votre vie comme une tache, " me prédisait, dès le commencement, un de mes amis, qui est un grand poète. En effet, toutes mes mésaventures lui ont, jusqu'à présent, donné raison. Mais j'ai un de ces heureux caractères qui tirent une jouissance de la haine, et qui se glorifient dans le mépris. Mon goût diaboliquement passionné de la bêtise me fait trouver des plaisirs particuliers dans les travestissements de la calomnie. Chaste comme le papier, sobre comme l'eau, porté à la dévotion comme une communiant, inoffensif comme une victime, il ne me déplairait pas de passer pour un débauché, un ivrogne, un impie et un assassin.

Mon éditeur prétend qu'il y aurait quelque utilité pour moi, comme pour lui, à expliquer pourquoi et comment j'ai fait ce livre, quels ont été mon but et mes moyens, mon dessein et ma méthode. Un tel travail de critique aurait sans doute quelques chances d'amuser les esprits amoureux de la rhétorique profonde. Pour ceux-là peut-être l'écrirai-je plus tard et le ferai-je tirer à une dizaine d'exemplaires. Mais, à un meilleur examen, ne paraît-il pas évident que ce serait là une besogne tout à fait superflue, pour les uns comme pour les autres, puisque les uns savent ou devinent, et que les autres ne comprendront jamais ? Pour insuffler au peuple l'intelligence d'un objet d'art, j'ai une trop grande peur du ridicule, et je craindrais, en cette matière, d'égaler ces utopistes qui veulent, par un décret, rendre tous les Français riches et vertueux d'un seul coup. Et puis, ma meilleure raison, ma suprême, est que cela m'ennuie et me déplaît. Mène-t-on la foule dans les ateliers de l'habilleuse et du décorateur, dans la loge de la comédienne ? Montre-t-on au public affolé aujourd'hui, indifférent demain, le mécanisme des trucs ? Lui explique-t-on les retouches et les variantes improvisées aux répétitions, et jusqu'à quelle dose l'instinct et la sincérité sont mêlés aux rubriques et au charlatanisme indispensable dans l'amalgame de l'œuvre ? Lui révèle-t-on toutes les loques, les fards, les poulies, les chaînes, les repentirs, les épreuves barbouillées, bref toutes les horreurs qui composent le sanctuaire de l'art ?

D'ailleurs, telle n'est pas aujourd'hui mon humeur. Je n'ai désir ni de démontrer, ni d'étonner, ni d'amuser, ni de persuader. J'ai mes nerfs, mes vapeurs. J'aspire à un repos absolu et à une nuit continue. Chantre des voluptés folles du vin et de l'opium, je n'ai soif que d'une liqueur incon nue sur la terre, et que la pharmaceutique céleste, elle-même, ne pourrait pas m'offrir ; d'une liqueur qui ne contiendrait ni la vitalité, ni la mort, ni l'excitation, ni le néant. Ne rien savoir, ne rien enseigner, ne rien vouloir, ne rien sentir, dormir et encore dormir, tel est aujourd'hui mon unique vœu. Vœu infâme et dégoûtant, mais sincère.

Toutefois, comme un goût supérieur nous apprend à ne pas craindre de nous contredire un peu nous-mêmes, j'ai rassemblé, à la fin de ce livre abominable, les témoignages de sympathie de quelques-uns des hommes que je prise le plus, pour qu'un lecteur impartial en puisse inférer que je ne suis pas absolument digne d'excommunication et qu'ayant su me faire aimer de quelques-uns, mon cœur, quoi qu'en ait dit je ne sais plus quel torchon imprimé, n'a peut-être pas "l'épouvantable laideur de mon visage".

Enfin, par une générosité peu commune, dont MM. les critiques...

Comme l'ignorance va croissant...

Je dénonce moi-même les imitations...

Preface

France is passing through a phase of vulgarity. Paris, center and appeal of universal stupidity. In spite of Molière and Béranger, we would never have believed France to be marching on the path of progress. Questions of art, terra incognita. Great men are fools. My book could have done some good ; I'm not grieved by this possibility. It could have been harmful ; this does not fill me with joy. The aim of poetry. This book was not made for my wives, my daughters, or my sisters.

All the crimes I have recounted have been imputed to me. The base entertainment of hate and contempt. The elegiacs are blackguards. And the word became flesh. For the poet is of no faction. Otherwise, he would be a simple mortal. The Devil. Original sin. Good man. You may be the Tyrant's favorite if you so wish. It is more difficult to love God than to believe in Him ; on the other hand, it is more difficult for people of this century to believe in the Devil than to love him. Everyone makes use of him and no one thinks him real. The sublime subtlety of that Devil.

A soul of my choosing. The decor. Hence novelty. An epigraph. D'Aurevilly. The Renaissance. Gérard de Nerval. We are all hanged or hangable. I had worked in some garbage to please the journalists. They turned out to be a bunch of ingrates.

C. B.

Preface to the Flowers

It is not for my wives, my daughters, or my sisters that this book was written ; nor for the wives, daughters, or sisters of my neighbor. I will leave this analysis to those who mistake good actions for beautiful language.

I know well that the lover fascinated by a rich, beautiful style exposes his body to the hate of the masses. But no human respect, no false prudishness, no coalition, no universal suffrage will restrain me from speaking

the incomparable dialect of this century, nor from confounding ink with virtue.

Since time immemorial the best poets have shared the most flowered spaces of the poetic realm. To me it seemed pleasing, and more agreeable than difficult, to extract the beauty of Evil. This book, fundamentally useless and absolutely innocent, was made with no other goal than to provide me with some light entertainment and indulge my taste for obstacles.

Some have told me that poetry can do wrong ; this does not fill me with joy. Others – good souls all of them – that it may do good ; and I'm not grieved by this possibility. The fear of some and the hope of others surprised me in equal measure, and did nothing but prove yet again that this century has unlearned the classical concepts of literature.

Despite the assistance provided by some celebrated oafs to man's innate predilection for humbug, I would never have thought it possible that our country could march on the path of progress with such speed. This world of ours has acquired a thick film of vulgarity that imbues a spiritual man with all the violence of passion. But happy are the shells which the poison has not entered.

Initially, I had the intention of answering several critics and explaining at the same time some very simple questions totally obscured by modernity's glare. What is poetry ? What is its aim ? What is the distinction between the Beautiful and the Good ? What could be the Beautiful in Evil ? I could have averred that rhythm and rhyme fulfill man's immortal need for monotony, symmetry and surprise. I could have spoken at length on the adaptation of style to the subject, of the vanity and danger of inspiration, and so forth and so on. But I suffered from the imprudence of reading this morning several papers. Suddenly an indolence not unlike the weight of twenty atmospheres came over me, and my actions ceased in the face of the horrific inutility of explaining anything to anyone. Those who knew me were able to guess why. And for those who cannot or do not want to understand, any explanations would accumulate in vain into a heap of misconceptions.

III

How can an artist, through a sustained series of efforts, attain originality commensurate with his talent ?

How can poetry become music through prosody whose roots dig farther into the human soul than any classical theory might claim ?

How does French poetry possess a little-known and mysterious system of prosody like that of Latin or English ?

Why are all poets ignorant of how words rightly incorporate rhyme unable to express any ideas ?

How is it that poetry (in this way akin to music and mathematics) can imitate a horizontal line, a straight line ascending, or a descending straight line ? How can it rise in steep path to the sky without shortness of breath, or fall perpendicularly towards hell with the velocity of all gravity ? How can it follow a spiral, trace a parabola or the zigzag of superimposed angles ?

How does poetry relate to the art of painting, of cooking, of cosmetics by expressing every sensation of sweetness or bitterness, of beatitude or horror by the coupling of a certain noun with a certain adjective, analogue or opposite ?

How is it that every man, reliant on my principles and availing himself of the knowledge which I plan to teach him in twenty lessons, can compose a tragedy no more lustily boozed than any other or structure a poem of sufficient length to be as dull and tedious as all other epic poems ?

Quite a task, rising up against all this divine insensitivity ! More so due to the fact that I, despite numerous laudable attempts, could not resist the desire to please my contemporaries, as shown in various places highlighted like rouge, certain base flatteries addressed to her, Democracy, and even some other twaddle excusing the despondency of my subject matter. But my dearest gentlemen of the press were ungrateful for such caresses, and I omitted as much as possible in this new edition the traces of this ingratitude.

To verify once more the excellence of my method, I have suggested devoting myself in the future to a celebration of the joys of the dedication and intoxication of military glory, even if they are not known to me.

Notes on my plagiary : Thomas Gray ; Edgar Allan Poe (2 passages) ; Longfellow (2 passages) ; Statius ; Virgil (the whole part of Andromache) ; Aeschylus ; Victor Hugo.

Project on a preface to the Flowers of Evil

(perhaps to be incorporated into previous notes)

If there is some glory in not being understood or in being understood just a little, I can say unboastfully that with this slender tome I have obtained and deserved such fame in one fell swoop. Offered numerous times to a series of publishers, all of whom shoved it away in horror ; harassed

and mutilated, in 1857, following a rather bizarre misunderstanding, slowly rejuvenated, sharpened and strengthened in the course of many years of silence ; having disappeared yet again due to my insouciance, this discordant product of the Muse of the last days, revived again by a few new violent strokes, dares today to confront the sun a third time with its inanity.

This is not any fault of mine. The person to blame is the publisher insisting that he thought himself strong enough to brave the public's dis-taste. "This book will remain forever like a blemish on your life," one of my friends, an important poet, said to me from the very beginning. As it were, all my misadventures up to that point had affirmed the correctness of his observation. But I possess one of those happy personalities which derive a certain pleasure from hate, and which are glorified in their contempt. My taste so wickedly bent towards stupidity coerced me into finding particular pleasure in the travesties of calumny. As chaste as a sheet of white paper, as sober as water, as devoted to devotion as a communicant, as inoffensive as a victim, I do not mind passing for a debauched drunk, an impious lout, or an assassin.

My publisher continues to pretend that I, like he, would gain some benefit from explaining why and how I created this book, what my means and ends were, and from detailing my design and method. A critical work in that vein would surely amuse those minds enamored with profound rhetoric. For those dear souls I will write something later, perhaps, and have it printed in about ten copies. But, upon further scrutiny, doesn't this all seem superfluous and wasteful since some will know or guess its essence and others will never understand it ? I am too afraid of ridicule to insufflate to the masses the intelligence of a work of art. And I fear that I too greatly accommodated those Utopians who want by some immediate and magical decree to render all Frenchmen rich and virtuous.

And then, my most important reason, that most important reason of all : such acts bore and displease me. Should one then lead the rabble into the dresser's and decorator's studio, or the actor's box ? Should one reveal the tricks and levers of our gadgetry to the crowd so impassioned today and so indifferent tomorrow ? Should one explain to them the edits and daubs and the variants improvised at rehearsals, or to what extent sincerity and instinct combine under the banner of indispensable charlatanism ? Should they know of all the wrecks, makeup, pulleys, chains, regrets, and smears – in short, all the horrors that compose the sanctuary of art ?

Besides, I'm not in the mood for all this today. I have no desire to demonstrate, surprise, amuse, or persuade. I have my nerves and my erratic whims. My goal is absolute rest and endless night. Bard of the mad pleasures of wine and opium, I thirst for nothing but a liqueur unknown

on earth which even the celestial pharmacy could not provide me. A liqueur containing neither vitality, nor death, nor excitation, nor nothingness. To know nothing, to teach nothing, to want nothing, to sense nothing, to sleep, and then to sleep more, this is today my one and only pledge. An infamous and disgusting pledge, but a sincere one.

Nevertheless, as superior taste instructs us not to be afraid of contradicting ourselves a bit, I have gathered at the end of this abominable book testimonies of sympathy on the part of certain men whom I value most. In this way, the impartial reader may see that I am not absolutely deserving of excommunication and that, having learned to make myself loved by some, my heart, although I no longer know on what printed cloth, does not perhaps have the "horrific ugliness of my face."

Finally, by unmatched generosity, whereby my dear critics ...

As ignorance, more and more so ...

I myself denounce all imitations...

Préface à cette édition

Ce livre regroupe les poèmes de toutes les éditions Des 'Fleurs Du Mal' de 1857, 1861 & 1868, plus tous les nouveaux poèmes Des 'Epaves' condamnés par la censure en 1857.

Les poèmes suivent l'ordre de l'édition originale de 1861, ainsi que l'ordre Des éditions de 1857 & 1868. Dans la section finale du livre se trouvent 'Les Épaves'.

L'édition de 1857

La poésie de Baudelaire était connue bien avant la parution les Fleurs Du Mal en 1857. Quelques poèmes épars avaient été publiés dans Des journaux et Des revues, et Baudelaire avait assis sa notoriété en récitant certains de ses macabres vers à voix haute. Il avait plusieurs fois annoncé la publication de ses poèmes sous Le titre 'Les Lesbiennes' ou 'Les Limbes'. Le titre définitif ne sera choisi qu'en 1855, suggéré par son ami Hippolyte Babou et la publication ne se fera qu'en 1857 lorsque son ami Auguste Poulet-Malassis imprimera la 1^o version de ses 'Fleurs Maldives'. (Baudelaire leur rendra hommage dans as dédicace).

'Les Fleurs Du Mal' apparaissent sur les étagères Des librairies Parisiennes en juin 1857 : 1 100 exemplaires furent imprimés et destinés à la vente plus 20 'hors commerce' imprimés sur papier de luxe. Moins d'un mois plus tard, Le Gouvernement français engagea une action en justice contre l'auteur et la maison d'édition, les accusant d'outrage aux bonnes moeurs.

Le 20 aout une court française décida de supprimer 6 poèmes pour raison morale. Le procès fut sensation et l'été suivant l'édition originale Des Fleurs Du Mal fut épuisée.

L'édition de 1861

Baudelaire ne cessa de composer de nouveaux poèmes à ajouter à l'édition originale pour justifier une impression quasi constante parmi ces poèmes se trouvent 'Le Cygne' et 'Le Voyage', de nos jours considérés comme Des chefs d'œuvre. La 2^e édition des Fleurs Du Mal parue en librairie à Paris début Février 1861 (prix 3f) : 1 500 exemplaires furent imprimés plus quelques exemplaires hors commerce sur papier de Luxe. Cette édition, considérée comme définitive ne comprenait pas les 6 poèmes censurés par Le Gvt Fr, mais contenait les 'Tableaux Parisiens' ainsi qu'un portrait de l'auteur par Félix Bracquemond.

"Les Épaves" 1866

Baudelaire était un écrivain au talent reconnu mais son succès lui fournit plus de notoriété que de revenus. En 1864 il démenagea à Bruxelles, principalement pour échapper à ses créanciers, où il retrouva son ami l'éditeur A. Poulet-Malassis. Une nouvelle édition, tirée à 216 exemplaires plus 10 exemplaires hors commerce sorti regroupant 'Les Epaves' et les 6 poèmes censurés, comprenant 33 poèmes, 1 intro et un portrait par Félicien Rops.

L'édition de 1866 fut le dernier ouvrage supervisé par l'auteur lui-même, qui souffrit d'une attaque de démence en mars 1866 et mourut l'année suivante après être retourné à Paris.

L'édition de 1868

Après la mort de Baudelaire le 31 aout 1867, les droits de ses œuvres furent reversés à sa mère viellissante, ce qui peut sembler ironique vu la relation qu'il entretenait avec elle. Effrayés & mécontents à l'idée que son œuvre puisse disparaître, ses amis poussèrent sa mère à publier une toute dernière édition.

Cette dernière publication comprenait Les Fleurs Du Mal, Les Paradis Artificiels, Les Traductions D'Edgar Allan Poe, ses poèmes en prose, ses critiques d'art et d'autres écrits divers. Mais les 6 poèmes censurés en 1857 n'y sont pas.

Cette édition de 1868 fut la seule autorisée par les ayants-droits de Baudelaire, jusqu'à ce que son œuvre tombe dans le domaine public en 1917.

Certains puristes désapprouvent la manières dont les poèmes choisis et ainsi réunis altèrent la ‘structure secrète’ de l’édition de 1861.

Preface to this edition

This book contains poems from all editions of “Les Fleurs du mal” - the 1857, 1861, and 1868 editions - plus all new poems from Les Épaves.

Poems banned by censorship in 1857 are denoted as “(1857)” in title ; poems added in 1861, 1866 and 1868 are denoted by “(1861)”, “(1866)” and “(1868)” in title, respectively.

Poems follow the order of 1861 edition of LFDM, with poems from 1857 and 1868 editions added in order where appropriate ; poems added in 1866’s Les Épaves are contained in final section of the book, called “Les Épaves”.

About 1857 version

Baudelaire’s poetry was well-known long before it was collected in Les Fleurs du mal in 1857. A few scattered poems had appeared in journals and reviews, and Baudelaire had also achieved notoriety reciting his lurid verses aloud. Several times he announced that he was going to publish a collection of poems, giving titles such as “Les Lesbiennes” and “Les Limbes”. However, the definitive title was not to come until 1855, when “fleurs du mal” was suggested by his friend Hippolyte Babou, and publication was not to come until 1857, when his friend Auguste Poulet-Malassis printed the first edition of “ces fleurs maldives,” as Baudelaire wrote in the dedication.

Les Fleurs du mal appeared on the bookshelves of Paris in June 1857. Eleven hundred copies had been printed for sale, with an additional twenty copies hors commerce printed on fine paper. Within a month, the French government initiated an action against the author and the publisher, accusing them of outrages to public morality. On August 20th, a French court acknowledged the literary merit of the book as a whole but demanded that six poems be deleted on moral grounds. In a pattern now familiar, however, the trial only served to create a sensation, and by the following summer the initial printing of Les Fleurs du mal was sold out.

About 1861 version

Anxious to keep his poems in print, Baudelaire agitated for several years for another edition to be published. In addition, he composed new poems to add to the collection, including several works such as "Le Cygne" and "Le Voyage" which are today regarded as masterpieces.

The second edition of *Les Fleurs du mal* entered the bookshops of Paris in the first week of February, 1861. Readers spent three francs to purchase the new edition, of which fifteen hundred copies had been printed (plus a few hors commerce on fine paper). This edition, now considered definitive, lacked the six poems censored by the French government but contained a new subdivision ("Tableaux parisiens"), thirty-five new poems, and a portrait of the author by Félix Bracquemond.

About 1866 "Les Épaves"

Although Baudelaire had become increasingly successful as a writer, his success brought him more notoriety than income. In 1864 he moved from Paris to Brussels, largely to evade creditors. Earlier his friend and publisher Auguste Poulet-Malassis had also moved to Brussels to escape legal trouble, so together the two decided to put out another book of Baudelaire's verse.

This new work was not intended to be a comprehensive collection. It was, instead, a collection of incidental and recent verse - hence the title "épaves". It also included the six poems censored from the first edition of *Les Fleurs du mal*. Published in February 1866 in an edition of only two hundred and sixty copies (plus ten hors commerce), *Les Épaves* contained twenty-three poems, an introduction by Poulet-Malassis, and a frontispiece of the author by Félicien Rops.

It was the last book overseen by Baudelaire himself, who suffered a debilitating stroke in March, 1866, and died the following year back in Paris.

About 1868 version

After the death of Baudelaire on August 31, 1867, the rights to the poet's work reverted - ironically enough, given his relationship with her - to his aging mother. His friends, however, were not content to allow Baudelaire to fade into nothingness, and thus induced his mother to allow them

to produce a definitive edition of his works.

Subsequently, Baudelaire's close friends the poet Théodore de Banville and the bibliophile Charles Asselineau sold the rights to his complete works to the publisher Michel Lévy. The complete works were to include *Les Fleurs du mal*, *Les Paradis artificiels*, Baudelaire's translations of Edgar Allan Poe, as well as prose poems, art criticism, and miscellaneous writings.

In December 1868 the third edition of *Les Fleurs du mal* – volume 1 of the poet's complete works – went on sale in Paris. Along with an introduction by the poet Théophile Gautier, this new edition contained all the poems of the 1861 edition, eleven poems from *Les Épaves*, plus a few others. (It lacked, however, the six poems censored from the first edition, since these were still illegal to print in France.) This 1868 edition was the only one authorized by Baudelaire's estate until his work fell into the public domain in 1917. However, though Banville and Asselineau certainly meant well in assembling and editing the work, scholars today generally disagree with some of the choices made by the two friends, in particular with several of the poems they chose to include and with the way in which these poems altered the "secret architecture" of the 1861 edition.

Dédicace

Dédicace

Au poète impeccable
Au parfait magicien ès lettres françaises
A mon très-cher et très-vénéré
 Maître et ami
 Théophile Gautier
 Avec les sentiments
De la plus profonde humilité
 Je dédie
 Ces fleurs maladives

Ch. Baudelaire

Dedication

To the impeccable poet
To the perfect magician of French letters
To my very dear and very revered
 Master and friend
 Théophile Gautier
 With sentiments
Of the most profound humility
 I dedicate
These unhealthy flowers
 C.B.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Au Lecteur

Au Lecteur

La sottise, l'erreur, le péché, la lésine,
Occupent nos esprits et travaillent nos corps,
Et nous alimentons nos aimables remords,
Comme les mendiants nourrissent leur vermine.
Nos péchés sont têtus, nos repentirs sont lâches ;
Nous nous faisons payer grassement nos aveux,
Et nous rentrons gaiement dans le chemin bourbeux,
Croyant par de vils pleurs laver toutes nos taches.
Sur l'oreiller du mal c'est Satan Trismégiste
Qui berce longuement notre esprit enchanté,
Et le riche métal de notre volonté
Est tout vaporisé par ce savant chimiste.
C'est le Diable qui tient les fils qui nous remuent !
Aux objets répugnans nous trouvons des appas ;
Chaque jour vers l'Enfer nous descendons d'un pas,
Sans horreur, à travers des ténèbres qui puent.
Ainsi qu'un débauché pauvre qui baise et mange
Le sein martyrisé d'une antique catin,
Nous volons au passage un plaisir clandestin
Que nous pressons bien fort comme une vieille orange.
Serré, fourmillant, comme un million d'helminthes,
Dans nos cerveaux ribote un peuple de Démons,
Et, quand nous respirons, la Mort dans nos poumons
Descend, fleuve invisible, avec de sourdes plaintes.
Si le viol, le poison, le poignard, l'incendie,
N'ont pas encor brodé de leurs plaisants dessins
Le canevas banal de nos piteux destins,
C'est que notre âme, hélas ! n'est pas assez hardie.

Mais parmi les chacals, les panthères, les lices,
Les singes, les scorpions, les vautours, les serpents,
Les monstres glapissants, hurlants, grognants, rampants,
Dans la ménagerie infâme de nos vices,
Il en est un plus laid, plus méchant, plus immonde !
Quoiqu'il ne pousse ni grands gestes ni grands cris,
Il ferait volontiers de la terre un débris
Et dans un bâillement avalerait le monde ;
C'est l'Ennui ! L'oeil chargé d'un pleur involontaire,
Il rêve d'échafauds en fumant son houka.
Tu le connais, lecteur, ce monstre délicat,
– Hypocrite lecteur, – mon semblable, – mon frère !

– Charles Baudelaire

To the Reader

Folly, error, sin, avarice
Occupy our minds and labor our bodies,
And we feed our pleasant remorse
As beggars nourish their vermin.
Our sins are obstinate, our repentance is faint ;
We exact a high price for our confessions,
And we gaily return to the miry path,
Believing that base tears wash away all our stains.
On the pillow of evil Satan, Trismegist,
Incessantly lulls our enchanted minds,
And the noble metal of our will
Is wholly vaporized by this wise alchemist.
The Devil holds the strings which move us !
In repugnant things we discover charms ;
Every day we descend a step further toward Hell,
Without horror, through gloom that stinks.
Like a penniless rake who with kisses and bites
Tortures the breast of an old prostitute,
We steal as we pass by a clandestine pleasure
That we squeeze very hard like a dried up orange.
Serried, swarming, like a million maggots,
A legion of Demons carouses in our brains,

And when we breathe, Death, that unseen river,
 Descends into our lungs with muffled wails.
 If rape, poison, daggers, arson
 Have not yet embroidered with their pleasing designs
 The banal canvas of our pitiable lives,
 It is because our souls have not enough boldness.
 But among the jackals, the panthers, the bitch hounds,
 The apes, the scorpions, the vultures, the serpents,
 The yelping, howling, growling, crawling monsters,
 In the filthy menagerie of our vices,
 There is one more ugly, more wicked, more filthy !
 Although he makes neither great gestures nor great cries,
 He would willingly make of the earth a shambles
 And, in a yawn, swallow the world ;
 He is Ennui ! – His eye watery as though with tears,
 He dreams of scaffolds as he smokes his hookah pipe.
 You know him reader, that refined monster,
 – Hypocritical reader, – my fellow, – my brother !

– William Aggeler, 1954

To the Reader

Folly and error, avarice and vice,
 Employ our souls and waste our bodies' force.
 As mangey beggars incubate their lice,
 We nourish our innocuous remorse.
 Our sins are stubborn, craven our repentance.
 For our weak vows we ask excessive prices.
 Trusting our tears will wash away the sentence,
 We sneak off where the muddy road entices.
 Cradled in evil, that Thrice-Great Magician,
 The Devil, rocks our souls, that can't resist ;
 And the rich metal of our own volition
 Is vaporised by that sage alchemist.
 The Devil pulls the strings by which we're worked :
 By all revolting objects lured, we slink
 Hellwards ; each day down one more step we're jerked
 Feeling no horror, through the shades that stink.

Just as a lustful pauper bites and kisses
The scarred and shrivelled breast of an old whore,
We steal, along the roadside, furtive blisses,
Squeezing them, like stale oranges, for more.
Packed tight, like hives of maggots, thickly seething
Within our brains a host of demons surges.
Deep down into our lungs at every breathing,
Death flows, an unseen river, moaning dirges.
If rape or arson, poison, or the knife
Has wove no pleasing patterns in the stuff
Of this drab canvas we accept as life –
It is because we are not bold enough!
Amongst the jackals, leopards, mongrels, apes,
Snakes, scorpions, vultures, that with hellish din,
Squeal, roar, writhe, gambol, crawl, with monstrous shapes,
In each man's foul menagerie of sin –
There's one more damned than all. He never gambols,
Nor crawls, nor roars, but, from the rest withdrawn,
Gladly of this whole earth would make a shambles
And swallow up existence with a yawn...
Boredom! He smokes his hookah, while he dreams
Of gibbets, weeping tears he cannot smother.
You know this dainty monster, too, it seems –
Hypocrite reader! – You! – My twin! – My brother!

– Roy Campbell, 1952



SPLEEN ET IDÉAL
SPLEEN AND IDEAL

Bénédiction

Bénédiction

Lorsque, par un décret des puissances suprêmes,
Le Poète apparaît en ce monde ennuyé,
Sa mère épouvantée et pleine de blasphèmes
Crispe ses poings vers Dieu, qui la prend en pitié :
– « Ah ! que n'ai-je mis bas tout un noeud de vipères,
Plutôt que de nourrir cette dérision !
Maudite soit la nuit aux plaisirs éphémères
Où mon ventre a conçu mon expiation !
Puisque tu m'as choisie entre toutes les femmes
Pour être le dégoût de mon triste mari,
Et que je ne puis pas rejeter dans les flammes,
Comme un billet d'amour, ce monstre rabougrí,
Je ferai rejoaillir ta haine qui m'accable
Sur l'instrument maudit de tes méchancetés,
Et je tordrai si bien cet arbre misérable,
Qu'il ne pourra pousser ses boutons empestés ! »
Elle ravale ainsi l'écume de sa haine,
Et, ne comprenant pas les desseins éternels,
Elle-même prépare au fond de la Géhenne
Les bûchers consacrés aux crimes maternels.
Pourtant, sous la tutelle invisible d'un Ange,
L'Enfant déshérité s'enivre de soleil
Et dans tout ce qu'il boit et dans tout ce qu'il mange
Retrouve l'ambroisie et le nectar vermeil.
Il joue avec le vent, cause avec le nuage,
Et s'enivre en chantant du chemin de la croix ;
Et l'Esprit qui le suit dans son pèlerinage
Pleure de le voir gai comme un oiseau des bois.

Tous ceux qu'il veut aimer l'observent avec crainte,
Ou bien, s'enhardissant de sa tranquillité,
Cherchent à qui saura lui tirer une plainte,
Et font sur lui l'essai de leur férocité.
Dans le pain et le vin destinés à sa bouche
Ils mêlent de la cendre avec d'impurs crachats ;
Avec hypocrisie ils jettent ce qu'il touche,
Et s'accusent d'avoir mis leurs pieds dans ses pas.
Sa femme va criant sur les places publiques :
« Puisqu'il me trouve assez belle pour m'adorer,
Je ferai le métier des idoles antiques,
Et comme elles je veux me faire redorer ;
Et je me souîlerai de nard, d'encens, de myrrhe,
De génuflexions, de viandes et de vins,
Pour savoir si je puis dans un coeur qui m'admirer
Usurper en riant les hommages divins !
Et, quand je m'ennuierai de ces farces impies,
Je poserai sur lui ma frêle et forte main ;
Et mes ongles, pareils aux ongles des harpies,
Sauront jusqu'à son coeur se frayer un chemin.
Comme un tout jeune oiseau qui tremble et qui palpite,
J'arracherai ce coeur tout rouge de son sein,
Et, pour rassasier ma bête favorite
Je le lui jetterai par terre avec dédain ! »
Vers le Ciel, où son oeil voit un trône splendide,
Le Poète serein lève ses bras pieux
Et les vastes éclairs de son esprit lucide
Lui dérobent l'aspect des peuples furieux :
– « Soyez béni, mon Dieu, qui donnez la souffrance
Comme un divin remède à nos impuretés
Et comme la meilleure et la plus pure essence
Qui prépare les forts aux saintes voluptés !
Je sais que vous gardez une place au Poète
Dans les rangs bienheureux des saintes Légions,
Et que vous l'invitez à l'éternelle fête
Des Trônes, des Vertus, des Dominations.
Je sais que la douleur est la noblesse unique
Où ne mordront jamais la terre et les enfers,
Et qu'il faut pour tresser ma couronne mystique
Imposer tous les temps et tous les univers.

Mais les bijoux perdus de l'antique Palmyre,
Les métaux inconnus, les perles de la mer,
Par votre main montés, ne pourraient pas suffire
A ce beau diadème éblouissant et clair ;
Car il ne sera fait que de pure lumière,
Puisée au foyer saint des rayons primitifs,
Et dont les yeux mortels, dans leur splendeur entière,
Ne sont que des miroirs obscurcis et plaintifs ! »

– Charles Baudelaire

Benediction

When, after a decree of the supreme powers,
The Poet is brought forth in this wearisome world,
His mother terrified and full of blasphemies
Raises her clenched fist to God, who pities her :
– “Ah ! would that I had spawned a whole knot of vipers
Rather than to have fed this derisive object !
Accursed be the night of ephemeral joy
When my belly conceived this, my expiation !
Since of all women You have chosen me
To be repugnant to my sorry spouse,
And since I cannot cast this misshapen monster
Into the flames, like an old love letter,
I shall spew the hatred with which you crush me down
On the cursed instrument of your malevolence,
And twist so hard this wretched tree
That it cannot put forth its pestilential buds !”
Thus she gulps down the froth of her hatred,
And not understanding the eternal designs,
Herself prepares deep down in Gehenna
The pyre reserved for a mother's crimes.
However, protected by an unseen Angel,
The outcast child is enrapt by the sun,
And in all that he eats, in everything he drinks,
He finds sweet ambrosia and rubiate nectar.
He cavorts with the wind, converses with the clouds,
And singing, transported, goes the way of the cross ;

And the Angel who follows him on pilgrimage
Weeps to see him as carefree as a bird.
All those whom he would love watch him with fear,
Or, emboldened by his tranquility,
Emulously attempt to wring a groan from him
And test on him their inhumanity.
With the bread and the wine intended for his mouth
They mix ashes and foul spittle,
And, hypocrites, cast away what he touches
And feel guilty if they have trod in his footprints.
His wife goes about the market-places
Crying : "Since he finds me fair enough to adore,
I shall imitate the idols of old,
And like them I want to be regilded ;
I shall get drunk with spikenard, incense, myrrh,
And with genuflections, viands and wine,
To see if laughingly I can usurp
In an admiring heart the homage due to God !
And when I tire of these impious jokes,
I shall lay upon him my strong, my dainty hand ;
And my nails, like harpies' talons,
Will cut a path straight to his heart.
That heart which flutters like a fledgling bird
I'll tear, all bloody, from his breast,
And scornfully I'll throw it in the dust
To sate the hunger of my favorite hound !"
To Heav'n, where his eye sees a radiant throne,
Piously, the Poet, serene, raises his arms,
And the dazzling brightness of his illumined mind
Hides from his sight the raging mob :
— "Praise be to You, O God, who send us suffering
As a divine remedy for our impurities
And as the best and the purest essence
To prepare the strong for holy ecstasies !
I know that you reserve a place for the Poet
Within the blessed ranks of the holy Legions,
And that you invite him to the eternal feast
Of the Thrones, the Virtues, and the Dominations.
I know that suffering is the sole nobility

Which earth and hell shall never mar,
And that to weave my mystic crown,
You must tax every age and every universe.
But the lost jewels of ancient Palmyra,
The unfound metals, the pearls of the sea,
Set by Your own hand, would not be adequate
For that diadem of dazzling splendor,
For that crown will be made of nothing but pure light
Drawn from the holy source of primal rays,
Whereof our mortal eyes, in their fullest brightness,
Are no more than tarnished, mournful mirrors!"

– William Aggeler, 1954

Benediction

When by an edict of the powers supreme
A poet's born into this world's drab space,
His mother starts, in horror, to blaspheme
Clenching her fists at God, who grants her grace.
"Would that a nest of vipers I'd aborted
Rather than this absurd abomination.
Cursed be the night of pleasures vainly sported
On which my womb conceived my expiation.
Since of all women I am picked by You
To be my Mate's aversion and his shame :
And since I cannot, like a billet-doux,
Consign this stunted monster to the flame,
I'll turn the hatred, which You load on me,
On the curst tool through which You work your spite,
And twist and stunt this miserable tree
Until it cannot burgeon for the blight."
She swallows down the white froth of her ire
And, knowing naught of schemes that are sublime,
Deep in Gehenna, starts to lay the pyre
That's consecrated to maternal crime.
Yet with an unseen Angel for protector
The outcast waif grows drunken with the sun,
And finds ambrosia, too, and rosy nectar

In all he eats or drinks, suspecting none.
He sings upon his Via Crucis, plays
With winds, and with the clouds exchanges words :
The Spirit following his pilgrim-ways
Weeps to behold him gayer than the birds.
Those he would love avoid him as in fear,
Or, growing bold to see one so resigned,
Compete to draw from him a cry or tear,
And test on him the fierceness of their kind.
In food or drink that's destined for his taste
They mix saliva foul with cinders black,
Drop what he's touched with hypocrite distaste,
And blame themselves for walking in his track.
His wife goes crying in the public way
– "Since fair enough he finds me to adore,
The part of ancient idols I will play
And gild myself with coats of molten ore.
I will get drunk on incense, myrrh, and nard,
On genuflexions, meat, and beady wine,
Out of his crazed and wondering regard,
I'll laugh to steal prerogatives divine.
When by such impious farces bored at length,
I'll place my frail strong hand on him, and start,
With nails like those of harpies in their strength,
To plough myself a pathway to his heart.
Like a young bird that trembles palpitating,
I'll wrench his heart, all crimson, from his chest,
And to my favourite beast, his hunger sating,
Will fling it in the gutter with a jest."
Skyward, to where he sees a Throne blaze splendid,
The pious Poet lifts his arms on high,
And the vast lightnings of his soul extended
Blot out the crowds and tumults from his eye.
"Blessed be You, O God, who give us pain,
As cure for our impurity and wrong –
Essence that primes the stalwart to sustain
Seraphic raptures that were else too strong.
I know that for the Poet You've a post,
Where the blest Legions take their ranks and stations,

Invited to the revels with the host
Of Virtues, Powers, and Thrones, and Dominations
That grief's the sole nobility, I know it,
Where neither Earth nor Hell can make attacks,
And that, to deck my mystic crown of poet,
All times and universes paid their tax.
But all the gems from old Palmyra lost,
The ores unmixed, the pearls of the abyss,
Set by Your hand, could not suffice the cost
Of such a blazing diadem as this.
Because it will be only made of light,
Drawn from the hearth of the essential rays,
To which our mortal eyes, when burning bright,
Are but the tarnished mirrors that they glaze."

– Roy Campbell, 1952



L'Albatros (1861)

L'Albatros

Souvent, pour s'amuser, les hommes d'équipage
Prennent des albatros, vastes oiseaux des mers,
Qui suivent, indolents compagnons de voyage,
Le navire glissant sur les gouffres amers.

À peine les ont-ils déposés sur les planches,
Que ces rois de l'azur, maladroits et honteux,
LaisSENT piteusement leurs grandes ailes blanches
Comme des avirons traîner à côté d'eux.

Ce voyageur ailé, comme il est gauche et veule !
Lui, naguère si beau, qu'il est comique et laid !
L'un agace son bec avec un brûle-gueule,
L'autre mime, en boitant, l'infirme qui volait !

Le Poète est semblable au prince des nuées
Qui hante la tempête et se rit de l'archer ;
Exilé sur le sol au milieu des huées,
Ses ailes de géant l'empêchent de marcher.

– Charles Baudelaire

The Albatross

Often, to amuse themselves, the men of a crew
Catch albatrosses, those vast sea birds
That indolently follow a ship
As it glides over the deep, briny sea.

Scarcely have they placed them on the deck
Than these kings of the sky, clumsy, ashamed,
Pathetically let their great white wings

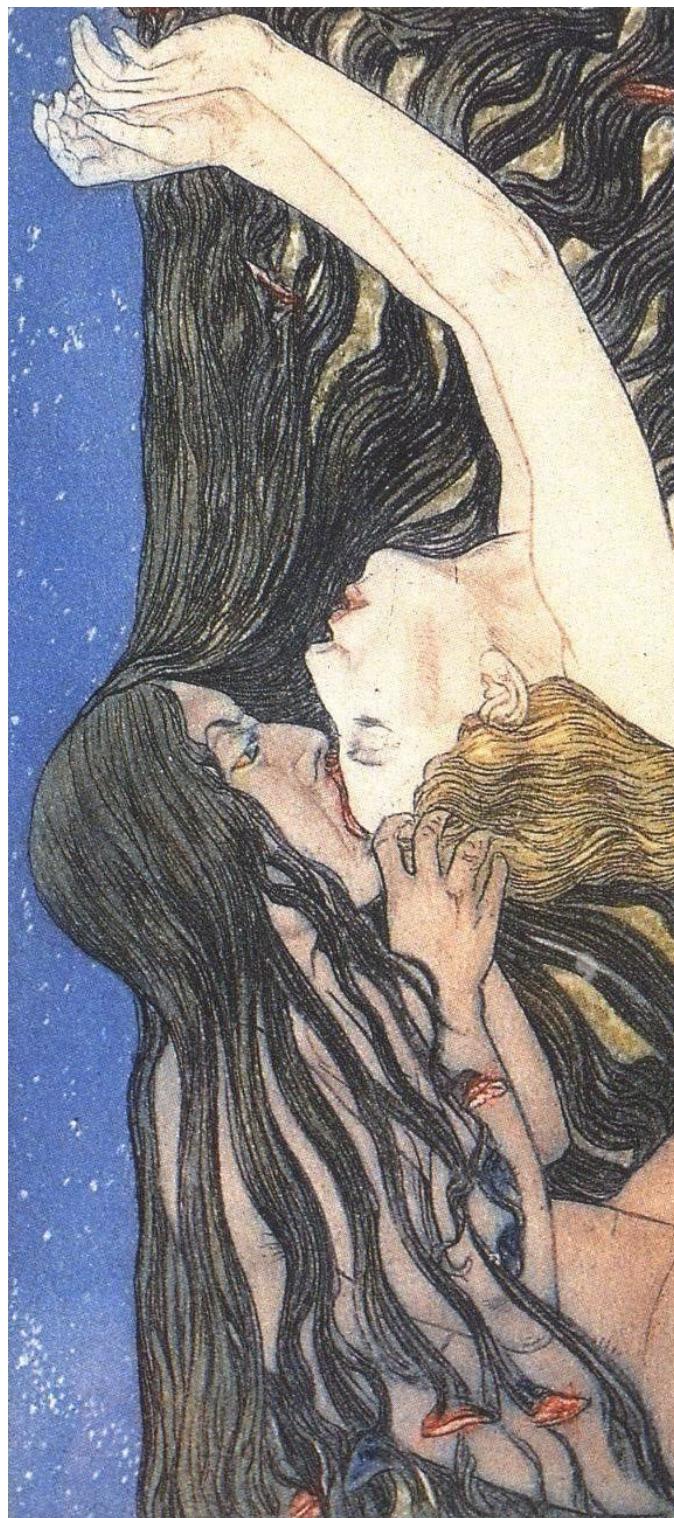
Drag beside them like oars.
That winged voyager, how weak and gauche he is,
So beautiful before, now comic and ugly !
One man worries his beak with a stubby clay pipe ;
Another limps, mimics the cripple who once flew !
The poet resembles this prince of cloud and sky
Who frequents the tempest and laughs at the Bowman ;
When exiled on the earth, the butt of hoots and jeers,
His giant wings prevent him from walking.

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Albatross

Sometimes for sport the men of loafing crews
Snare the great albatrosses of the deep,
The indolent companions of their cruise
As through the bitter vastitudes they sweep.
Scarce have they fished aboard these airy kings
When helpless on such unaccustomed floors,
They piteously droop their huge white wings
And trail them at their sides like drifting oars.
How comical, how ugly, and how meek
Appears this soarer of celestial snows !
One, with his pipe, teases the golden beak,
One, limping, mocks the cripple as he goes.
The Poet, like this monarch of the clouds,
Despising archers, rides the storm elate.
But, stranded on the earth to jeering crowds,
The great wings of the giant baulk his gait.

– Roy Campbell, 1952



Élévation

Élévation

Au-dessus des étangs, au-dessus des vallées,
Des montagnes, des bois, des nuages, des mers,
Par delà le soleil, par delà les éthers,
Par delà les confins des sphères étoilées,
Mon esprit, tu te meus avec agilité,
Et, comme un bon nageur qui se pâme dans l'onde,
Tu sillones gaiement l'immensité profonde
Avec une indicible et mâle volupté.
Envole-toi bien loin de ces miasmes morbides ;
Va te purifier dans l'air supérieur,
Et bois, comme une pure et divine liqueur,
Le feu clair qui remplit les espaces limpides.
Derrière les ennuis et les vastes chagrins
Qui chargent de leur poids l'existence brumeuse,
Heureux celui qui peut d'une aile vigoureuse
S'élancer vers les champs lumineux et sereins ;
Celui dont les pensers, comme des alouettes,
Vers les cieux le matin prennent un libre essor,
– Qui plane sur la vie, et comprend sans effort
Le langage des fleurs et des choses muettes !

– Charles Baudelaire

Elevation

Above the lakes, above the vales,
The mountains and the woods, the clouds, the seas,
Beyond the sun, beyond the ether,

Beyond the confines of the starry spheres,
My soul, you move with ease,
And like a strong swimmer in rapture in the wave
You wing your way blithely through boundless space
With virile joy unspeakable.
Fly far, far away from this baneful miasma
And purify yourself in the celestial air,
Drink the ethereal fire of those limpid regions
As you would the purest of heavenly nectars.
Beyond the vast sorrows and all the vexations
That weigh upon our lives and obscure our vision,
Happy is he who can with his vigorous wing
Soar up towards those fields luminous and serene,
He whose thoughts, like skylarks,
Toward the morning sky take flight
– Who hovers over life and understands with ease
The language of flowers and silent things !

– William Aggeler, 1954

Elevation

Above the valleys and the lakes : beyond
The woods, seas, clouds and mountain-ranges : far
Above the sun, the aethers silver-swanned
With nebulae, and the remotest star,
My spirit ! with agility you move
Like a strong swimmer with the seas to fight,
Through the blue vastness furrowing your groove
With an ineffable and male delight.
Far from these foetid marshes, be made pure
In the pure air of the superior sky,
And drink, like some most exquisite liqueur,
The fire that fills the lucid realms on high.
Beyond where cares or boredom hold dominion,
Which charge our fogged existence with their spleen,
Happy is he who with a stalwart pinion
Can seek those fields so shining and serene :
Whose thoughts, like larks, rise on the freshening breeze

Who fans the morning with his tameless wings,
Skims over life, and understands with ease
The speech of flowers and other voiceless things.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Correspondances

Correspondances

La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers
LaisSENT parfois sortir de confuses paroles ;
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.
Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent
Dans une ténèbreuse et profonde unité,
Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarté,
Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent.
Il est des parfums frais comme des chairs d'enfants,
Doux comme les hautbois, verts comme les prairies,
– Et d'autres, corrompus, riches et triomphants,
Ayant l'expansion des choses infinies,
Comme l'ambre, le musc, le benjoin et l'encens,
Qui chantent les transports de l'esprit et des sens.

– Charles Baudelaire

Correspondences

Nature is a temple in which living pillars
Sometimes give voice to confused words ;
Man passes there through forests of symbols
Which look at him with understanding eyes.
Like prolonged echoes mingling in the distance
In a deep and tenebrous unity,
Vast as the dark of night and as the light of day,
Perfumes, sounds, and colors correspond.
There are perfumes as cool as the flesh of children,

Sweet as oboes, green as meadows
– And others are corrupt, and rich, triumphant,
With power to expand into infinity,
Like amber and incense, musk, benzoin,
That sing the ecstasy of the soul and senses.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Correspondences

Nature's a temple where each living column,
At times, gives forth vague words. There Man advances
Through forest-groves of symbols, strange and solemn,
Who follow him with their familiar glances.
As long-drawn echoes mingle and transfuse
Till in a deep, dark unison they swoon,
Vast as the night or as the vault of noon –
So are commingled perfumes, sounds, and hues.
There can be perfumes cool as children's flesh,
Like fiddles, sweet, like meadows greenly fresh.
Rich, complex, and triumphant, others roll
With the vast range of all non-finite things –
Amber, musk, incense, benjamin, each sings
The transports of the senses and the soul.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

J'aime le souvenir de ces époques nues

J'aime le souvenir de ces époques nues

J'aime le souvenir de ces époques nues,
Dont Phoebus se plaisait à dorer les statues.
Alors l'homme et la femme en leur agilité
Jouissaient sans mensonge et sans anxiété,
Et, le ciel amoureux leur caressant l'échine,
Exerçaient la santé de leur noble machine.
Cybèle alors, fertile en produits généreux,
Ne trouvait point ses fils un poids trop onéreux,
Mais, louve au cœur gonflé de tendresses communes
Abreuvait l'univers à ses tétines brunes.
L'homme, élégant, robuste et fort, avait le droit
D'être fier des beautés qui le nommaient leur roi ;
Fruits purs de tout outrage et vierges de gerçures,
Dont la chair lisse et ferme appelait les morsures !
Le Poète aujourd'hui, quand il veut concevoir
Ces natives grandeurs, aux lieux où se font voir
La nudité de l'homme et celle de la femme,
Sent un froid ténébreux envelopper son âme
Devant ce noir tableau plein d'épouvantement.
Ô monstruosités pleurant leur vêtement !
Ô ridicules troncs ! torses dignes des masques !
Ô pauvres corps tordus, maigres, ventrus ou flasques,
Que le dieu de l'Utile, implacable et serein,
Enfants, emmaillota dans ses langes d'airain !
Et vous, femmes, hélas ! pâles comme des cierges,
Que ronge et que nourrit la débauche, et vous, vierges,
Du vice maternel traînant l'hérédité

Et toutes les hideurs de la fécondité !
 Nous avons, il est vrai, nations corrompues,
 Aux peuples anciens des beautés inconnues :
 Des visages rongés par les chancres du coeur,
 Et comme qui dirait des beautés de langueur ;
 Mais ces inventions de nos muses tardives
 N'empêcheront jamais les races maladives
 De rendre à la jeunesse un hommage profond,
 – À la sainte jeunesse, à l'air simple, au doux front,
 À l'oeil limpide et clair ainsi qu'une eau courante,
 Et qui va répandant sur tout, insouciante
 Comme l'azur du ciel, les oiseaux et les fleurs,
 Ses parfums, ses chansons et ses douces chaleurs !

– Charles Baudelaire

I Love to Think of Those Naked Epochs

I love to think of those naked epochs
 Whose statues Phoebus liked to tinge with gold.
 At that time men and women, lithe and strong,
 Tasted the thrill of love free from care and prudery,
 And with the amorous sun caressing their loins
 They gloried in the health of their noble bodies.
 Then Cybele, generous with her fruits,
 Did not find her children too heavy a burden ;
 A she-wolf from whose heart flowed boundless love for all,
 She fed the universe from her tawny nipples.
 Man, graceful, robust, strong, was justly proud
 Of the beauties who proclaimed him their king ;
 Fruits unblemished and free from every scar,
 Whose smooth, firm flesh invited biting kisses !
 Today, when the Poet wishes to imagine
 This primitive grandeur, in places where
 Men and women show themselves in a state of nudity,
 He feels a gloomy cold enveloping his soul
 Before this dark picture full of terror.
 Monstrosities bewailing their clothing !
 Ridiculous torsos appropriate for masks !
 Poor bodies, twisted, thin, bulging or flabby,

That the god Usefulness, implacable and calm,
Wrapped up at tender age in swaddling clothes of brass !
And you, women, alas ! pale as candies,
Whom Debauch gnaws and feeds, and you, virgins,
Who trail the heritage of the maternal vice
And all the hideousness of fecundity !
Degenerate races, we have, it's true,
Types of beauty unknown to the ancient peoples :
Visages gnawed by cankers of the heart
And what one might say were languor's marks of beauty ;
But these inventions of our backward Muses
Will never prevent unhealthy races
From paying to their youth deep and sincere homage,
– To holy youth, with serene brow and guileless air,
With eyes bright and clear, like a running brook,
Which goes spreading over all things, as free from care
As the blue of the sky, the birds and the flowers,
Its perfumes, its songs and its sweet ardor !

– William Aggeler, 1954

I Love the Thought of Those Old Naked Days

I love the thought of those old naked days
When Phoebus gilded torsos with his rays,
When men and women sported, strong and fleet,
Without anxiety or base deceit,
And heaven caressed them, amorously keen
To prove the health of each superb machine.
Cybele then was lavish of her guerdon
And did not find her sons too gross a burden :
But, like a she-wolf, in her love great-hearted,
Her full brown teats to all the world imparted.
Bold, handsome, strong, Man, rightly, might evince
Pride in the glories that proclaimed him prince –
Fruits pure of outrage, by the blight unsmitten,
With firm, smooth flesh that cried out to be bitten.
Today the Poet, when he would assess
Those native splendours in the nakedness
Of man or woman, feels a sombre chill

Enveloping his spirit and his will.
He meets a gloomy picture, which he loathes,
Wherein deformity cries out for clothes.
Oh comic runts ! Oh horror of burlesque !
Lank, flabby, skewed, pot-bellied, and grotesque !
Whom their smug god, Utility (poor brats !)
Has swaddled in his brazen cloths "ersatz"
As with cheap tinsel. Women tallow-pale,
Both gnawed and nourished by debauch, who trail
The heavy burden of maternal vice,
Or of fecundity the hideous price.
We have (corrupted nations) it is true
Beauties the ancient people never knew –
Sad faces gnawed by cancers of the heart
And charms which morbid lassitudes impart.
But these inventions of our tardy muse
Can't force our ailing peoples to refuse
Just tribute to the holiness of youth
With its straightforward mien, its forehead couth,
The limpid gaze, like running water bright,
Diffusing, careless, through all things, like the light
Of azure skies, the birds, the winds, the flowers,
The songs, and perfumes, and heart-warming powers.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Les Phares

Les Phares

Rubens, fleuve d'oubli, jardin de la paresse,
Oreiller de chair fraîche où l'on ne peut aimer,
Mais où la vie afflue et s'agit sans cesse,
Comme l'air dans le ciel et la mer dans la mer ;
Léonard de Vinci, miroir profond et sombre,
Où des anges charmants, avec un doux souris
Tout chargé de mystère, apparaissent à l'ombre
Des glaciers et des pins qui ferment leur pays ;
Rembrandt, triste hôpital tout rempli de murmures,
Et d'un grand crucifix décoré seulement,
Où la prière en pleurs s'exhale des ordures,
Et d'un rayon d'hiver traversé brusquement ;
Michel-Ange, lieu vague où l'on voit des Hercules
Se mêler à des Christs, et se lever tout droits
Des fantômes puissants qui dans les crépuscules
Déchirent leur suaire en étirant leurs doigts ;
Colères de boxeur, impudences de faune,
Toi qui sus ramasser la beauté des goujats,
Grand cœur gonflé d'orgueil, homme débile et jaune,
Puget, mélancolique empereur des forçats ;
Watteau, ce carnaval où bien des coeurs illustres,
Comme des papillons, errent en flamboyant,
Décors frais et légers éclairés par des lustres
Qui versent la folie à ce bal tournoyant ;
Goya, cauchemar plein de choses inconnues,
De foetus qu'on fait cuire au milieu des sabbats,
De vieilles au miroir et d'enfants toutes nues,
Pour tenter les démons ajustant bien leurs bas ;

Delacroix, lac de sang hanté des mauvais anges,
 Ombragé par un bois de sapins toujours vert,
 Où, sous un ciel chagrin, des fanfares étranges
 Passent, comme un soupir étouffé de Weber ;
 Ces malédictions, ces blasphèmes, ces plaintes,
 Ces extases, ces cris, ces pleurs, ces Te Deum,
 Sont un écho redit par mille labyrinthes ;
 C'est pour les coeurs mortels un divin opium !
 C'est un cri répété par mille sentinelles,
 Un ordre renvoyé par mille porte-voix ;
 C'est un phare allumé sur mille citadelles,
 Un appel de chasseurs perdus dans les grands bois !
 Car c'est vraiment, Seigneur, le meilleur témoignage
 Que nous puissions donner de notre dignité
 Que cet ardent sanglot qui roule d'âge en âge
 Et vient mourir au bord de votre éternité !

– Charles Baudelaire

The Beacons

Rubens, river of oblivion, garden of indolence,
 Pillow of cool flesh where one cannot love,
 But where life moves and whirls incessantly
 Like the air in the sky and the tide in the sea ;
 Leonardo, dark, unfathomable mirror,
 In which charming angels, with sweet smiles
 Full of mystery, appear in the shadow
 Of the glaciers and pines that enclose their country ;
 Rembrandt, gloomy hospital filled with murmuring,
 Ornamented only with a large crucifix,
 Lit for a moment by a wintry sun,
 Where from rot and ordure rise tearful prayers ;
 Angelo, shadowy place where Hercules' are seen
 Mingling with Christs, and rising straight up,
 Powerful phantoms, which in the twilights
 Rend their winding-sheets with outstretched fingers ;
 Boxer's wrath, shamelessness of Fauns, you whose genius
 Showed to us the beauty in a villain,

Great heart filled with pride, sickly, yellow man,
Puget, melancholy emperor of galley slaves ;
Watteau, carnival where the loves of many famous hearts
Flutter capriciously like butterflies with gaudy wings ;
Cool, airy settings where the candelabras' light
Touches with madness the couples whirling in the dance
Goya, nightmare full of unknown things,
Of fetuses roasted in the midst of witches' sabbaths,
Of old women at the mirror and of nude children,
Tightening their hose to tempt the demons ;
Delacroix, lake of blood haunted by bad angels,
Shaded by a wood of fir-trees, ever green,
Where, under a gloomy sky, strange fanfares
Pass, like a stifled sigh from Weber ;
These curses, these blasphemies, these lamentations,
These Te Deums, these ecstasies, these cries, these tears,
Are an echo repeated by a thousand labyrinths ;
They are for mortal hearts a divine opium.
They are a cry passed on by a thousand sentinels,
An order re-echoed through a thousand megaphones ;
They are a beacon lighted on a thousand citadels,
A call from hunters lost deep in the woods !
For truly, Lord, the clearest proofs
That we can give of our nobility,
Are these impassioned sobs that through the ages roll,
And die away upon the shore of your Eternity.

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Beacons

Rubens, the grove of case, Nepenthe's river
Couch of cool flesh, where Love may never be,
But where life ever flows and seems to quiver
As air in heaven, or, in the sea, the sea.
Da Vinci, dusky mirror and profound,
Where angels, smiling mystery, appear,
Shaded by pines and glaciers, that surround
And seem to shut their country in the rear.

Rembrandt, sad hospital of murmurs, where
Adorned alone by one great crucifix,
From offal-heaps exhales the weeping prayer
That winter shoots a sunbeam to transfix.

Vague region, Michelangelo, where Titans
Are mixed with Christs : and strong ghosts rise, in crowds
To stand bolt upright in the gloom that lightens,
With gristly talons tearing through their shrouds.

Rage of the boxer, mischief of the faun,
Extracting beauty out of blackguards' looks –
The heart how proud, the man how pinched and drawn –
Puget the mournful emperor of crooks !

Watteau, the carnival, where famous hearts
Go flitting by like butterflies that burn,
While through gay scenes each chandelier imparts
A madness to the dancers as they turn.

Goya's a nightmare full of things unguessed,
Of foeti stewed on nights of witches' revels.
Crones ogle mirrors ; children scarcely dressed,
Adjust their hose to tantalise the devils.

A lake of gore where fallen angels dwell
Is Delacroix, by firwoods ever fair,
Where under fretful skies strange fanfares swell
Like Weber's sighs and heartbeats in the air.

These curses, blasphemies, and lamentations,
These ecstasies, tears, cries and soaring psalms –
Through endless mazes, their reverberations
Bring, to our mortal hearts, divinest balms.

A thousand sentinels repeat the cry.
A thousand trumpets echo. Beacon-tossed
A thousand summits flare it through the sky,
A call of hunters in the jungle lost.

And certainly this is the most sublime
Proof of our worth and value, Oh Divinity,
That this great sob rolls on through ageless time
To die upon the shores of your infinity.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

La Muse malade

La Muse malade

Ma pauvre muse, hélas ! qu'as-tu donc ce matin ?
Tes yeux creux sont peuplés de visions nocturnes,
Et je vois tour à tour réfléchis sur ton teint
La folie et l'horreur, froides et taciturnes.

Le succube verdâtre et le rose lutin
T'ont-ils versé la peur et l'amour de leurs urnes ?
Le cauchemar, d'un poing despotic et mutin
T'a-t-il noyée au fond d'un fabuleux Minturnes ?
Je voudrais qu'exhalant l'odeur de la santé
Ton sein de pensers forts fût toujours fréquenté,
Et que ton sang chrétien coulât à flots rythmiques,
Comme les sons nombreux des syllabes antiques,
Où règnent tour à tour le père des chansons,
Phoebus, et le grand Pan, le seigneur des moissons.

– Charles Baudelaire

The Sick Muse

My poor Muse, alas ! what ails you today ?
Your hollow eyes are full of nocturnal visions ;
I see in turn reflected on your face
Horror and madness, cold and taciturn.
Have the green succubus, the rosy elf,
Poured out for you love and fear from their urns ?
Has the hand of Nightmare, cruel and despotic,
Plunged you to the bottom of some weird Minturnae ?
I would that your bosom, fragrant with health,

Were constantly the dwelling place of noble thoughts,
And that your Christian blood would flow in rhythmic waves
Like the measured sounds of ancient verse,
Over which reign in turn the father of all songs,
Phoebus, and the great Pan, lord of harvest.

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Sick Muse

Alas, poor Muse, what ails you so today ?
Your hollow eyes with midnight visions burn,
And turn about, in your complexion play
Madness and horror, cold and taciturn.

Green succubus and rosy imp – have they
Poured you both fear and love into one glass ?
Or with his tyrant fist the nightmare, say,
Submerged you in some fabulous morass ?

I wish that, breathing health, your breast might nourish
Ever robuster thoughts therein to flourish :
And that your Christian blood, in rhythmic flow,
With those old polysyllables would chime,
Where, turn about, reigned Phoebus, sire of rhyme,
And Pan, the lord of harvests long ago.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

La Muse vénale

La Muse vénale

Ô muse de mon coeur, amante des palais,
Auras-tu, quand Janvier lâchera ses Borées,
Durant les noirs ennuis des neigeuses soirées,
Un tison pour chauffer tes deux pieds violets ?
Ranimeras-tu donc tes épaules marbrées
Aux nocturnes rayons qui percent les volets ?
Sentant ta bourse à sec autant que ton palais
Récolteras-tu l'or des voûtes azurées ?
Il te faut, pour gagner ton pain de chaque soir,
Comme un enfant de choeur, jouer de l'encensoir,
Chanter des Te Deum auxquels tu ne crois guère,
Ou, saltimbanque à jeun, étaler tes appas
Et ton rire trempé de pleurs qu'on ne voit pas,
Pour faire épanouir la rate du vulgaire.

– Charles Baudelaire

The Venal Muse

Muse of my heart, you who love palaces,
When January frees his north winds, will you have,
During the black ennui of snowy evenings,
An ember to warm your two feet blue with cold ?
Will you bring the warmth back to your mottled shoulders,
With the nocturnal beams that pass through the shutters ?
Knowing that your purse is as dry as your palate,
Will you harvest the gold of the blue, vaulted sky ?
To earn your daily bread you are obliged

To swing the censer like an altar boy,
And to sing Te Deums in which you don't believe,
Or, hungry mountebank, to put up for sale your charm,
Your laughter wet with tears which people do not see,
To make the vulgar herd shake with laughter.

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Venal Muse

Muse of my heart, of palaces the lover,
Where will you, when the blast of winter blows
In the black boredom of snowed lights, discover
A glowing brand to warm your violet toes ?
How will you there revive your marbled skin
At the chill rays your shutters then disperse ?
The gold of azure heavens will you win
When empty are your palate and your purse ?
You'll need each evening, then, to earn your bread,
As choirboys swinging censers that are dead
Who sing Te Deums which they disbelieve :
Or, fasting pierrette, trade your loveliness
And laughter, soaked in tears that none can guess,
The boredom of the vulgar to relieve.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Mauvais Moine

Le Mauvais Moine

Les cloîtres anciens sur leurs grandes murailles
Etalaient en tableaux la sainte Vérité,
Dont l'effet réchauffant les pieuses entrailles,
Tempérait la froideur de leur austérité.

En ces temps où du Christ florissaient les semaines,
Plus d'un illustre moine, aujourd'hui peu cité,
Prenant pour atelier le champ des funérailles,
Glorifiait la Mort avec simplicité.

– Mon âme est un tombeau que, mauvais cénobite,
Depuis l'éternité je parcours et j'habite ;
Rien n'embellit les murs de ce cloître odieux.

Ô moine fainéant ! quand saurai-je donc faire
Du spectacle vivant de ma triste misère
Le travail de mes mains et l'amour de mes yeux ?

– Charles Baudelaire

The Bad Monk

Cloisters in former times portrayed on their high walls
The truths of Holy Writ with fitting pictures
Which gladdened pious hearts and lessened the coldness,
The austere appearance, of those monasteries.

In those days the sowing of Christ's Gospel flourished,
And more than one famed monk, seldom quoted today,
Taking his inspiration from the graveyard,
Glorified Death with naive simplicity.

– My soul is a tomb where, bad cenobite,

I wander and dwell eternally ;
Nothing adorns the walls of that loathsome cloister.
O lazy monk ! When shall I learn to make
Of the living spectacle of my bleak misery
The labor of my hands and the love of my eyes ?

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Evil Monk

The walls of cloisters on their frescoed lath
Displayed, in pictures, sacred truths of old,
Whose sight would warm the entrails of one's faith
To temper their austerity and cold.
In times when every sowing flowered for Christ
Lived famous monks, now out of memory's reach ;
The graveyard for their library sufficed,
And Death was glorified in simple speech.
My soul's a grave, where, evil cenobite,
To all eternity I have been banned.
Nothing adorns this cloister fall of spite.
O idle monk ! Say, to what end were planned
The living spectacle of my sad plight,
Love of my eye, or labour of my hand ?

– Roy Campbell, 1952

L'Ennemi

L'Ennemi

Ma jeunesse ne fut qu'un ténébreux orage,
Traversé çà et là par de brillants soleils ;
Le tonnerre et la pluie ont fait un tel ravage,
Qu'il reste en mon jardin bien peu de fruits vermeils.
Voilà que j'ai touché l'automne des idées,
Et qu'il faut employer la pelle et les râteaux
Pour rassembler à neuf les terres inondées,
Où l'eau creuse des trous grands comme des tombeaux.
Et qui sait si les fleurs nouvelles que je rêve
Trouveront dans ce sol lavé comme une grève
Le mystique aliment qui ferait leur vigueur ?
– Ô douleur ! ô douleur ! Le Temps mange la vie,
Et l'obscur Ennemi qui nous ronge le coeur
Du sang que nous perdons croît et se fortifie !

– Charles Baudelaire

The Enemy

My youth has been nothing but a tenebrous storm,
Pierced now and then by rays of brilliant sunshine ;
Thunder and rain have wrought so much havoc
That very few ripe fruits remain in my garden.
I have already reached the autumn of the mind,
And I must set to work with the spade and the rake
To gather back the inundated soil
In which the rain digs holes as big as graves.
And who knows whether the new flowers I dream of

Will find in this earth washed bare like the strand,
The mystic aliment that would give them vigor ?
Alas ! Alas ! Time eats away our lives,
And the hidden Enemy who gnaws at our hearts
Grows by drawing strength from the blood we lose !

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Enemy

My youth was but a tempest, dark and savage,
Through which, at times, a dazzling sun would shoot
The thunder and the rain have made such ravage
My garden is nigh bare of rosy fruit.
Now I have reached the Autumn of my thought,
And spade and rake must toil the land to save,
That fragments of my flooded fields be sought
From where the water sluices out a grave.
Who knows if the new flowers my dreams prefigure,
In this washed soil should find, as by a sluit,
The mystic nourishment to give them vigour ?
Time swallows up our life, O ruthless rigour !
And the dark foe that nibbles our heart's root,
Grows on our blood the stronger and the bigger !

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Guignon

Le Guignon

Pour soulever un poids si lourd,
Sisyphe, il faudrait ton courage !
Bien qu'on ait du coeur à l'ouvrage,
L'Art est long et le Temps est court.
Loin des sépultures célèbres,
Vers un cimetière isolé,
Mon coeur, comme un tambour voilé,
Va battant des marches funèbres.
– Maint joyau dort enseveli
Dans les ténèbres et l'oubli,
Bien loin des pioches et des sondes ;
Mainte fleur épanche à regret
Son parfum doux comme un secret
Dans les solitudes profondes.

– Charles Baudelaire

Evil Fate

To lift a weight so heavy,
Would take your courage, Sisyphus !
Although one's heart is in the work,
Art is long and Time is short.
Far from famous sepulchers
Toward a lonely cemetery
My heart, like muffled drums,
Goes beating funeral marches.
Many a jewel lies buried

In darkness and oblivion,
Far, far away from picks and drills ;
Many a flower regretfully
Exhales perfume soft as secrets
In a profound solitude.

– William Aggeler, 1954

III Luck

So huge a burden to support
Your courage, Sisyphus, would ask ;
Well though my heart attacks its task,
Yet Art is long and Time is short.

Far from the famed memorial arch
Towards a lonely grave I come.
My heart in its funereal march
Goes beating like a muffled drum.

– Yet many a gem lies hidden still
Of whom no pick-axe, spade, or drill
The lonely secrecy invades ;
And many a flower, to heal regret,
Pours forth its fragrant secret yet
Amidst the solitary shades.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

La Vie antérieure

La Vie antérieure

J'ai longtemps habité sous de vastes portiques
Que les soleils marins teignaient de mille feux,
Et que leurs grands piliers, droits et majestueux,
Rendaient pareils, le soir, aux grottes basaltiques.
Les houles, en roulant les images des cieux,
Mêlaient d'une façon solennelle et mystique
Les tout-puissants accords de leur riche musique
Aux couleurs du couchant reflété par mes yeux.
C'est là que j'ai vécu dans les voluptés calmes,
Au milieu de l'azur, des vagues, des splendeurs
Et des esclaves nus, tout imprégnés d'odeurs,
Qui me rafraîchissaient le front avec des palmes,
Et dont l'unique soin était d'approfondir
Le secret douloureux qui me faisait languir.

– Charles Baudelaire

My Former Life

For a long time I dwelt under vast porticos
Which the ocean suns lit with a thousand colors,
The pillars of which, tall, straight, and majestic,
Made them, in the evening, like basaltic grottos.
The billows which cradled the image of the sky
Mingled, in a solemn, mystical way,
The omnipotent chords of their rich harmonies
With the sunsets' colors reflected in my eyes ;
It was there that I lived in voluptuous calm,

In splendor, between the azure and the sea,
And I was attended by slaves, naked, perfumed,
Who fanned my brow with fronds of palms
And whose sole task it was to fathom
The dolorous secret that made me pine away.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Former Life

I've lived beneath huge portals where marine
Suns coloured, with a myriad fires, the waves ;
At eve majestic pillars made the scene
Resemble those of vast basaltic caves.
The breakers, rolling the reflected skies,
Mixed, in a solemn, enigmatic way,
The powerful symphonies they seem to play
With colours of the sunset in my eyes.
There did I live in a voluptuous calm
Where breezes, waves, and splendours roved as vagrants ;
And naked slaves, impregnated with fragrance,
Would fan my forehead with their fronds of palm :
Their only charge was to increase the anguish
Of secret grief in which I loved to languish.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Bohémiens en voyage

Bohémiens en voyage

La tribu prophétique aux prunelles ardentes
Hier s'est mise en route, emportant ses petits
Sur son dos, ou livrant à leurs fiers appétits
Le trésor toujours prêt des mamelles pendantes.
Les hommes vont à pied sous leurs armes luisantes
Le long des chariots où les leurs sont blottis,
Promenant sur le ciel des yeux appesantis
Par le morne regret des chimères absentes.
Du fond de son réduit sablonneux, le grillon,
Les regardant passer, redouble sa chanson ;
Cybèle, qui les aime, augmente ses verdures,
Fait couler le rocher et fleurir le désert
Devant ces voyageurs, pour lesquels est ouvert
L'empire familier des ténèbres futures.

– Charles Baudelaire

Gypsies Traveling

The prophetical tribe, that ardent eyed people,
Set out last night, carrying their children
On their backs, or yielding to those fierce appetites
The ever ready treasure of pendulous breasts.
The men travel on foot with their gleaming weapons
Alongside the wagons where their kin are huddled,
Surveying the heavens with eyes rendered heavy
By a mournful regret for vanished illusions.
The cricket from the depths of his sandy retreat

Watches them as they pass, and louder grows his song ;
Cybele, who loves them, increases her verdure,
Makes the desert blossom, water spurt from the rock
Before these travelers for whom is opened wide
The familiar domain of the future's darkness.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Gipsies on the Road

The tribe of seers, last night, began its march
With burning eyes, and shouldering its young
To whose ferocious appetites it swung
The wealth of hanging breasts that nought can parch.
The men, their weapons glinting in the rays,
Walk by the convoy where their folks are carted,
Sweeping the far-off skylines with a gaze
Regretful of Chimeras long-departed.
Out of his hole the cricket sees them pass
And sings the louder. Greener grows the grass
Because Cybele loves them, and has made
The barren rock to gush, the sands to flower,
To greet these travellers, before whose power
Familiar futures open realms of shade.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

L'Homme et la mer

L'Homme et la mer

Homme libre, toujours tu chériras la mer !
La mer est ton miroir ; tu contemples ton âme
Dans le déroulement infini de sa lame,
Et ton esprit n'est pas un gouffre moins amer.
Tu te plais à plonger au sein de ton image ;
Tu l'embrasses des yeux et des bras, et ton coeur
Se distrait quelquefois de sa propre rumeur
Au bruit de cette plainte indomptable et sauvage.
Vous êtes tous les deux ténébreux et discrets :
Homme, nul n'a sondé le fond de tes abîmes ;
Ô mer, nul ne connaît tes richesses intimes,
Tant vous êtes jaloux de garder vos secrets !
Et cependant voilà des siècles innombrables
Que vous vous combattez sans pitié ni remords,
Tellement vous aimez le carnage et la mort,
Ô lutteurs éternels, ô frères implacables !

– Charles Baudelaire

Man and the Sea

Free man, you will always cherish the sea !
The sea is your mirror ; you contemplate your soul
In the infinite unrolling of its billows ;
Your mind is an abyss that is no less bitter.
You like to plunge into the bosom of your image ;
You embrace it with eyes and arms, and your heart
Is distracted at times from its own clamoring

By the sound of this plaint, wild and untamable.
Both of you are gloomy and reticent :
Man, no one has sounded the depths of your being ;
O Sea, no person knows your most hidden riches,
So zealously do you keep your secrets !
Yet for countless ages you have fought each other
Without pity, without remorse,
So fiercely do you love carnage and death,
O eternal fighters, implacable brothers !

– William Aggeler, 1954

Man and the Sea

Free man, you'll always love the sea – for this,
That it's a mirror, where you see your soul
In its eternal waves that chafe and roll ;
Nor is your soul less bitter an abyss.
in your reflected image there to merge,
You love to dive, its eyes and limbs to match.
Sometimes your heart forgets its own, to catch
The rhythm of that wild and timeless dirge.
The two of you are shadowy, deep, and wide.
Man ! None has ever plummeted your floor –
Sea ! None has ever known what wealth you store –
Both are so jealous of the things you hide !
Yet age on age is ended, or begins,
While you without remorse or pity fight.
So much in death and carnage you delight,
Eternal wrestlers ! Unrelenting twins !

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Don Juan aux enfers

Don Juan aux enfers

Quand Don Juan descendit vers l'onde souterraine
Et lorsqu'il eut donné son obole à Charon,
Un sombre mendiant, l'oeil fier comme Antisthène,
D'un bras vengeur et fort saisit chaque aviron.
Montrant leurs seins pendants et leurs robes ouvertes,
Des femmes se tordaient sous le noir firmament,
Et, comme un grand troupeau de victimes offertes,
Derrière lui traînaient un long mugissement.
Sganarelle en riant lui réclamait ses gages,
Tandis que Don Luis avec un doigt tremblant
Montrait à tous les morts errant sur les rivages
Le fils audacieux qui railla son front blanc.
Frissonnant sous son deuil, la chaste et maigre Elvire,
Près de l'époux perfide et qui fut son amant,
Semblait lui réclamer un suprême sourire
Où brillât la douceur de son premier serment.
Tout droit dans son armure, un grand homme de pierre
Se tenait à la barre et coupait le flot noir ;
Mais le calme héros, courbé sur sa rapière,
Regardait le sillage et ne daignait rien voir.

– Charles Baudelaire

Don Juan in Hades

When Don Juan descended to the underground sea,
And when he had given his obolus to Charon,
That gloomy mendicant, with Antisthenes' proud look,

Seized the two oars with strong, revengeful hands.
Showing their pendent breasts and their unfastened gowns
Women writhed and twisted under the black heavens,
And like a great flock of sacrificial victims,
A continuous groan trailed along in the wake.
Sganarelle with a laugh was demanding his wage,
While Don Luis with a trembling finger
Was showing to the dead, wandering along the shores,
The impudent son who had mocked his white brow.
Shuddering in her grief, Elvira, chaste and thin,
Near her treacherous spouse who was once her lover,
Seemed to implore of him a final, parting smile
That would shine with the sweetness of his first promises.
Erect in his armor, a tall man carved from stone
Was standing at the helm and cutting the black flood ;
But the hero unmoved, leaning on his rapier,
Kept gazing at the wake and deigned not look aside.

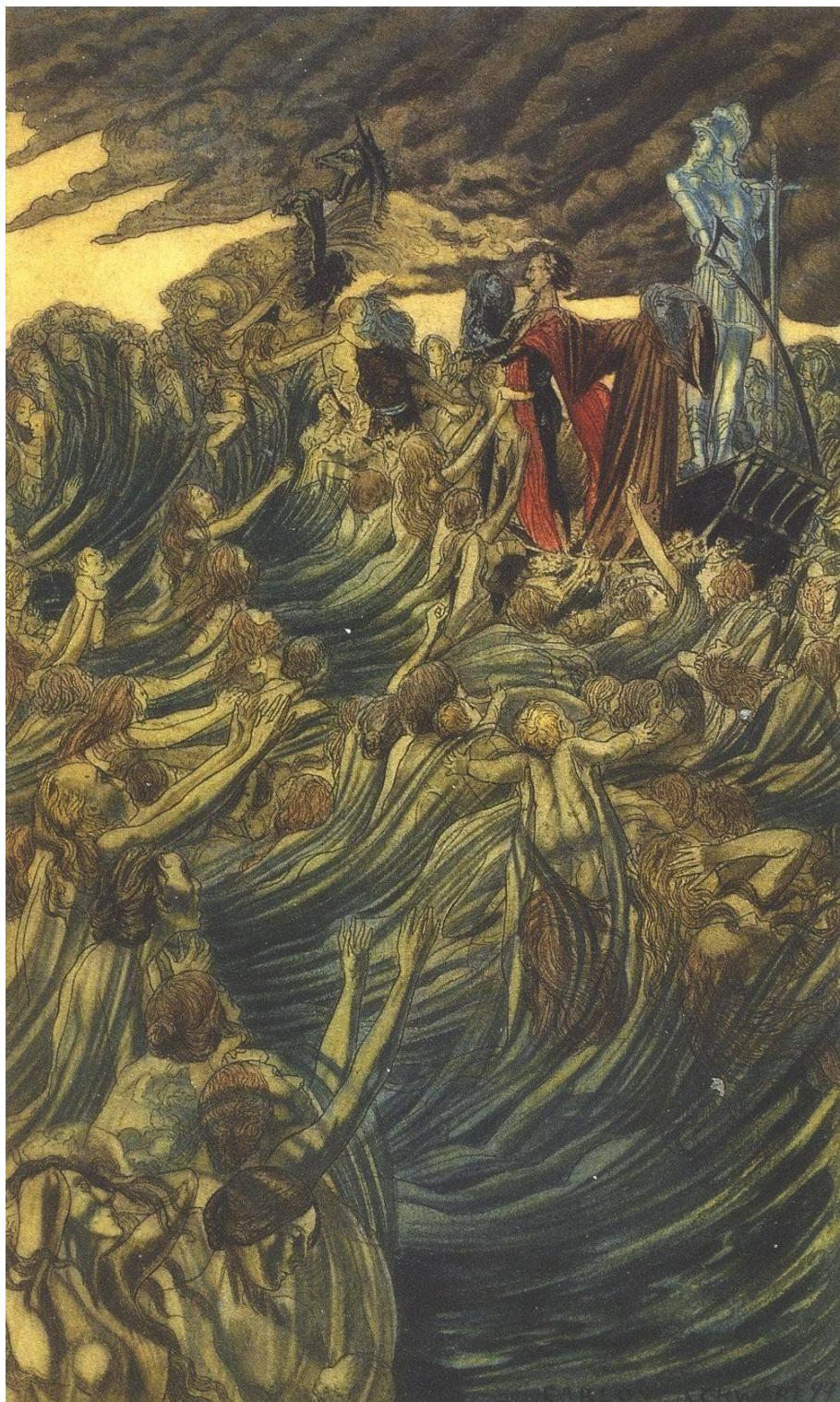
– William Aggeler, 1954

Don Juan in Hell

When, having reached the subterranean wave,
Don Juan paid his passage from the shore,
Proud as Antisthenes, a surly knave
With vengeful arms laid hold of either oar.
With hanging breasts between their mantles showing
Sad women, writhing under the black sky,
Made, as they went, the sound of cattle lowing
As from a votive herd that's led to die.
Sganarelle for his wages seemed to linger,
And laughed ; while to the dead assembled there,
Don Luis pointed out with trembling finger
The son who dared to flout his silver hair.
Chilled in her crepe, the chaste and thin Elvira,
Standing up close to her perfidious spouse,
Seemed to be pleading from her old admirer
For that which thrilled his first, unbroken vows.
A great stone man in armour leaped aboard ;

Seizing the helm, the coal-black wave he cleft.
But the calm hero, leaning on his sword,
Had eyes for nothing but the wake they left.

– Roy Campbell, 1952



À Théodore de Banville (1868)

À Théodore de Banville

Vous avez empoigné les cries de la Déesse
Avec un tel poignet, qu'on vous eût pris, à voir
Et cet air de maîtrise et ce beau nonchaloir,
Pour un jeune ruffian terrassant sa maîtresse.

L'oeil clair et plein du feu de la précocité,
Vous avez prélassé votre orgueil d'architecte
Dans des constructions dont l'audace correcte
Fait voir quelle sera votre maturité.

Poète, notre sang nous fuit par chaque pore ;
Est-ce que par hasard la robe du Centaure
Qui changeait toute veine en funèbre ruisseau
Était teinte trois fois dans les baves subtiles
De ces vindicatifs et monstrueux reptiles
Que le petit Hercule étranglait au berceau ?

– Charles Baudelaire

To Théodore de Banville

So roughly did you seize the Goddess by her hair
That, seeing your imperious, nonchalant look,
One would have taken you to be
A young ruffian manhandling his mistress.

Your bright eye filled with the fire of precocity,
You indulged the pride of an architect
In your phrasing, correct in spite of its daring ;
You showed what you will be in your maturity.
Poet, our blood escapes from every pore ;

Was it merely by chance the robe of the Centaur
Which transformed every vein into a fatal stream
Was dyed three times in the subtle froth
Of those reptiles, monstrous and vindictive
That little Hercules strangled in his cradle ?

– William Aggeler, 1954

To Théodore de Banville, 1842

Your hands have seized the goddess by the hair
In such a grasp, so finally and fully,
One thinks of some Herculean young Bully
Flooring his mistress with a lordly air.
With clear eyes radiant with precocious fire,
You've shown such pride in architecture fine
And such a pure audacity of line –
One knows to what your manhood will aspire.
Poet ! Our blood, through every pore outpressed,
Escapes from us as if the Centaur's vest
Made a funereal rill of every vein ;
One thinks that vest was dyed in vengeful spittle
Of the two snakes that Hercules, when little,
Throttled in his two fists till they were slain.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Châtiment de l'Orgueil

Châtiment de l'Orgueil

En ces temps merveilleux où la Théologie
Fleurit avec le plus de sève et d'énergie,
On raconte qu'un jour un docteur des plus grands,
– Après avoir forcé les coeurs indifférents ;
Les avoir remués dans leurs profondeurs noires ;
Après avoir franchi vers les célestes gloires
Des chemins singuliers à lui-même inconnus,
Où les purs Esprits seuls peut-être étaient venus, –
Comme un homme monté trop haut, pris de panique,
S'écria, transporté d'un orgueil satanique :
« Jésus, petit Jésus ! je t'ai poussé bien haut !
Mais, si j'avais voulu t'attaquer au défaut
De l'armure, ta honte égalerait ta gloire,
Et tu ne serais plus qu'un foetus dérisoire ! »

Immédiatement sa raison s'en alla.
L'éclat de ce soleil d'un crêpe se voila
Tout le chaos roula dans cette intelligence,
Temple autrefois vivant, plein d'ordre et d'opulence,
Sous les plafonds duquel tant de pompe avait lui.
Le silence et la nuit s'installèrent en lui,
Comme dans un caveau dont la clef est perdue.
Dès lors il fut semblable aux bêtes de la rue,
Et, quand il s'en allait sans rien voir, à travers
Les champs, sans distinguer les étés des hivers,
Sale, inutile et laid comme une chose usée,
Il faisait des enfants la joie et la risée.

– Charles Baudelaire

Punishment for Pride

In that marvelous time in which Theology
 Flourished with the greatest energy and vigor,
 It is said that one day a most learned doctor
 – After winning by force the indifferent hearts,
 Having stirred them in the dark depths of their being ;
 After crossing on the way to celestial glory,
 Singular and strange roads, even to him unknown,
 Which only pure Spirits, perhaps, had reached, –
 Panic-stricken, like one who has clambered too high,
 He cried, carried away by a satanic pride :
 “Jesus, little jesus ! I raised you very high !
 But had I wished to attack you through the defect
 In your armor, your shame would equal your glory,
 And you would be no more than a despised fetus !”
 At that very moment his reason departed.
 A crape of mourning veiled the brilliance of that sun ;
 Complete chaos rolled in and filled that intellect,
 A temple once alive, ordered and opulent,
 Within whose walls so much pomp had glittered.
 Silence and darkness took possession of it
 Like a cellar to which the key is lost.
 Henceforth he was like the beasts in the street,
 And when he went along, seeing nothing, across
 The fields, distinguishing nor summer nor winter,
 Dirty, useless, ugly, like a discarded thing,
 He was the laughing-stock, the joke, of the children.

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Punishment of Pride

When first Theology in her young prime
 Flourished with vigour, in that wondrous time,
 Of an illustrious Doctor it was said
 That, having forced indifferent hearts to shed
 Tears of emotion, moved to depths profound :
 And having to celestial glory found
 Marvellous paths, to his own self unknown,

Where only purest souls had fared alone –
Like a man raised too high, as in a panic,
Crazed with a vertigo of pride satanic,
He cried "Poor Christ, I've raised you to renown !
But had I wished to bring you crashing down
Probing your flaws, your shame would match your pride
And you'd be but a foetus to deride!"
Immediately he felt his wits escape,
That flash of sunlight veiled itself in crepe.
All chaos through his intellect was rolled,
A temple once, containing hoards of gold,
By opulence and order well controlled,
And topped with ceilings splendid to behold.
Silence and night installed their reign in him.
It seemed he was a cellar dank and dim,
To which no living man could find the key ;
And from that day a very beast was he.
And while he wandered senseless on his way,
Not knowing spring from summer, night from day,
Foul, dirty, useless, and with no hereafter,
He served the children as a butt for laughter.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

La Beauté

La Beauté

Je suis belle, ô mortels ! comme un rêve de pierre,
Et mon sein, où chacun s'est meurtri tour à tour,
Est fait pour inspirer au poète un amour
Eternel et muet ainsi que la matière.

Je trône dans l'azur comme un sphinx incompris ;
J'unis un cœur de neige à la blancheur des cygnes ;
Je hais le mouvement qui déplace les lignes,
Et jamais je ne pleure et jamais je ne ris.

Les poètes, devant mes grandes attitudes,
Que j'ai l'air d'emprunter aux plus fiers monuments,
Consumeront leurs jours en d'austères études ;
Car j'ai, pour fasciner ces dociles amants,
De purs miroirs qui font toutes choses plus belles :
Mes yeux, mes larges yeux aux clartés éternelles !

– Charles Baudelaire

Beauty

I am fair, O mortals ! like a dream carved in stone,
And my breast where each one in turn has bruised himself
Is made to inspire in the poet a love
As eternal and silent as matter.

On a throne in the sky, a mysterious sphinx,
I join a heart of snow to the whiteness of swans ;
I hate movement for it displaces lines,
And never do I weep and never do I laugh.
Poets, before my grandiose poses,

Which I seem to assume from the proudest statues,
Will consume their lives in austere study ;
For I have, to enchant those submissive lovers,
Pure mirrors that make all things more beautiful :
My eyes, my large, wide eyes of eternal brightness !

– William Aggeler, 1954

Beauty

I'm fair, O mortals, as a dream of stone ;
My breasts whereon, in turn, your wrecks you shatter,
Were made to wake in poets' hearts alone
A love as indestructible as matter.
A sky-throned sphinx, unknown yet, I combine
The cygnet's whiteness with a heart of snow.
I loathe all movement that displaces line,
And neither tears nor laughter do I know.
Poets before my postures, which I seem
To learn from masterpieces, love to dream
And there in austere thought consume their days.
I have, these docile lovers to subject,
Mirrors that glorify all they reflect –
These eyes, great eyes, eternal in their blaze !

– Roy Campbell, 1952

L'Idéal

L'Idéal

Ce ne seront jamais ces beautés de vignettes,
Produits avariés, nés d'un siècle vaurien,
Ces pieds à brodequins, ces doigts à castagnettes,
Qui sauront satisfaire un cœur comme le mien.

Je laisse à Gavarni, poète des chloroses,
Son troupeau gazouillant de beautés d'hôpital,
Car je ne puis trouver parmi ces pâles roses
Une fleur qui ressemble à mon rouge idéal.

Ce qu'il faut à ce cœur profond comme un abîme,
C'est vous, Lady Macbeth, âme puissante au crime,
Rêve d'Eschyle éclos au climat des autans ;
Ou bien toi, grande Nuit, fille de Michel-Ange,
Qui tors paisiblement dans une pose étrange
Tes appas façonnés aux bouches des Titans !

– Charles Baudelaire

The Ideal

It will never be the beauties that vignettes show,
Those damaged products of a good-for-nothing age,
Their feet shod with high shoes, hands holding castanets,
Who can ever satisfy any heart like mine.

I leave to Gavarni, poet of chlorosis,
His Prattling troop of consumptive beauties,
For I cannot find among those pale roses
A flower that is like my red ideal.

The real need of my heart, profound as an abyss,

Is you, Lady Macbeth, soul so potent in crime,
The dream of Aeschylus, born in the land of storms ;
Or you, great Night, daughter of Michelangelo,
Who calmly contort, reclining in a strange pose
Your charms molded by the mouths of Titans !

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Ideal

It's not with smirking beauties of vignettes,
The shopsoiled products of a worthless age,
With buskinéd feet and hands for castanets –
A heart like mine its longing could assuage.
I leave Gavarni, poet of chloroses,
His twittering flock, anaemic and unreal.
I could not find among such bloodless roses,
A flower to match my crimson-hued ideal.
To this heart deeper than the deepest canyon,
Lady Macbeth would be a fit companion,
Crime-puissant dream of Aeschylus ; or you,
Daughter of Buonarroti, stately Night !
Whose charms to suit a Titan's appetite,
You twist, so strange, yet peaceful, to the view.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

La Géante

La Géante

Du temps que la Nature en sa verve puissante
Concevait chaque jour des enfants monstrueux,
J'eusse aimé vivre auprès d'une jeune géante,
Comme aux pieds d'une reine un chat voluptueux.
J'eusse aimé voir son corps fleurir avec son âme
Et grandir librement dans ses terribles jeux ;
Deviner si son cœur couve une sombre flamme
Aux humides brouillards qui nagent dans ses yeux ;
Parcourir à loisir ses magnifiques formes ;
Ramper sur le versant de ses genoux énormes,
Et parfois en été, quand les soleils malsains,
Lasse, la font s'étendre à travers la campagne,
Dormir nonchalamment à l'ombre de ses seins,
Comme un hameau paisible au pied d'une montagne.

– Charles Baudelaire

The Giantess

At the time when Nature with a lusty spirit
Was conceiving monstrous children each day,
I should have liked to live near a young giantess,
Like a voluptuous cat at the feet of a queen.
I should have liked to see her soul and body thrive
And grow without restraint in her terrible games ;
To divine by the mist swimming within her eyes
If her heart harbored a smoldering flame ;
To explore leisurely her magnificent form ;

To crawl upon the slopes of her enormous knees,
And sometimes in summer, when the unhealthy sun
Makes her stretch out, weary, across the countryside,
To sleep nonchalantly in the shade of her breasts,
Like a peaceful hamlet below a mountainside.

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Giantess

Of old when Nature, in her verve defiant,
Conceived each day some birth of monstrous mien,
I would have lived near some young female giant
Like a voluptuous cat beside a queen ;
To see her body flowering with her soul
Freely develop in her mighty games,
And in the mists that through her gaze would roll
Guess that her heart was hatching sombre flames ;
To roam her mighty contours as I please,
Ramp on the cliff of her tremendous knees,
And in the solstice, when the suns that kill
Make her stretch out across the land and rest,
To sleep beneath the shadow of her breast
Like a hushed village underneath a hill.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Les Bijoux (1857)

Les Bijoux

La très chère était nue, et, connaissant mon coeur,
Elle n'avait gardé que ses bijoux sonores,
Dont le riche attirail lui donnait l'air vainqueur
Qu'ont dans leurs jours heureux les esclaves des Mores.
Quand il jette en dansant son bruit vif et moqueur,
Ce monde rayonnant de métal et de pierre
Me ravit en extase, et j'aime à la fureur
Les choses où le son se mêle à la lumière.
Elle était donc couchée et se laissait aimer,
Et du haut du divan elle souriait d'aise
À mon amour profond et doux comme la mer,
Qui vers elle montait comme vers sa falaise.
Les yeux fixés sur moi, comme un tigre dompté,
D'un air vague et rêveur elle essayait des poses,
Et la candeur unie à la lubricité
Donnait un charme neuf à ses métamorphoses ;
Et son bras et sa jambe, et sa cuisse et ses reins,
Polis comme de l'huile, onduleux comme un cygne,
Passaient devant mes yeux clairvoyants et sereins ;
Et son ventre et ses seins, ces grappes de ma vigne,
S'avançaient, plus câlins que les Anges du mal,
Pour troubler le repos où mon âme était mise,
Et pour la déranger du rocher de cristal
Où, calme et solitaire, elle s'était assise.
Je croyais voir unis par un nouveau dessin
Les hanches de l'Antiope au buste d'un imberbe,
Tant sa taille faisait ressortir son bassin.
Sur ce teint fauve et brun, le fard était superbe !

– Et la lampe s'étant résignée à mourir,
Comme le foyer seul illuminait la chambre
Chaque fois qu'il poussait un flamboyant soupir,
Il inondait de sang cette peau couleur d'ambre !

– Charles Baudelaire

The Jewels

My darling was naked, and knowing my heart well,
She was wearing only her sonorous jewels,
Whose opulent display made her look triumphant
Like Moorish concubines on their fortunate days.
When it dances and flings its lively, mocking sound,
This radiant world of metal and of gems
Transports me with delight ; I passionately love
All things in which sound is mingled with light.
She had lain down ; and let herself be loved
From the top of the couch she smiled contentedly
Upon my love, deep and gentle as the sea,
Which rose toward her as toward a cliff.
Her eyes fixed upon me, like a tamed tigress,
With a vague, dreamy air she was trying poses,
And by blending candor with lechery,
Her metamorphoses took on a novel charm ;
And her arm and her leg, and her thigh and her loins,
Shiny as oil, sinuous as a swan,
Passed in front of my eyes, clear-sighted and serene ;
And her belly, her breasts, grapes of my vine,
Advanced, more cajoling than angels of evil,
To trouble the quiet that had possessed my soul,
To dislodge her from the crag of crystal,
Where calm and alone she had taken her seat.
I thought I saw blended in a novel design
Antiope's haunches and the breast of a boy,
Her waist set off so well the fullness of her hips.
On that tawny brown skin the rouge stood out superb !
– And when at last the lamp allowed itself to die,
Since the fire alone lighted the room,

Each time that it uttered a flaming sigh,
It drenched with blood that amber colored skin !

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Jewels

My well-beloved was stripped. Knowing my whim,
She wore her tinkling gems, but naught besides :
And showed such pride as, while her luck betides,
A sultan's favoured slave may show to him.
When it lets off its lively, crackling sound,
This blazing blend of metal crossed with stone,
Gives me an ecstasy I've only known
Where league of sound and lustre can be found.
She let herself be loved : then, drowsy-eyed,
Smiled down from her high couch in languid ease.
My love was deep and gentle as the seas
And rose to her as to a cliff the tide.
My own approval of each dreamy pose,
Like a tarned tiger, cunningly she sighted :
And candour, with lubricity united,
Gave piquancy to every one she chose,
Her limbs and hips, burnished with changing lustres,
Before my eyes clairvoyant and serene,
Swarmed themselves, undulating in their sheen ;
Her breasts and belly, of my vine the clusters,
Like evil angels rose, my fancy twitting,
To kill the peace which over me she'd thrown,
And to disturb her from the crystal throne
Where, calm and solitary, she was sitting.
So swerved her pelvis that, in one design,
Antiope's white rump it seemed to graft
To a boy's torso, merging fore and aft.
The talc on her brown tan seemed half-divine.
The lamp resigned its dying flame. Within,
The hearth alone lit up the darkened air,
And every time it sighed a crimson flare
It drowned in blood that amber-coloured skin.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Masque (1861)

Le Masque

Statue allégorique dans le goût de la Renaissance
À Ernest Christophe, statuaire.

Contemplons ce trésor de grâces florentines ;
Dans l'ondulation de ce corps musculeux
L'Elégance et la Force abondent, soeurs divines.
Cette femme, morceau vraiment miraculeux,
Divinement robuste, adorablement mince,
Est faite pour trôner sur des lits somptueux
Et charmer les loisirs d'un pontife ou d'un prince.

– Aussi, vois ce souris fin et voluptueux
Où la Fatuité promène son extase ;
Ce long regard sournois, langoureux et moqueur ;
Ce visage mignard, tout encadré de gaze,
Dont chaque trait nous dit avec un air vainqueur :
« La Volupté m'appelle et l'Amour me couronne ! »
À cet être doué de tant de majesté
Vois quel charme excitant la gentillesse donne !
Approchons, et tournons autour de sa beauté.

Ô blasphème de l'art ! ô surprise fatale !
La femme au corps divin, promettant le bonheur,
Par le haut se termine en monstre bicéphale !

– Mais non ! ce n'est qu'un masque, un décor suborneur,
Ce visage éclairé d'une exquise grimace,
Et, regarde, voici, crispée atrocement,
La véritable tête, et la sincère face
Renversée à l'abri de la face qui ment
Pauvre grande beauté ! le magnifique fleuve
De tes pleurs aboutit dans mon cœur soucieux

Ton mensonge m'enivre, et mon âme s'abreuve
 Aux flots que la Douleur fait jaillir de tes yeux !
 – Mais pourquoi pleure-t-elle ? Elle, beauté parfaite,
 Qui mettrait à ses pieds le genre humain vaincu,
 Quel mal mystérieux ronge son flanc d'athlète ?
 – Elle pleure insensé, parce qu'elle a vécu !
 Et parce qu'elle vit ! Mais ce qu'elle déplore
 Surtout, ce qui la fait frémir jusqu'aux genoux,
 C'est que demain, hélas ! il faudra vivre encore !
 Demain, après-demain et toujours ! – comme nous !

– Charles Baudelaire

The Mask

Allegorical Statue in the Style of the Renaissance
 To Ernest Christophe, Sculptor

Let us gaze at this gem of Florentine beauty ;
 In the undulation of this brawny body
 Those divine sisters, Gracefulness and Strength, abound.
 This woman, a truly miraculous marble,
 Adorably slender, divinely robust,
 Is made to be enthroned upon sumptuous beds
 And to charm the leisure of a Pope or a Prince.
 – And see that smile, voluptuous and delicate,
 Where self-conceit displays its ecstasy ;
 That sly, lingering look, mocking and languorous ;
 That dainty face, framed in a veil of gauze,
 Whose every feature says, with a triumphant air :
 “Pleasure calls me and Love gives me a crown !”
 To that being endowed with so much majesty
 See what exciting charm is lent by prettiness !
 Let us draw near, and walk around its loveliness.
 O blasphemy of art ! Fatal surprise !
 That exquisite body, that promise of delight,
 At the top turns into a two-headed monster !
 Why no ! it's but a mask, a lying ornament,
 That visage enlivened by a dainty grimace,
 And look, here is, atrociously shriveled,

The real, true head, the sincere countenance
Reversed and hidden by the lying face.
Poor glamorous beauty ! the magnificent stream
Of your tears flows into my anguished heart ;
Your falsehood makes me drunk and my soul slakes its thirst
At the flood from your eyes, which Suffering causes !
– But why is she weeping ? She, the perfect beauty,
Who could put at her feet the conquered human race,
What secret malady gnaws at those sturdy flanks ?
– She is weeping, fool, because she has lived !
And because she lives ! But what she deplores
Most, what makes her shudder down to her knees,
Is that tomorrow, alas ! she will still have to live !
Tomorrow, after tomorrow, always ! – like us !

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Mask

(An allegoric statue in Renaissance style)
To Ernest Christophe, sculptor

Study with me this Florentinian treasure,
Whose undulous and muscular design
Welds Grace with Strength in sisterhood divine ;
A marvel only wonderment can measure,
Divinely strong, superbly slim and fine,
She's formed to reign upon a bed of pleasure
And charm some prince or pontiff in his leisure.
See, too, her smile voluptuously shine,
Where sheer frivolity displays its sign :
That lingering look of languor, guile, and cheek,
The dainty face, which veils of gauze enshrine,
That seems in conquering accents thus to speak :
"Pleasure commands me. Love my brow has crowned !"
Enamouring our thoughts in humble duty,
True majesty with merriment is found.
Approach, let's take a turn about her beauty.
O blasphemy ! Dread shock ! Our hopes to pique,
This lovely body, promising delight,

Ends at the top in a two-headed freak.
But no ! it's just a mask that tricked our sight,
Fooling us with that exquisite grimace :
On the reverse you see her proper face,
Fiercely convulsed, in its true self revealed,
Which from our sight that lying mask concealed.
– O sad great beauty ! The grand river, fed
By your rich tears, debouches in my heart.
Though I am rapt with your deceptive art,
My soul is slaked upon the tears you shed.
And yet why does she weep ? Such peerless grace
Could trample down the conquered human race.
What evil gnaws her flank so strong and sleek ?
She weeps because she's lived, and that she lives.
Madly she weeps for that. But more she grieves
(And at the knees she trembles and goes weak)
Because tomorrow she must live, and then
The next day, and forever – like us men.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Hymne à la Beauté (1861)

Hymne à la Beauté

Viens-tu du ciel profond ou sors-tu de l'abîme,
O Beauté ? ton regard, infernal et divin,
Verse confusément le bienfait et le crime,
Et l'on peut pour cela te comparer au vin.
Tu contiens dans ton oeil le couchant et l'aurore ;
Tu répands des parfums comme un soir orageux ;
Tes baisers sont un philtre et ta bouche une amphore
Qui font le héros lâche et l'enfant courageux.
Sors-tu du gouffre noir ou descends-tu des astres ?
Le Destin charmé suit tes jupons comme un chien ;
Tu sèmes au hasard la joie et les désastres,
Et tu gouvernes tout et ne réponds de rien.
Tu marches sur des morts, Beauté, dont tu te moques ;
De tes bijoux l'Horreur n'est pas le moins charmant,
Et le Meurtre, parmi tes plus chères breloques,
Sur ton ventre orgueilleux danse amoureusement.
L'éphémère ébloui vole vers toi, chandelle,
Crépite, flambe et dit : Bénissons ce flambeau !
L'amoureux pantelant incliné sur sa belle
A l'air d'un moribond caressant son tombeau.
Que tu viennes du ciel ou de l'enfer, qu'importe,
Ô Beauté ! monstre énorme, effrayant, ingénue !
Si ton oeil, ton souris, ton pied, m'ouvrent la porte
D'un Infini que j'aime et n'ai jamais connu ?
De Satan ou de Dieu, qu'importe ? Ange ou Sirène,
Qu'importe, si tu rends, – fée aux yeux de velours,
Rythme, parfum, lueur, ô mon unique reine ! –
L'univers moins hideux et les instants moins lourds ?

– Charles Baudelaire

Hymn to Beauty

Do you come from Heaven or rise from the abyss,
 Beauty ? Your gaze, divine and infernal,
 Pours out confusedly benevolence and crime,
 And one may for that, compare you to wine.

You contain in your eyes the sunset and the dawn ;
 You scatter perfumes like a stormy night ;
 Your kisses are a philtre, your mouth an amphora,
 Which make the hero weak and the child courageous.

Do you come from the stars or rise from the black pit ?
 Destiny, bewitched, follows your skirts like a dog ;
 You sow at random joy and disaster,
 And you govern all things but answer for nothing.

You walk upon corpses which you mock, O Beauty !
 Of your jewels Horror is not the least charming,
 And Murder, among your dearest trinkets,
 Dances amorously upon your proud belly.

The dazzled moth flies toward you, O candle !
 Crepitates, flames and says : "Blessed be this flambeau !"
 The panting lover bending o'er his fair one
 Looks like a dying man caressing his own tomb,

Whether you come from heaven or from hell, who cares,
 O Beauty ! Huge, fearful, ingenuous monster !
 If your regard, your smile, your foot, open for me
 An Infinite I love but have not ever known ?

From God or Satan, who cares ? Angel or Siren,
 Who cares, if you make, – fay with the velvet eyes,
 Rhythm, perfume, glimmer ; my one and only queen !
 The world less hideous, the minutes less leaden ?

– William Aggeler, 1954

Hymn to Beauty

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.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Parfum exotique

Parfum exotique

Quand, les deux yeux fermés, en un soir chaud d'automne,
Je respire l'odeur de ton sein chaleureux,
Je vois se dérouler des rivages heureux
Qu'éblouissent les feux d'un soleil monotone ;
Une île paresseuse où la nature donne
Des arbres singuliers et des fruits savoureux ;
Des hommes dont le corps est mince et vigoureux,
Et des femmes dont l'oeil par sa franchise étonne.
Guidé par ton odeur vers de charmants climats,
Je vois un port rempli de voiles et de mâts
Encor tout fatigués par la vague marine,
Pendant que le parfum des verts tamariniers,
Qui circule dans l'air et m'enfle la narine,
Se mêle dans mon âme au chant des mariniers.

– Charles Baudelaire

Exotic Perfume

When, with both my eyes closed, on a hot autumn night,
I inhale the fragrance of your warm breast
I see happy shores spread out before me,
On which shines a dazzling and monotonous sun ;
A lazy isle to which nature has given
Singular trees, savory fruits,
Men with bodies vigorous and slender,
And women in whose eyes shines a startling candor.
Guided by your fragrance to these charming countries,

I see a port filled with sails and rigging
Still utterly wearied by the waves of the sea,
While the perfume of the green tamarinds,
That permeates the air, and elates my nostrils,
Is mingled in my soul with the sailors' chanteys.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Exotic Perfume

When I, with eyes shut, on warm autumn eves,
The fragrance of your warmer breast respire,
I see a country bathed in solar fire
Whose happy shores its lustre never leaves ;
An isle of indolence, where nature raises
Singular trees and fruits both sweet and tender,
Where men have bodies vigorous and slender
And women's eyes a candour that amazes.

Led by your scent to fairer climes at last,
I see a port of sails, where every mast
Seems weary of the labours of its cruise ;
While scents of tamarind, blown here and there,
Swelling my nostrils as they rinse the air,
Are mingled with the chanties of the crews.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

La Chevelure (1861)

La Chevelure

Ô toison, moutonnant jusque sur l'encolure !
Ô boucles ! Ô parfum chargé de nonchaloir !
Extase ! Pour peupler ce soir l'alcôve obscure
Des souvenirs dormant dans cette chevelure,
Je la veux agiter dans l'air comme un mouchoir !

La langoureuse Asie et la brûlante Afrique,
Tout un monde lointain, absent, presque défunt,
Vit dans tes profondeurs, forêt aromatique !
Comme d'autres esprits voguent sur la musique,
Le mien, ô mon amour ! nage sur ton parfum.

J'irai lagrave-bas où l'arbre et l'homme, pleins de sève,
Se pâment longuement sous l'ardeur des climats ;
Fortes tresses, soyez la houle qui m'enlève !
Tu contiens, mer d'ébène, un éblouissant rêve
De voiles, de rameurs, de flammes et de mâts :

Un port retentissant où mon âme peut boire
À grands flots le parfum, le son et la couleur
Où les vaisseaux, glissant dans l'or et dans la moire
Ouvrent leurs vastes bras pour embrasser la gloire
D'un ciel pur où frémit l'éternelle chaleur.

Je plongerai ma tête amoureuse d'ivresse
Dans ce noir océan où l'autre est enfermé ;
Et mon esprit subtil que le roulis caresse
Saura vous retrouver, ô féconde paresse,
Infinis bergements du loisir embaumé !

Cheveux bleus, pavillon de ténèbres tendues
Vous me rendez l'azur du ciel immense et rond ;
Sur les bords duvetés de vos mèches tordues

Je m'enivre ardemment des senteurs confondues
De l'huile de coco, du musc et du goudron.
Longtemps ! toujours ! ma main dans ta crinière lourde
Sèmera le rubis, la perle et le saphir,
Afin qu'à mon désir tu ne sois jamais sourde !
N'es-tu pas l'oasis où je rêve, et la gourde
Où je hume à longs traits le vin du souvenir ?

– Charles Baudelaire

Head of Hair

O fleecy hair, falling in curls to the shoulders !
O black locks ! O perfume laden with nonchalance !
Ecstasy ! To people the dark alcove tonight
With memories sleeping in that thick head of hair.
I would like to shake it in the air like a scarf !
Sweltering Africa and languorous Asia,
A whole far-away world, absent, almost defunct,
Dwells in your depths, aromatic forest !
While other spirits glide on the wings of music,
Mine, O my love ! floats upon your perfume.
I shall go there, where trees and men, full of vigor,
Are plunged in a deep swoon by the heat of the land ;
Heady tresses be the billows that carry me away !
Ebony sea, you hold a dazzling dream
Of rigging, of rowers, of pennons and of masts :
A clamorous harbor where my spirit can drink
In great draughts the perfume, the sound and the color ;
Where the vessels gliding through the gold and the moire
Open wide their vast arms to embrace the glory
Of a clear sky shimmering with everlasting heat.
I shall bury my head enamored with rapture
In this black sea where the other is imprisoned ;
And my subtle spirit caressed by the rolling
Will find you once again, O fruitful indolence,
Endless lulling of sweet-scented leisure !
Blue-black hair, pavilion hung with shadows,
You give back to me the blue of the vast round sky ;

In the downy edges of your curling tresses
I ardently get drunk with the mingled odors
Of oil of coconut, of musk and tar.
A long time ! Forever ! my hand in your thick mane
Will scatter sapphires, rubies and pearls,
So that you will never be deaf to my desire !
Aren't you the oasis of which I dream, the gourd
From which I drink deeply, the wine of memory ?

– William Aggeler, 1954

Her Hair

O fleece that down her nape rolls, plume on plume !
O curls ! O scent of nonchalance and ease !
What ecstasy ! To populate this room
With memories it harbours in its gloom,
I'd shake it like a banner on the breeze.
Hot Africa and languid Asia play
(An absent world, defunct, and far away)
Within that scented forest, dark and dim.
As other souls on waves of music swim,
Mine on its perfume sails, as on the spray.
I'll journey there, where man and sap-filled tree
Swoon in hot light for hours. Be you my sea,
Strong tresses ! Be the breakers and gales
That waft me. Your black river holds, for me,
A dream of masts and rowers, flames and sails.
A port, resounding there, my soul delivers
With long deep draughts of perfumes, scent, and clamour,
Where ships, that glide through gold and purple rivers,
Fling wide their vast arms to embrace the glamour
Of skies wherein the heat forever quivers.
I'll plunge my head in it, half drunk with pleasure –
In this black ocean that engulfs her form.
My soul, caressed with wavelets there may measure
Infinite rocking in embalmed leisure,
Creative idleness that fears no storm !
Blue tresses, like a shadow-stretching tent,

You shed the blue of heavens round and far.
Along its downy fringes as I went
I reeled half-drunken to confuse the scent
Of oil of coconuts, with musk and tar.
My hand forever in your mane so dense,
Rubies and pearls and sapphires there will sow,
That you to my desire be never slow –
Oasis of my dreams, and gourd from whence
Deep-draughted wines of memory will flow.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Je t'adore à l'égal de la voûte nocturne

Je t'adore à l'égal de la voûte nocturne

Je t'adore à l'égal de la voûte nocturne,
Ô vase de tristesse, ô grande taciturne,
Et t'aime d'autant plus, belle, que tu me fuis,
Et que tu me parais, ornement de mes nuits,
Plus ironiquement accumuler les lieues
Qui séparent mes bras des immensités bleues.
Je m'avance à l'attaque, et je grimpe aux assauts,
Comme après un cadavre un choeur de vermisseaux,
Et je chéris, ô bête implacable et cruelle !
Jusqu'à cette froideur par où tu m'es plus belle !

– Charles Baudelaire

I Adore You as Much as the Nocturnal Vault...

I adore you as much as the nocturnal vault,
O vase of sadness, most taciturn one,
I love you all the more because you flee from me,
And because you appear, ornament of my nights,
More ironically to multiply the leagues
That separate my arms from the blue infinite.
I advance to attack, and I climb to assault,
Like a swarm of maggots after a cadaver,
And I cherish, implacable and cruel beast,
Even that coldness which makes you more beautiful.

– William Aggeler, 1954

More Than Night's Vault, It's You That I Adore

More than night's vault, it's you that I adore,
Vessel of sorrow, silent one, the more
Because you flee from me, and seem to place,
Ornament of my nights ! more leagues of space
Ironically between me and you
Than part me from these vastitudes of blue.
I charge, attack, and mount to the assault
As worms attack a corpse within a vault.
And cherish even the coldness that you boast,
By which, harsh beast, you subjugate me most.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Tu mettrais l'univers entier dans ta ruelle

Tu mettrais l'univers entier dans ta ruelle

Tu mettrais l'univers entier dans ta ruelle,
Femme impure ! L'ennui rend ton âme cruelle.
Pour exercer tes dents à ce jeu singulier,
Il te faut chaque jour un cœur au râtelier.
Tes yeux, illuminés ainsi que des boutiques
Et des ifs flamboyants dans les fêtes publiques,
Usent insolemment d'un pouvoir emprunté,
Sans connaître jamais la loi de leur beauté.
Machine aveugle et sourde, en cravates féconde !
Salutaire instrument, buveur du sang du monde,
Comment n'as-tu pas honte et comment n'as-tu pas
Devant tous les miroirs vu pâlir tes appas ?
La grandeur de ce mal où tu te crois savante
Ne t'a donc jamais fait reculer d'épouante,
Quand la nature, grande en ses desseins cachés
De toi se sert, ô femme, ô reine des péchés,
– De toi, vil animal, – pour pétrir un génie ?
Ô fangeuse grandeur ! sublime ignominie !

– Charles Baudelaire

You Would Take the Whole World to Bed with You

You would take the whole world to bed with you,
Impure woman ! Ennui makes your soul cruel ;
To exercise your teeth at this singular game,

You need a new heart in the rack each day.
Your eyes, brilliant as shop windows
Or as blazing lamp-stands at public festivals,
Insolently use a borrowed power
Without ever knowing the law of their beauty.
Blind, deaf machine, fecund in cruelties !
Remedial instrument, drinker of the world's blood,
Why are you not ashamed and why have you not seen
In every looking-glass how your charms are fading ?
Why have you never shrunk at the enormity
Of this evil at which you think you are expert,
When Nature, resourceful in her hidden designs,
Makes use of you, woman, O queen of sin,
Of you, vile animal, – to fashion a genius ?
O foul magnificence ! Sublime ignominy !

– William Aggeler, 1954

You'd Stick the World into Your Bedside Lane

You'd stick the world into your bedside lane.
It's boredom makes you callous to all pain.
To exercise your teeth for this strange task,
A heart upon a rake, each day, you'd ask.
Your eyes lit up like shopfronts, or the trees
With lanterns on the night of public sprees,
Make insolent misuse of borrowed power
And scorn the law of beauty that's their dower.
Oh deaf-and-dumb machine, harm-breeding fool
World sucking leech, yet salutary tool !
Have you not seen your beauties blanch to pass
Before their own reflection in the glass ?
Before this pain, in which you think you're wise,
Does not its greatness shock you with surprise,
To think that Nature, deep in projects hidden,
Has chosen you, vile creature of the midden,
To knead a genius for succeeding time.
O sordid grandeur ! Infamy sublime !

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Sed non satiata

Sed non satiata

Bizarre déité, brune comme les nuits,
Au parfum mélangé de musc et de havane,
Œuvre de quelque obi, le Faust de la savane,
Sorcière au flanc d'Ebène, enfant des noirs minuits,
Je préfère au constance, à l'opium, aux nuits,
L'élixir de ta bouche où l'amour se pavane ;
Quand vers toi mes désirs partent en caravane,
Tes yeux sont la citerne où boivent mes ennuis.
Par ces deux grands yeux noirs, soupiraux de ton âme,
Ô démon sans pitié ! verse-moi moins de flamme ;
Je ne suis pas le Styx pour t'embrasser neuf fois,
Hélas ! et je ne puis, Mégère libertine,
Pour briser ton courage et te mettre aux abois,
Dans l'enfer de ton lit devenir Proserpine !

– Charles Baudelaire

Unslakeable Lust

Singular deity, brown as the nights,
Scented with the perfume of Havana and musk,
Work of some obeah, Faust of the savanna,
Witch with ebony flanks, child of the black midnight,
I prefer to *constance*, to opium, to *nuits*,
The nectar of your mouth upon which love parades ;
When toward you my desires set out in caravan,
Your eyes are the cistern that gives drink to my cares.
Through those two great black eyes, the outlets of your soul,

O pitiless demon ! pour upon me less flame ;
I'm not the River Styx to embrace you nine times,
Alas ! and I cannot, licentious Megaera,
To break your spirit and bring you to bay
In the hell of your bed turn into Proserpine !

– William Aggeler, 1954

Sed non Satiata

Strange goddess, brown as evening to the sight,
Whose scent is half of musk, half of havanah,
Work of some obi, Faust of the Savanah,
Ebony witch, and daughter of the night.
By far preferred to troth, or drugs, or sleep,
Love vaunts the red elixir of your mouth.
My caravan of longings seeks in drouth
Your eyes, the wells at which my cares drink deep.
Through those black eyes, by which your soul respires,
Pitiless demon ! pour less scorching fires.
I am no Styx nine times with flame to wed.
Nor can I turn myself to Proserpine
To break your spell, Megera libertine !
Within the dark inferno of your bed.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Avec ses vêtements ondoyants et nacrés

Avec ses vêtements ondoyants et nacrés

Avec ses vêtements ondoyants et nacrés,
Même quand elle marche on croirait qu'elle danse,
Comme ces longs serpents que les jongleurs sacrés
Au bout de leurs bâtons agitent en cadence.
Comme le sable morne et l'azur des déserts,
Insensibles tous deux à l'humaine souffrance
Comme les longs réseaux de la houle des mers
Elle se développe avec indifférence.
Ses yeux polis sont faits de minéraux charmants,
Et dans cette nature étrange et symbolique
Où l'ange inviolé se mêle au sphinx antique,
Où tout n'est qu'or, acier, lumière et diamants,
Resplendit à jamais, comme un astre inutile,
La froide majesté de la femme stérile.

– Charles Baudelaire

With Her Pearly, Undulating Dresses

With her pearly, undulating dresses,
Even when she's walking, she seems to be dancing
Like those long snakes which the holy fakirs
Set swaying in cadence on the end of their staffs.
Like the dull sand and the blue of deserts,
Both of them unfeeling toward human suffering,
Like the long web of the ocean's billows,

She unfurls herself with unconcern.
Her glossy eyes are made of charming minerals
And in that nature, symbolic and strange,
Where pure angel is united with ancient sphinx,
Where everything is gold, steel, light and diamonds,
There glitters forever, like a useless star,
The frigid majesty of the sterile woman.

– William Aggeler, 1954

With Waving Opalescence in Her Gown

With waving opalescence in her gown,
Even when she walks along, you think she's dancing.
Like those long snakes which charmers, while entrancing,
Wave with their wands, in cadence, up and down.
Like the sad sands of deserts and their skies,
By human sufferings untouched and free,
Or like the surfy curtains of the sea,
She flaunts a cold indifference. Her eyes
Are made of charming minerals well-burnished.
Her nature, both by sphynx and angel furnished,
Is old, intact, symbolic, and bizarre :
She seems, made all of gems, steel, light, and gold,
In barrenness, majestic, hard, and cold,
To blaze forever, like a useless star.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Serpent qui danse

Le Serpent qui danse

Que j'aime voir, chère indolente,
De ton corps si beau,
Comme une étoffe vacillante,
Miroiter la peau !
Sur ta chevelure profonde
Aux âcres parfums,
Mer odorante et vagabonde
Aux flots bleus et bruns,
Comme un navire qui s'éveille
Au vent du matin,
Mon âme rêveuse appareille
Pour un ciel lointain.
Tes yeux, où rien ne se révèle
De doux ni d'amer,
Sont deux bijoux froids où se mêle
L'or avec le fer.
À te voir marcher en cadence,
Belle d'abandon,
On dirait un serpent qui danse
Au bout d'un bâton.
Sous le fardeau de ta paresse
Ta tête d'enfant
Se balance avec la mollesse
D'un jeune éléphant,
Et ton corps se penche et s'allonge
Comme un fin vaisseau
Qui roule bord sur bord et plonge
Ses vergues dans l'eau.

Comme un flot grossi par la fonte
Des glaciers grondants,
Quand l'eau de ta bouche remonte
Au bord de tes dents,
Je crois boire un vin de Bohême,
Amer et vainqueur,
Un ciel liquide qui parsème
D'étoiles mon coeur !

– Charles Baudelaire

The Dancing Serpent

Indolent darling, how I love
To see the skin
Of your body so beautiful
Shimmer like silk !
Upon your heavy head of hair
With its acrid scents,
Adventurous, odorant sea
With blue and brown waves,
Like a vessel that awakens
To the morning wind,
My dreamy soul sets sail
For a distant sky.
Your eyes where nothing is revealed
Of bitter or sweet,
Are two cold jewels where are mingled
Iron and gold.
To see you walking in cadence
With fine abandon,
One would say a snake which dances
On the end of a staff.
Under the weight of indolence
Your child-like head sways
Gently to and fro like the head
Of a young elephant,
And your body stretches and leans
Like a slender ship

That rolls from side to side and dips
Its yards in the sea.
Like a stream swollen by the thaw
Of rumbling glaciers,
When the water of your mouth rises
To the edge of your teeth,
It seems I drink Bohemian wine,
Bitter and conquering,
A liquid sky that scatters
Stars in my heart !

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Snake that Dances

I love to watch, while you are lazing,
Your skin. It iridesces
Like silk or satin, smoothly-glazing
The light that it caresses.
Under your tresses dark and deep
Where acrid perfumes drown,
A fragrant sea whose breakers sweep
In mazes blue or brown,
My soul, a ship, to the attraction
Of breezes that bedizen
Its swelling canvas, clears for action
And seeks a far horizon.
Your eyes where nothing can be seen
Either of sweet or bitter
But gold and iron mix their sheen,
Seem frosty gems that glitter.
To see you rhythmically advancing
Seems to my fancy fond
As if it were a serpent dancing
Waved by the charmer's wand.
Under the languorous moods that weigh it,
Your childish head bows down :
Like a young elephant's you sway it
With motions soft as down.

Your body leans upon the hips
Like a fine ship that laves
Its hull from side to side, and dips
Its yards into the waves.
When, as by glaciers ground, the spate
Swells hissing from beneath,
The water of your mouth, elate,
Rises between your teeth –
It seems some old Bohemian vintage
Triumphant, fierce, and tart,
A liquid heaven that showers a mintage
Of stars across my heart.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Une Charogne

Une Charogne

Rappelez-vous l'objet que nous vîmes, mon âme,
Ce beau matin d'été si doux :
Au détour d'un sentier une charogne infâme
Sur un lit semé de cailloux,
Les jambes en l'air, comme une femme lubrique,
Brûlante et suant les poisons,
Ouvrait d'une façon nonchalante et cynique
Son ventre plein d'exhalaisons.
Le soleil rayonnait sur cette pourriture,
Comme afin de la cuire à point,
Et de rendre au centuple à la grande Nature
Tout ce qu'ensemble elle avait joint ;
Et le ciel regardait la carcasse superbe
Comme une fleur s'épanouir.
La puanteur était si forte, que sur l'herbe
Vous crûtes vous évanouir.
Les mouches bourdonnaient sur ce ventre putride,
D'où sortaient de noirs bataillons
De larves, qui coulaient comme un épais liquide
Le long de ces vivants haillons.
Tout cela descendait, montait comme une vague
Ou s'élançait en pétillant ;
On eût dit que le corps, enflé d'un souffle vague,
Vivait en se multipliant.
Et ce monde rendait une étrange musique,
Comme l'eau courante et le vent,
Ou le grain qu'un vanneur d'un mouvement rythmique
Agite et tourne dans son van.

Les formes s'effaçaient et n'étaient plus qu'un rêve,
Une ébauche lente à venir
Sur la toile oubliée, et que l'artiste achève
Seulement par le souvenir.

Derrière les rochers une chienne inquiète
Nous regardait d'un oeil fâché,
Epant le moment de reprendre au squelette
Le morceau qu'elle avait lâché.

– Et pourtant vous serez semblable à cette ordure,
À cette horrible infection,
Etoile de mes yeux, soleil de ma nature,
Vous, mon ange et ma passion !

Oui ! telle vous serez, ô la reine des grâces,
Apres les derniers sacrements,
Quand vous irez, sous l'herbe et les floraisons grasses,
Moisir parmi les ossements.

Alors, ô ma beauté ! dites à la vermine
Qui vous mangera de baisers,
Que j'ai gardé la forme et l'essence divine
De mes amours décomposés !

– Charles Baudelaire

A Carcass

My love, do you recall the object which we saw,
That fair, sweet, summer morn !
At a turn in the path a foul carcass
On a gravel strewn bed,
Its legs raised in the air, like a lustful woman,
Burning and dripping with poisons,
Displayed in a shameless, nonchalant way
Its belly, swollen with gases.

The sun shone down upon that putrescence,
As if to roast it to a turn,
And to give back a hundredfold to great Nature
The elements she had combined ;
And the sky was watching that superb cadaver
Blossom like a flower.

So frightful was the stench that you believed
You'd faint away upon the grass.
The blow-flies were buzzing round that putrid belly,
From which came forth black battalions
Of maggots, which oozed out like a heavy liquid
All along those living tatters.
All this was descending and rising like a wave,
Or poured out with a crackling sound ;
One would have said the body, swollen with a vague breath,
Lived by multiplication.
And this world gave forth singular music,
Like running water or the wind,
Or the grain that winnowers with a rhythmic motion
Shake in their winnowing baskets.
The forms disappeared and were no more than a dream,
A sketch that slowly falls
Upon the forgotten canvas, that the artist
Completes from memory alone.
Crouched behind the boulders, an anxious dog
Watched us with angry eye,
Waiting for the moment to take back from the carcass
The morsel he had left.
– And yet you will be like this corruption,
Like this horrible infection,
Star of my eyes, sunlight of my being,
You, my angel and my passion !
Yes ! thus will you be, queen of the Graces,
After the last sacraments,
When you go beneath grass and luxuriant flowers,
To molder among the bones of the dead.
Then, O my beauty ! say to the worms who will
Devour you with kisses,
That I have kept the form and the divine essence
Of my decomposed love !

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Carcase

The object that we saw, let us recall,

This summer morn when warmth and beauty mingle –
At the path's turn, a carcase lay asprawl
Upon a bed of shingle.
Legs raised, like some old whore far-gone in passion,
The burning, deadly, poison-sweating mass
Opened its paunch in careless, cynic fashion,
Ballooned with evil gas.
On this putrescence the sun blazed in gold,
Cooking it to a turn with eager care –
So to repay to Nature, hundredfold,
What she had mingled there.
The sky, as on the opening of a flower,
On this superb obscenity smiled bright.
The stench drove at us, with such fearsome power
You thought you'd swoon outright.
Flies trumpeted upon the rotten belly
Whence larvae poured in legions far and wide,
And flowed, like molten and liquefient jelly,
Down living rags of hide.
The mass ran down, or, like a wave elated
Rolled itself on, and crackled as if frying :
You'd think that corpse, by vague breath animated,
Drew life from multiplying.
Through that strange world a rustling rumour ran
Like rushing water or a gust of air,
Or grain that winnowers, with rhythmic fan,
Sweep simmering here and there.
It seemed a dream after the forms grew fainter,
Or like a sketch that slowly seems to dawn
On a forgotten canvas, which the painter
From memory has drawn.
Behind the rocks a restless cur that slunk
Eyed us with fretful greed to recommence
His feast, amidst the bonework, on the chunk
That he had torn from thence.
Yet you'll resemble this infection too
One day, and stink and sprawl in such a fashion,
Star of my eyes, sun of my nature, you,
My angel and my passion !
Yes, you must come to this, O queen of graces,

At length, when the last sacraments are over,
And you go down to moulder in dark places
Beneath the grass and clover.
Then tell the vermin as it takes its pleasance
And feasts with kisses on that face of yours,
I've kept intact in form and godlike essence
Our decomposed amours !

– Roy Campbell, 1952

De profundis clamavi

De profundis clamavi

J'implore ta pitié, Toi, l'unique que j'aime,
Du fond du gouffre obscur où mon coeur est tombé.
C'est un univers morne à l'horizon plombé,
Où nagent dans la nuit l'horreur et le blasphème ;
Un soleil sans chaleur plane au-dessus six mois,
Et les six autres mois la nuit couvre la terre ;
C'est un pays plus nu que la terre polaire
– Ni bêtes, ni ruisseaux, ni verdure, ni bois !
Or il n'est pas d'horreur au monde qui surpassé
La froide cruauté de ce soleil de glace
Et cette immense nuit semblable au vieux Chaos ;
Je jalouse le sort des plus vils animaux
Qui peuvent se plonger dans un sommeil stupide,
Tant l'écheveau du temps lentement se dévide !

– Charles Baudelaire

Out of the Depths Have I Cried

I beg pity of Thee, the only one I love,
From the depths of the dark pit where my heart has fallen,
It's a gloomy world with a leaden horizon,
Where through the night swim horror and blasphemy ;
A frigid sun floats overhead six months,
And the other six months darkness covers the land ;
It's a land more bleak than the polar wastes
– Neither beasts, nor streams, nor verdure, nor woods !
But no horror in the world can surpass

The cold cruelty of that glacial sun
And this vast night which is like old Chaos ;
I envy the lot of the lowest animals
Who are able to sink into a stupid sleep,
So slowly does the skein of time unwind !

– William Aggeler, 1954

De Profundis Clamavi

Have pity, my one love and sole delight !
Down to a dark abyss my heart has sounded,
A mournful world, by grey horizons bounded,
Where blasphemy and horror swim by night.
For half the year a heatless sun gives light,
The other half the night obscures the earth.
The arctic regions never knew such dearth.
No woods, nor streams, nor creatures meet the sight.
No horror in the world could match in dread
The cruelty of that dire sun of frost,
And that huge night like primal chaos spread.
I envy creatures of the vilest kind
That they in stupid slumber can be lost –
So slowly does the skein of time unwind !

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Vampire

Le Vampire

Toi qui, comme un coup de couteau,
Dans mon coeur plaintif es entrée ;
Toi qui, forte comme un troupeau
De démons, vins, folle et parée,
De mon esprit humilié
Faire ton lit et ton domaine ;
– Infâme à qui je suis lié
Comme le forçat à la chaîne,
Comme au jeu le joueur tête,
Comme à la bouteille l'ivrogne,
Comme aux vermines la charogne
– Maudite, maudite sois-tu !

J'ai prié le glaive rapide
De conquérir ma liberté,
Et j'ai dit au poison perfide
De secourir ma lâcheté.

Hélas ! le poison et le glaive
M'ont pris en dédain et m'ont dit :
« Tu n'es pas digne qu'on t'enlève
À ton esclavage maudit,

Imbécile ! – de son empire
Si nos efforts te délivraient,
Tes baisers ressusciteraient
Le cadavre de ton vampire ! »

– Charles Baudelaire

The Vampire

You who, like the stab of a knife,
Entered my plaintive heart ;
You who, strong as a herd
Of demons, came, ardent and adorned,
To make your bed and your domain
Of my humiliated mind
– Infamous bitch to whom I’m bound
Like the convict to his chain,
Like the stubborn gambler to the game,
Like the drunkard to his wine,
Like the maggots to the corpse,
– Accurst, accurst be you !
I begged the swift poniard
To gain for me my liberty,
I asked perfidious poison
To give aid to my cowardice.
Alas ! both poison and the knife
Contemptuously said to me :
“You do not deserve to be freed
From your accursed slavery,
Fool ! – if from her domination
Our efforts could deliver you,
Your kisses would resuscitate
The cadaver of your vampire !”

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Vampire

You, who like a dagger ploughed
Into my heart with deadly thrill :
You who, stronger than a crowd
Of demons, mad, and dressed to kill,
Of my dejected soul have made
Your bed, your lodging, and domain :
To whom I’m linked (Unseemly jade !)
As is a convict to his chain,

Or as the gamester to his dice,
Or as the drunkard to his dram,
Or as the carrion to its lice –
I curse you. Would my curse could damn !
I have besought the sudden blade
To win for me my freedom back.
Perfidious poison I have prayed
To help my cowardice. Alack !
Both poison and the sword disdained
My cowardice, and seemed to say
“You are not fit to be unchained
From your damned servitude. Away,
You imbecile ! since if from her empire
We were to liberate the slave,
You’d raise the carrion of your vampire,
By your own kisses, from the grave.”

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Léthé (1857)

Le Léthé

Viens sur mon cœur, âme cruelle et sourde,
Tigre adoré, monstre aux airs indolents ;
Je veux longtemps plonger mes doigts tremblants
Dans l'épaisseur de ta crinière lourde ;

Dans tes jupons remplis de ton parfum
Ensevelir ma tête endolorie,
Et respirer, comme une fleur flétrie,
Le doux relent de mon amour défunt.

Je veux dormir ! dormir plutôt que vivre !
Dans un sommeil aussi doux que la mort,
J'étalerai mes baisers sans remords
Sur ton beau corps poli comme le cuivre.

Pour engloutir mes sanglots apaisés
Rien ne me vaut l'abîme de ta couche ;
L'oubli puissant habite sur ta bouche,
Et le Léthé coule dans tes baisers.

À mon destin, désormais mon délice,
J'obéirai comme un prédestiné ;
Martyr docile, innocent condamné,
Dont la ferveur attise le supplice,

Je sucrai, pour noyer ma rancoeur,
Le népenthès et la bonne ciguë
Aux bouts charmants de cette gorge aiguë
Qui n'a jamais emprisonné de cœur.

– Charles Baudelaire

Lethe

Come, lie upon my breast, cruel, insensitive soul,
Adored tigress, monster with the indolent air ;
I want to plunge trembling fingers for a long time
In the thickness of your heavy mane,
To bury my head, full of pain
In your skirts redolent of your perfume,
To inhale, as from a withered flower,
The moldy sweetness of my defunct love.
I wish to sleep ! to sleep rather than live !
In a slumber doubtful as death,
I shall remorselessly cover with my kisses
Your lovely body polished like copper.
To bury my subdued sobbing
Nothing equals the abyss of your bed,
Potent oblivion dwells upon your lips
And Lethe flows in your kisses.
My fate, hereafter my delight,
I'll obey like one predestined ;
Docile martyr, innocent man condemned,
Whose fervor aggravates the punishment.
I shall suck, to drown my rancor,
Nepenthe and the good hemlock
From the charming tips of those pointed breasts
That have never guarded a heart.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Lethe

Rest on my heart, deaf, cruel soul, adored
Tigress, and monster with the lazy air.
I long, in the black jungles of your hair,
To force each finger thrilling like a sword :
Within wide skirts, filled with your scent, to hide
My bruised and battered forehead hour by hour,
And breathe, like dampness from a withered flower,
The pleasant mildew of a love that died.

Rather than live, I wish to sleep, alas !
Lulled in a slumber soft and dark as death,
In ruthless kisses lavishing my breath
Upon your body smooth as burnished brass.
To swallow up my sorrows in eclipse,
Nothing can match your couch's deep abysses ;
The stream of Lethe issues from your kisses
And powerful oblivion from your lips.
Like a predestined victim I submit :
My doom, to me, henceforth, is my delight,
A willing martyr in my own despite
Whose fervour fans the faggots it has lit.
To drown my rancour and to heal its smart,
Nepenthe and sweet hemlock, peace and rest,
I'll drink from the twin summits of a breast
That never lodged the semblance of a heart.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Une nuit que j'étais près d'une affreuse Juive

Une nuit que j'étais près d'une affreuse Juive

Une nuit que j'étais près d'une affreuse Juive,
Comme au long d'un cadavre un cadavre étendu,
Je me pris à songer près de ce corps vendu
À la triste beauté dont mon désir se prive.
Je me représentai sa majesté native,
Son regard de vigueur et de grâces armé,
Ses cheveux qui lui font un casque parfumé,
Et dont le souvenir pour l'amour me ravive.
Car j'eusse avec ferveur bâisé ton noble corps,
Et depuis tes pieds frais jusqu'à tes noires tresses
Déroulé le trésor des profondes caresses,
Si, quelque soir, d'un pleur obtenu sans effort
Tu pouvais seulement, ô reine des cruelles !
Obscurcir la splendeur de tes froides prunelles.

– Charles Baudelaire

One Night I Lay with a Frightful Jewess

One night I lay with a frightful Jewess,
Like a cadaver stretched out beside a cadaver,
And I began to muse, by that peddled body,
About the sad beauty my desire forgoes.
I pictured to myself her native majesty,
Her gaze with power and with grace endowed,
The hair which forms for her a perfumed casque,

And whose souvenir awakens love's desire.
For I would fervently have kissed your fair body
And spread out the treasure of soulful caresses
From your cool feet up to your tresses black,
If, some night, with a tear evoked without effort
You could only, queen of cruel women !
Softten the brilliancy of your cold eyes.

– William Aggeler, 1954

One Night When, near a Fearful Jewess Lying

One night when, near a fearful Jewess lying,
As one corpse by another corpse, I sprawled –
Beside the venal body I was buying,
The beauty that was absent I recalled.
I pictured you in native majesty
With glances full of energy and grace,
Your hair, a perfumed casque, whose memory
Revives me for the amorous embrace,
For madly I'd have kissed your noble frame,
And from your cool feet to your great black tresses,
Unleashed the treasure of profound caresses,
If with a single tear that gently came
You could have quenched, O queen of all the cruel !
The blazing of your eyes, their icy fuel.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Remords posthume

Remords posthume

Lorsque tu dormiras, ma belle ténébreuse,
Au fond d'un monument construit en marbre noir,
Et lorsque tu n'auras pour alcôve et manoir
Qu'un caveau pluvieux et qu'une fosse creuse ;
Quand la pierre, opprimant ta poitrine peureuse
Et tes flancs qu'assouplit un charmant nonchaloir,
Empêchera ton cœur de battre et de vouloir,
Et tes pieds de courir leur course aventureuse,
Le tombeau, confident de mon rêve infini
(Car le tombeau toujours comprendra le poète),
Durant ces grandes nuits d'où le somme est banni,
Te dira : « Que vous sert, courtisane imparfaite,
De n'avoir pas connu ce que pleurent les morts ? »
– Et le vers rongera ta peau comme un remords.

– Charles Baudelaire

Posthumous Remorse

When you will sleep, O dusky beauty mine,
Beneath a monument fashioned of black marble,
When you will have for bedroom and mansion
Only a rain-swept vault and a hollow grave,
When the slab of stone, oppressing your frightened breast
And your flanks now supple with charming nonchalance,
Will keep your heart from beating, from wishing,
And your feet from running their adventurous course,
The tomb, confidant of my infinite dreams

(For the tomb will always understand the poet)
Through those long nights from which all sleep is banned, will
say :
“What does it profit you, imperfect courtesan,
Not to have known why the dead weep ?”
– And like remorse the worm will gnaw your skin.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Posthumous Remorse

When you're asleep, dear shadow-coloured wench,
Within a coal-black, marble monument :
When, for your room and mansion, you are pent
In a wet cellar and a hollow trench :
When the stone, pressing on your startled breast
And flanks in fluent suppleness competing,
Prevents your heart from wishing or from beating,
Your feet from racing on their reckless quest.
The tomb that shares my deathless recollection
(For poets best are understood by tombs)
On those long nights, when never sleep presumes,
Will say, “What boots, frail vase of imperfection,
Not to have known what pains with death begin ?” –
And, like remorse, the worm will gnaw your skin.

– Roy Campbell, 1952



Le Chat

Le Chat

Viens, mon beau chat, sur mon coeur amoureux ;
Retiens les griffes de ta patte,
Et laisse-moi plonger dans tes beaux yeux,
Mêlés de métal et d'agate.

Lorsque mes doigts caressent à loisir
Ta tête et ton dos élastique,
Et que ma main s'enivre du plaisir
De palper ton corps électrique,
Je vois ma femme en esprit. Son regard,
Comme le tien, aimable bête
Profond et froid, coupe et fend comme un dard,
Et, des pieds jusques à la tête,
Un air subtil, un dangereux parfum
Nagent autour de son corps brun.

– Charles Baudelaire

The Cat

Come, superb cat, to my amorous heart ;
Hold back the talons of your paws,
Let me gaze into your beautiful eyes
Of metal and agate.

When my fingers leisurely caress you,
Your head and your elastic back,
And when my hand tingles with the pleasure
Of feeling your electric body,
In spirit I see my woman. Her gaze

Like your own, amiable beast,
Profound and cold, cuts and cleaves like a dart,
And, from her head down to her feet,
A subtle air, a dangerous perfume
Floats about her dusky body.

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Cat

Come, my fine cat, against my loving heart ;
Sheathe your sharp claws, and settle.
And let my eyes into your pupils dart
Where agate sparks with metal.

Now while my fingertips caress at leisure
Your head and wiry curves,
And that my hand's elated with the pleasure
Of your electric nerves,

I think about my woman – how her glances
Like yours, dear beast, deep-down
And cold, can cut and wound one as with lances ;
Then, too, she has that vagrant
And subtle air of danger that makes fragrant
Her body, lithe and brown.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Duellum (1861)

Duellum

Deux guerriers ont couru l'un sur l'autre, leurs armes
Ont éclaboussé l'air de lueurs et de sang.
Ces jeux, ces cliquetis du fer sont les vacarmes
D'une jeunesse en proie à l'amour vagissant.
Les glaives sont brisés ! comme notre jeunesse,
Ma chère ! Mais les dents, les ongles acérés,
Vengent bientôt l'épée et la dague traîtresse.
– Ô fureur des coeurs mûrs par l'amour ulcérés !
Dans le ravin hanté des chats-pards et des onces
Nos héros, s'étreignant méchamment, ont roulé,
Et leur peau fleurira l'aridité des ronces.
– Ce gouffre, c'est l'enfer, de nos amis peuplé !
Roulons-y sans remords, amazone inhumaine,
Afin d'éterniser l'ardeur de notre haine !

– Charles Baudelaire

The Duel

Two warriors rushed upon each other ; their arms
Spattered the air with sparks and blood.
This fencing, this clashing of steel, are the uproar
Of youth when it becomes a prey to pining love.
The blades are broken ! like our youth
My darling ! But the teeth, the steely fingernails,
Soon avenge the sword and the treacherous dagger.
– O Fury of mature hearts embittered by love !
In the ravine haunted by lynxes and panthers,

Our heroes viciously clasping each other, rolled,
And their skin will put blooms on the barren brambles.
This abyss, it is hell, thronged with our friends !
Let us roll there without remorse, cruel amazon,
So the ardor of our hatred will be immortalized !

– William Aggeler, 1954

Duel

Two fighters rushed together : sabres bleak
With crimson blood-gouts lit the air above.
That clinking swordplay was the tender squeak
Of youth , when it's a prey to bleating love.
The swords are splintered, like our youth, my darling,
And now it's teeth and talons are the fashion.
The clash of swords is child's play to the snarling
Of hearts adult in ulcerated passion.
In the ravine by lynx and leopard haunted,
Our heroes, wrestling heroes, roll undaunted.
Rags of their skin flower red upon the gorse.
This gulf is hell, and peopled by our friends.
Here, hellcat ! Come, let's roll without remorse
To celebrate a feud that never ends !

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Balcon

Le Balcon

Mère des souvenirs, maîtresse des maîtresses,
Ô toi, tous mes plaisirs ! ô toi, tous mes devoirs !
Tu te rappelleras la beauté des caresses,
La douceur du foyer et le charme des soirs,
Mère des souvenirs, maîtresse des maîtresses !

Les soirs illuminés par l'ardeur du charbon,
Et les soirs au balcon, voilés de vapeurs roses.
Que ton sein m'était doux ! que ton coeur m'était bon !
Nous avons dit souvent d'impérissables choses
Les soirs illuminés par l'ardeur du charbon.

Que les soleils sont beaux dans les chaudes soirées !
Que l'espace est profond ! que le coeur est puissant !
En me penchant vers toi, reine des adorées,
Je croyais respirer le parfum de ton sang.
Que les soleils sont beaux dans les chaudes soirées !

La nuit s'épaississait ainsi qu'une cloison,
Et mes yeux dans le noir devinaient tes prunelles,
Et je buvais ton souffle, ô douceur ! ô poison !
Et tes pieds s'endormaient dans mes mains fraternelles.
La nuit s'épaississait ainsi qu'une cloison.

Je sais l'art d'évoquer les minutes heureuses,
Et revis mon passé blotti dans tes genoux.
Car à quoi bon chercher tes beautés langoureuses
Ailleurs qu'en ton cher corps et qu'en ton coeur si doux ?
Je sais l'art d'évoquer les minutes heureuses !

Ces serments, ces parfums, ces baisers infinis,
Renaîtront-ils d'un gouffre interdit à nos sondes,
Comme montent au ciel les soleils rajeunis

Après s'être lavés au fond des mers profondes ?
– Ô serments ! ô parfums ! ô baisers infinis !

– Charles Baudelaire

The Balcony

Mother of memories, mistress of mistresses,
O you, all my pleasure, O you, all my duty !
You'll remember the sweetness of our caresses,
The peace of the fireside, the charm of the evenings.
Mother of memories, mistress of mistresses !

The evenings lighted by the glow of the coals,
The evenings on the balcony, veiled with rose mist ;
How soft your breast was to me ! how kind was your heart !
We often said imperishable things,
The evenings lighted by the glow of the coals.

How splendid the sunsets are on warm evenings !
How deep space is ! how potent is the heart !
In bending over you, queen of adored women,
I thought I breathed the perfume in your blood.
How splendid the sunsets are on warm evenings !

The night was growing dense like an encircling wall,
My eyes in the darkness felt the fire of your gaze
And I drank in your breath, O sweetness, O poison !
And your feet nestled soft in my brotherly hands.
The night was growing dense like an encircling wall.

I know the art of evoking happy moments,
And live again our past, my head laid on your knees,
For what's the good of seeking your languid beauty
Elsewhere than in your dear body and gentle heart ?
I know the art of evoking happy moments.

Those vows, those perfumes, those infinite kisses,
Will they be reborn from a gulf we may not sound,
As rejuvenated suns rise in the heavens
After being bathed in the depths of deep seas ?
– O vows ! O perfumes ! O infinite kisses !

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Balcony

Mother of memories, queen of paramours,
Yourself are all my pleasure, all my duty ;
You will recall caresses that were yours
And fireside evenings in their warmth and beauty.
Mother of memories, queen of paramours.

On eves illumined by the light of coal,
The balcony beneath a rose-veiled sky,
Your breast how soft ! Your heart how good and whole !
We spoke eternal things that cannot die –
On eves illumined by the light of coal !

How splendid sets the sun of a warm evening !
How deep is space ! the heart how full of power !
When, queen of the adored, towards you leaning,
I breathed the perfume of your blood in flower.
How splendid sets the sun of a warm evening !

The evening like an alcove seemed to thicken,
And as my eyes astrologised your own,
Drinking your breath, I felt sweet poisons quicken,
And in my hands your feet slept still as stone.
The evening like an alcove seemed to thicken.

I know how to resuscitate dead minutes.
I see my past, its face hid in your knees.
How can I seek your languorous charm save in its
Own source, your heart and body formed to please.
I know how to resuscitate dead minutes.

These vows, these perfumes, and these countless kisses,
Reborn from gulfs that we could never sound,
Will they, like suns, once bathed in those abysses,
Rejuvenated from the deep, rebound –
These vows, these perfumes, and these countless kisses ?

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Possédé (1861)

Le Possédé

Le soleil s'est couvert d'un crêpe. Comme lui,
Ô Lune de ma vie ! emmitoufle-toi d'ombre
Dors ou fume à ton gré ; sois muette, sois sombre,
Et plonge tout entière au gouffre de l'Ennui ;
Je t'aime ainsi ! Pourtant, si tu veux aujourd'hui,
Comme un astre éclipsé qui sort de la pénombre,
Te pavanner aux lieux que la Folie encombre
C'est bien ! Charmant poignard, jaillis de ton étui !
Allume ta prunelle à la flamme des lustres !
Allume le désir dans les regards des rustres !
Tout de toi m'est plaisir, morbide ou pétulant ;
Sois ce que tu voudras, nuit noire, rouge aurore ;
Il n'est pas une fibre en tout mon corps tremblant
Qui ne crie : Ô mon cher Belzébuth, je t'adore !

– Charles Baudelaire

The One Possessed

The sun was covered with a crape. Like him,
Moon of my life ! swathe yourself with darkness ;
Sleep or smoke as you will ; be silent, be somber,
And plunge your whole being into Ennui's abyss ;
I love you thus ! However, if today you wish,
Like an eclipsed star that leaves the half-light,
To strut in the places which Madness encumbers,
That is fine ! Charming poniard spring out of your sheath !
Light your eyes at the flame of the lusters !

Kindle passion in the glances of churls !
To me you're all pleasure, morbid or petulant ;
Be what you will, black night, red dawn ;
There is no fiber in my whole trembling body
That does not cry : "Dear Beelzebub, I adore you !"

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Possessed

The sun in crepe has muffled up his fire.
Moon of my life ! Half shade yourself like him.
Slumber or smoke. Be silent and be dim,
And in the gulf of boredom plunge entire ;
I love you thus ! However, if you like,
Like some bright star from its eclipse emerging,
To flaunt with Folly where the crowds are surging –
Flash, lovely dagger, from your sheath and strike !
Light up your eyes from chandeliers of glass !
Light up the lustful looks of louts that pass !
Morbid or petulant, I thrill before you.
Be what you will, black night or crimson dawn ;
No fibre of my body tautly-drawn,
But cries : "Beloved demon, I adore you !"

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Un Fantôme (1861)

Un Fantôme

I LES TÉNÈBRES

Dans les caveaux d'insondable tristesse
Où le Destin m'a déjà relégué ;
Où jamais n'entre un rayon rose et gai ;
Où, seul avec la Nuit, maussade hôtesse,
Je suis comme un peintre qu'un Dieu moqueur
Condamné à peindre, hélas ! sur les ténèbres ;
Où, cuisinier aux appétits funèbres,
Je fais bouillir et je mange mon cœur,
Par instants brille, et s'allonge, et s'étale
Un spectre fait de grâce et de splendeur.
À sa rêveuse allure orientale,
Quand il atteint sa totale grandeur,
Je reconnais ma belle visiteuse :
C'est Elle ! noire et pourtant lumineuse.

II LE PARFUM

Lecteur, as-tu quelquefois respiré
Avec ivresse et lente gourmandise
Ce grain d'encens qui remplit une église,
Ou d'un sachet le musc invétéré ?
Charme profond, magique, dont nous grise
Dans le présent le passé restauré !
Ainsi l'amant sur un corps adoré
Du souvenir cueille la fleur exquise.
De ses cheveux élastiques et lourds,
Vivant sachet, encensoir de l'alcôve,
Une senteur montait, sauvage et fauve,

Et des habits, mousseline ou velours,
Tout imprégnés de sa jeunesse pure,
Se dégageait un parfum de fourrure.

III LE CADRE

Comme un beau cadre ajoute à la peinture,
Bien qu'elle soit d'un pinceau très-vanté,
Je ne sais quoi d'étrange et d'enchante
En l'isolant de l'immense nature,

Ainsi bijoux, meubles, métaux, dorure,
S'adaptaient juste à sa rare beauté ;
Rien n'offusquait sa parfaite clarté,
Et tout semblait lui servir de bordure.

Même on eût dit parfois qu'elle croyait
Que tout voulait l'aimer ; elle noyait
Sa nudité voluptueusement

Dans les baisers du satin et du linge,
Et, lente ou brusque, à chaque mouvement
Montrait la grâce enfantine du singe.

IV LE PORTRAIT

La Maladie et la Mort font des cendres
De tout le feu qui pour nous flamboya.
De ces grands yeux si fervents et si tendres,
De cette bouche où mon coeur se noya,

De ces baisers puissants comme un dictame,
De ces transports plus vifs que des rayons,
Que reste-t-il ? C'est affreux, ô mon âme !
Rien qu'un dessin fort pâle, aux trois crayons,

Qui, comme moi, meurt dans la solitude,
Et que le Temps, injurieux vieillard,
Chaque jour frotte avec son aile rude...

Noir assassin de la Vie et de l'Art,
Tu ne tueras jamais dans ma mémoire
Celle qui fut mon plaisir et ma gloire !

– Charles Baudelaire

A Phantom

I THE DARKNESS

In the mournful vaults of fathomless gloom
To which Fate has already banished me,
Where a bright, rosy beam never enters ;
Where, alone with Night, that sullen hostess,
I'm like a painter whom a mocking God
Condemns to paint, alas ! upon darkness ;
Where, a cook with a woeful appetite,
I boil and I eat my own heart ;
At times there shines, and lengthens, and broadens
A specter made of grace and of splendor ;
By its dreamy, oriental manner,
When it attains its full stature,
I recognize my lovely visitor ;
It's She ! dark and yet luminous.

II THE PERFUME

Reader, have you at times inhaled
With rapture and slow greediness
That grain of incense which pervades a church,
Or the inveterate musk of a sachet ?
Profound, magical charm, with which the past,
Restored to life, makes us inebriate !
Thus the lover from an adored body
Plucks memory's exquisite flower.
From her tresses, heavy and elastic,
Living sachet, censer for the bedroom,
A wild and savage odor rose,
And from her clothes, of muslin or velvet,
All redolent of her youth's purity,
There emanated the odor of furs.

III THE FRAME

As a lovely frame adds to a painting,
Even though it's from a master's brush,
An indefinable strangeness and charm
By isolating it from vast nature,
Thus jewels, metals, gilding, furniture,

Suited her rare beauty to perfection ;
Nothing dimmed its flawless splendor ;
All seemed to form for her a frame.
One would even have said that she believed
That everything wished to love her ; she drowned
Her nudity voluptuously
In the kisses of the satin and linen,
And, with each movement, slow or brusque,
She showed the child-like grace of a monkey.

IV THE PORTRAIT

Disease and Death make ashes
Of all the fire that flamed for us.
Of those wide eyes, so fervent and tender,
Of that mouth in which my heart was drowned,
Of those kisses potent as dittany,
Of those transports more vivid than sunbeams,
What remains ? It is frightful, O my soul !
Nothing but a faint sketch, in three colors,
Which, like me, is dying in solitude,
And which Time, that contemptuous old man,
Grazes each day with his rough wing...
Black murderer of Life and Art,
You will never kill in my memory
The one who was my glory and my joy !

– William Aggeler, 1954

A Phantom

I THE SHADES

My fate confines me, dark and shady,
In vaults of lone unfathomed grief.
No rosy sunbeams bring relief.
Alone with Night, my grim landlady,
I'm like a painter whom God spites
To paint on shades, and cook and eat
My own poor heart, the only meat
Of my funereal appetites.

Sometimes a spectre dim, reclining
In grace and glory, can be seen.
With dreamy oriental mien.
When fully its own form defining,
I recognise who it must be,
Sombre yet luminous, it's She !

II THE PERFUME

Reader, say, have you ever breathed,
With lazy greed and joy, the dusk
Of an old church with incense wreathed,
Or smelt an ancient bag of musk ?
It's by such charms the Nevermore
Intoxicates us in the Now –
As lovers to Remembrance bow
Over the bodies they adore.
From her thick tresses as they fume
(Scent-sack and censer of the room)
A feline, tawny perfume springs.
Her muslins and her velvets smooth
Give off, made pregnant with her youth,
Scents of the fur of prowling things.

III THE FRAME

As a fine frame improves a plate
Although the graver needs no vaunting –
I know not what of strange and haunting
(From nature vast to isolate
Her beauty) was conferred by gems,
Metals, and gear. She mingled with them,
And swirled them all into her rhythm
As in her skirts the flouncing herns.
They say she thought all things were stung
With love for her. Her naked flesh
She loved to drown in kisses fresh
Of flax or satin. To her clung,
In all the movements of her shape,
The childish graces of the ape.

IV THE PORTRAIT

Sickness and death will form the ash and dust
Of all the fire we blazed with in such splendour,
Of those great eyes so fervent and so tender,
The mouth wherein my heart would drown its lust,
The kisses strong as marum, the delightful,
Fierce transports livelier than the solar rays.
What can remain ? My soul, the truth is frightful !
A fading sketch, a faint three-coloured haze,
Which (like myself unfriended) wanes away,
While Time, insulting dotard, every day,
Brushes it fainter with his heedless wing...
Killer of life and art ! black, evil King !
You'll never kill, within my soul, the story
Of that which was my rapture and my glory.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Je te donne ces vers afin que si mon nom

Je te donne ces vers afin que si mon nom

Je te donne ces vers afin que si mon nom
Aborde heureusement aux époques lointaines,
Et fait rêver un soir les cervelles humaines,
Vaisseau favorisé par un grand aquilon,
Ta mémoire, pareille aux fables incertaines,
Fatigue le lecteur ainsi qu'un tympanon,
Et par un fraternel et mystique chaînon
Reste comme pendue à mes rimes hautaines ;
Être maudit à qui, de l'abîme profond
Jusqu'au plus haut du ciel, rien, hors moi, ne répond !
– Ô toi qui, comme une ombre à la trace éphémère,
Foules d'un pied léger et d'un regard serein
Les stupides mortels qui t'ont jugée amère,
Statue aux yeux de jais, grand ange au front d'airain !

– Charles Baudelaire

I Give You These Verses So That If My Name

I give you these verses so that if my name,
A vessel favored by a strong north wind,
Fortunately reaches the distant future's shore,
And some night sets the minds of men to dreaming,
Your memory, like fables shrouded in the past,
Will weary the reader like a dulcimer,
And by a mystical, brotherly bond

Remain suspended from my haughty verse ;
Accurst being to whom, from the deep abyss
To the highest heaven, nothing responds, save me !
– O you who, like an ephemeral ghost,
Trample lightly and with a serene look
Upon the dull mortals who found you repugnant,
Jet eyed statue, tall angel with a brow of bronze !

– William Aggeler, 1954

For You This Poem : If My Name Should Reach

For you this poem : if my name should reach
Favoured by mighty gales, to far-off times,
Like a proud vessel sailing to the beach,
To stir the brains of humans with my rhymes –
Your memory, uncertain as a myth,
Will tire the reader like an endless gong,
And be a mystic, kindred chain wherewith
He'll hang suspended to my towering song :
Curs'd soul to whom (from the supernal sky
To hell's abyss) none responds but I!
O you, who like a fleeting shadow pass,
Spurn with light foot and with serenest gaze
The stupid mortals who have grudged you praise,
O jade-eyed statue, angel browsed with brass !

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Semper eadem (1861)

Semper eadem

« D'où vous vient, disiez-vous, cette tristesse étrange,
Montant comme la mer sur le roc noir et nu ? »
– Quand notre coeur a fait une fois sa vendange
Vivre est un mal. C'est un secret de tous connu,
Une douleur très simple et non mystérieuse
Et, comme votre joie, éclatante pour tous.
Cessez donc de chercher, ô belle curieuse !
Et, bien que votre voix soit douce, taisez-vous !
Taisez-vous, ignorante ! âme toujours ravie !
Bouche au rire enfantin ! Plus encor que la Vie,
La Mort nous tient souvent par des liens subtils.
Laissez, laissez mon cœur s'enivrer d'un *mensonge*,
Plonger dans vos beaux yeux comme dans un beau songe
Et sommeiller longtemps à l'ombre de vos cils !

– Charles Baudelaire

Ever the Same

"Whence comes to you, you asked, this singular sadness
That rises like the sea on the naked, black rock ?"
– Once our heart has gathered the grapes from its vineyard,
Living is an evil. That's a secret known to all,
A simple pain, with no mystery,
As obvious to all men as your gaiety.
So abandon your search, inquisitive beauty ;
And though your voice is sweet, be still !
Be silent, ignorant ! ever enraptured soul !

Mouth with the child-like laugh ! Still more than Life,
Death holds us frequently with subtle bonds.
Let, let my heart become drunk with a *lie* ; let it
Plunge into your fair eyes as into a fair dream
And slumber long in the shadow of your lashes.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Semper Eadem

“Whence,” ask you, “does this strange new sadness flow
Like rising tides on rocks, black, bare, and vast ?”
For human hearts, when vintage-time is past,
To live is bad. That secret all men know –
An obvious sorrow, with no mystery, shown,
Clear as your joy, to everyone around.
O curious one, seek nothing more profound,
And speak not, though your voice be sweet in tone.
Hush, ignorant ! Hush, soul that’s still enraptured,
And mouth of childish laughter ! Neatly captured,
Death pulls us, more than life, with subtle wile.
Oh let my thought get drunk upon a *lie*,
And plunge, as in a dream, in either eye,
And in their lashes’ shadow sleep awhile !

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Tout entière

Tout entière

Le Démon, dans ma chambre haute
Ce matin est venu me voir,
Et, tâchant à me prendre en faute
Me dit : « Je voudrais bien savoir

Parmi toutes les belles choses
Dont est fait son enchantement,
Parmi les objets noirs ou roses
Qui composent son corps charmant,
Quel est le plus doux. »— Ô mon âme !
Tu répondis à l'Abhorré :
« Puisqu'en Elle tout est dictame
Rien ne peut être préféré.

Lorsque tout me ravit, j'ignore
Si quelque chose me séduit.
Elle éblouit comme l'Aurore
Et console comme la Nuit ;

Et l'harmonie est trop exquise,
Qui gouverne tout son beau corps,
Pour que l'impuissante analyse
En note les nombreux accords.

Ô métamorphose mystique
De tous mes sens fondus en un !
Son haleine fait la musique,
Comme sa voix fait le parfum ! »

– Charles Baudelaire

All of Her

The Devil into my high room
This morning came to pay a call,
And trying to find me in fault
Said : "I should like to know,
Among all the beautiful things
Which make her an enchantress,
Among the objects black or rose
That compose her charming body,
Which is the sweetest." – O my soul !
You answered the loathsome Creature :
"Since in Her all is dittany,
No single thing can be preferred.
When all delights me, I don't know
If some one thing entrances me.
She dazzles like the Dawn
And consoles like the Night ;
And the harmony that governs
Her whole body is too lovely
For impotent analysis
To note its numerous accords.
O mystic metamorphosis
Of all my senses joined in one !
Her breath makes music,
And her voice makes perfume !"

– William Aggeler, 1954

All in One

The Demon called on me this morning,
In my high room. As is his way,
Thinking to catch me without warning,
He put this question : "Tell me, pray,
Of all the beauties that compose,
The strange enchantment of her ways,
Amongst the wonders black or rose,
Which object most excites your praise,

And is the climax in her litany?"
My soul, you answered the Abhorred,
"Since she is fashioned, all, of dittany,
No part is most to be adored.
Since I am ravished, I ignore a
Degree of difference in delight.
She dazzles me like the aurora
And she consoles me like the night.
The harmony's so exquisite
That governs her, it is in vain
Analysis would try to split
The unity of such a strain.
O mystic fusion that, enwreathing
My senses, fuses each in each,
To hear the music of her breathing
And breathe the perfume of her speech."

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Que diras-tu ce soir, pauvre âme solitaire

Que diras-tu ce soir, pauvre âme solitaire

Que diras-tu ce soir, pauvre âme solitaire,
Que diras-tu, mon cœur, cœur autrefois flétris,
À la très belle, à la très bonne, à la très chère,
Dont le regard divin t'a soudain refleuri ?

– Nous mettrons notre orgueil à chanter ses louanges :
Rien ne vaut la douceur de son autorité
Sa chair spirituelle a le parfum des Anges
Et son oeil nous revêt d'un habit de clarté.
Que ce soit dans la nuit et dans la solitude
Que ce soit dans la rue et dans la multitude
Son fantôme dans l'air danse comme un flambeau.
Parfois il parle et dit : « Je suis belle, et j'ordonne
Que pour l'amour de moi vous n'aimiez que le Beau ;
Je suis l'Ange gardien, la Muse et la Madone. »

– Charles Baudelaire

What Will You Say Tonight, Poor Solitary Soul

What will you say tonight, poor solitary soul,
What will you say, my heart, heart once so withered,
To the kindest, dearest, the fairest of women,
Whose divine glance suddenly revived you ?

– We shall try our pride in singing her praises :
There is nothing sweeter than to do her bidding ;
Her spiritual flesh has the fragrance of Angels,

And when she looks upon us we are clothed with light.

Be it in the darkness of night, in solitude,
Or in the city street among the multitude,
Her image in the air dances like a torch flame.

Sometimes it speaks and says : "I am fair, I command
That for your love of me you love only Beauty ;
I am your guardian Angel, your Muse and Madonna."

– William Aggeler, 1954

What Can You Say, Poor Lonely Soul of Mine

What can you say, poor lonely soul of mine,
Or you, poor heart, so long ago turned sour,
To the best, dearest, loveliest, whose divine
Regard has made you open like a flower ?

We'll set our pride to sing her highest praise
Naught to her sweet authority compares :
Her psychic flesh is formed of fragrant airs.
Her glances clothe us in a suit of rays.

Be it in solitude at dead of night,
Or in the crowded streets of glaring light,
Her phantom like a torch before me streams.
It speaks : "I'm beautiful. These orders take.
Love naught but Beauty, always, for my sake,
Madonna, guardian Angel, Muse of dreams."

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Flambeau vivant

Le Flambeau vivant

Ils marchent devant moi, ces Yeux pleins de lumières,
Qu'un Ange très savant a sans doute aimantés
Ils marchent, ces divins frères qui sont mes frères,
Secouant dans mes yeux leurs feux diamantés.

Me sauvant de tout piège et de tout péché grave,
Ils conduisent mes pas dans la route du Beau
Ils sont mes serviteurs et je suis leur esclave
Tout mon être obéit à ce vivant flambeau.

Charmants Yeux, vous brillez de la clarté mystique
Qu'ont les cierges brûlant en plein jour ; le soleil
Rougit, mais n'éteint pas leur flamme fantastique ;
Ils célèbrent la Mort, vous chantez le Réveil
Vous marchez en chantant le réveil de mon âme,
Astres dont nul soleil ne peut flétrir la flamme !

– Charles Baudelaire

The Living Torch

They walk in front of me, those eyes aglow with light
Which a learned Angel has rendered magnetic ;
They walk, divine brothers who are my brothers too,
Casting into my eyes diamond scintillations.

They save me from all snares and from all grievous sin ;
They guide my steps along the pathway of Beauty ;
They are my servitors, I am their humble slave ;
My whole being obeys this living torch.
Bewitching eyes, you shine like mystical candles

That burn in broad daylight ; the sun
Reddens, but does not quench their eerie flame ;
While they celebrate Death, you sing the Awakening ;
You walk, singing the awakening of my soul,
Bright stars whose flame no sun can pale !

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Living Torch

Those lit eyes go before me, in full view,
(Some cunning angel magnetised their light) –
Heavenly twins, yet my own brothers too,
Shaking their diamond blaze into my sight.
My steps from every trap or sin to save,
In the strait road of Beauty they conduct me.
They are my servants, and I am their slave,
Obedient in whatever they instruct me.
Delightful eyes, you burn with mystic rays
Like candles in broad day ; red suns may blaze,
But cannot quench their still, fantastic light.
Those candles burn for death, but you for waking :
You sing the dawn that in my soul is breaking,
Stars which no sun could ever put to flight !

– Roy Campbell, 1952

À Celle qui est trop gaie (1857)

À Celle qui est trop gaie

Ta tête, ton geste, ton air
Sont beaux comme un beau paysage ;
Le rire joue en ton visage
Comme un vent frais dans un ciel clair.

Le passant chagrin que tu frôles
Est ébloui par la santé
Qui jaillit comme une clarté
De tes bras et de tes épaules.

Les retentissantes couleurs
Dont tu parsème tes toilettes
Jettent dans l'esprit des poètes
L'image d'un ballet de fleurs.

Ces robes folles sont l'emblème
De ton esprit bariolé ;
Folle dont je suis affolé,
Je te hais autant que je t'aime !

Quelquefois dans un beau jardin
Où je traînais mon atonie,
J'ai senti, comme une ironie,
Le soleil déchirer mon sein,
Et le printemps et la verdure
Ont tant humilié mon coeur,
Que j'ai puni sur une fleur
L'insolence de la Nature.

Ainsi je voudrais, une nuit,
Quand l'heure des voluptés sonne,
Vers les trésors de ta personne,
Comme un lâche, ramper sans bruit,

Pour châtier ta chair joyeuse,
Pour meurtrir ton sein pardonné,
Et faire à ton flanc étonné
Une blessure large et creuse,
Et, vertigineuse douceur !
À travers ces lèvres nouvelles,
Plus éclatantes et plus belles,
T'infuser mon venin, ma soeur !

– Charles Baudelaire

To One Who Is Too Gay

Your head, your bearing, your gestures
Are fair as a fair countryside ;
Laughter plays on your face
Like a cool wind in a clear sky.
The gloomy passer-by you meet
Is dazzled by the glow of health
Which radiates resplendently
From your arms and shoulders.
The touches of sonorous color
That you scatter on your dresses
Cast into the minds of poets
The image of a flower dance.
Those crazy frocks are the emblem
Of your multi-colored nature ;
Mad woman whom I'm mad about,
I hate and love you equally !
At times in a lovely garden
Where I dragged my atony,
I have felt the sun tear my breast,
As though it were in mockery ;
Both the springtime and its verdure
So mortified my heart
That I punished a flower
For the insolence of Nature.
Thus I should like, some night,
When the hour for pleasure sounds,

To creep softly, like a coward,
Toward the treasures of your body,
To whip your joyous flesh
And bruise your pardoned breast,
To make in your astonished flank
A wide and gaping wound,
And, intoxicating sweetness !
Through those new lips,
More bright, more beautiful,
To infuse my venom, my sister !

– William Aggeler, 1954

To One Who Is Too Gay

Your head, your gestures, and your air
Are lovely as a landscape ; smiles
Rimple upon your face at whiles
Like winds in the clear sky up there.
The grumpy passers that you graze
Are dazzled by the radiant health,
And the illimitable wealth
Your arms and shoulders seem to blaze.
The glaring colours that, in showers,
Clash in your clothes with such commotion,
In poets' minds suggest the notion
Of a mad ballet-dance of flowers.
These garish dresses illustrate
Your spirit, striped with every fad.
O madwoman, whom, quite as mad,
I love as madly as I hate.
Sometimes in gardens, seeking rest,
Where I have dragged my soul atonic,
I've felt the sun with gaze ironic
Tearing the heart within my breast.
The spring and verdure, dressed to stagger,
Humiliate me with such power
That I have punished, in a flower,
The insolence of Nature's swagger.

And so, one night, I'd like to sneak,
When night has tolled the hour of pleasure,
A craven thief, towards the treasure
Which is your person, plump and sleek.
To punish your bombastic flesh,
To bruise your breast immune to pain,
To farrow down your flank a lane
Of gaping crimson, deep and fresh.
And, most vertiginous delight!
Into those lips, so freshly striking
And daily lovelier to my liking –
Infuse the venom of my sprite.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Réversibilité

Réversibilité

Ange plein de gaieté, connaissez-vous l'angoisse,
La honte, les remords, les sanglots, les ennuis,
Et les vagues terreurs de ces affreuses nuits
Qui compriment le coeur comme un papier qu'on froisse ?
Ange plein de gaieté, connaissez-vous l'angoisse ?

Ange plein de bonté, connaissez-vous la haine,
Les poings crispés dans l'ombre et les larmes de fiel,
Quand la Vengeance bat son infernal rappel,
Et de nos facultés se fait le capitaine ?
Ange plein de bonté connaissez-vous la haine ?

Ange plein de santé, connaissez-vous les Fièvres,
Qui, le long des grands murs de l'hospice blafard,
Comme des exilés, s'en vont d'un pied traînard,
Cherchant le soleil rare et remuant les lèvres ?
Ange plein de santé, connaissez-vous les Fièvres ?

Ange plein de beauté, connaissez-vous les rides,
Et la peur de vieillir, et ce hideux tourment
De lire la secrète horreur du dévouement
Dans des yeux où longtemps burent nos yeux avide !
Ange plein de beauté, connaissez-vous les rides ?

Ange plein de bonheur, de joie et de lumières,
David mourant aurait demandé la santé
Aux émanations de ton corps enchanté ;
Mais de toi je n'implore, ange, que tes prières,
Ange plein de bonheur, de joie et de lumières !

– Charles Baudelaire

Reversibility

Angel full of gaiety, do you know anguish,
Shame, remorse, sobs, vexations,
And the vague terrors of those frightful nights
That compress the heart like a paper one crumples ?
Angel full of gaiety, do you know anguish ?
Angel full of kindness, do you know hatred,
The clenched fists in the darkness and the tears of gall,
When Vengeance beats out his hellish call to arms,
And makes himself the captain of our faculties ?
Angel full of kindness, do you know hatred ?
Angel full of health, do you know Fever,
Walking like an exile, moving with dragging steps,
Along the high, wan walls of the charity ward,
And with muttering lips seeking the rare sunlight ?
Angel full of health, do you know Fever ?
Angel full of beauty, do you know wrinkles,
The fear of growing old, and the hideous torment
Of reading in the eyes of her he once adored
Horror at seeing love turning to devotion ?
Angel full of beauty, do you know wrinkles ?
Angel full of happiness, of joy and of light,
David on his death-bed would have appealed for health
To the emanations of your enchanted flesh ;
But of you, angel, I beg only prayers,
Angel full of happiness, of joy and of light !

– William Aggeler, 1954

Reversibility

Angel of gaiety, have you known anguish,
Shame and remorse, tears, boredom, and dismay,
Vague horrors of the nights in which we languish,
Which crumple hearts like papers thrown away ?
Angel of gaiety, have you known anguish ?
Angel of kindness, have you met with hate ?
Fists clenched in gloom, eyes running tears of gall,
When Vengeance beats his drum to subjugate

Our faculties, the captain of them all ?
Angel of kindness, have you met with hate ?
Angel of health, have you beheld the Fevers ?
Across pale walls of wards they limp and stumble,
Like exiles wan, with agues, chills, and shivers,
Seeking the scanty sun with lips that mumble.
Angel of health, have you beheld the Fevers ?
Angel of beauty, do you know Old Age,
The fear of wrinkles, and the dire emotion,
In eyes we've pierced too long, as on a page,
To read the secret horror of devotion ?
Angel of beauty do you know Old Age ?
Angel of goodness, radiance, and delight,
The dying David would have begged to share
The emanations of your body bright.
But all I wish to ask of you is prayer,
Angel of goodness, radiance, and delight.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Confession

Confession

Une fois, une seule, aimable et douce femme,
À mon bras votre bras poli
S'appuya (sur le fond ténébreux de mon âme
Ce souvenir n'est point pâli) ;
Il était tard ; ainsi qu'une médaille neuve
La pleine lune s'étalait,
Et la solennité de la nuit, comme un fleuve,
Sur Paris dormant ruisselait.
Et le long des maisons, sous les portes cochères,
Des chats passaient furtivement
L'oreille au guet, ou bien, comme des ombres chères,
Nous accompagnaient lentement.
Tout à coup, au milieu de l'intimité libre
Eclose à la pâle clarté
De vous, riche et sonore instrument où ne vibre
Que la radieuse gaieté,
De vous, claire et joyeuse ainsi qu'une fanfare
Dans le matin étincelant
Une note plaintive, une note bizarre
S'échappa, tout en chancelant
Comme une enfant chétive, horrible, sombre, immonde,
Dont sa famille rougirait,
Et qu'elle aurait longtemps, pour la cacher au monde,
Dans un caveau mise au secret.
Pauvre ange, elle chantait, votre note criarde :
« Que rien ici-bas n'est certain,
Et que toujours, avec quelque soin qu'il se farde,
Se trahit l'égoïsme humain ;

Que c'est un dur métier que d'être belle femme,
Et que c'est le travail banal
De la danseuse folle et froide qui se pâme
Dans son sourire machinal ;
Que bâtir sur les coeurs est une chose sotte ;
Que tout craque, amour et beauté,
Jusqu'à ce que l'Oubli les jette dans sa hotte
Pour les rendre à l'Eternité ! »
J'ai souvent évoqué cette lune enchantée,
Ce silence et cette langueur,
Et cette confidence horrible chuchotée
Au confessionnal du cœur.

– Charles Baudelaire

Confession

One time, once only, sweet, amiable woman,
On my arm your smooth arm
Rested (on the tenebrous background of my soul
That memory is not faded) ;
It was late ; like a newly struck medal
The full moon spread its rays,
And the solemnity of the night streamed
Like a river over sleeping Paris.
And along the houses, under the porte-cocheres,
Cats passed by furtively,
With ears pricked up, or else, like beloved shades,
Slowly escorted us.
Suddenly, in the midst of that frank intimacy
Born in the pale moonlight,
From you, sonorous, rich instrument which vibrates
Only with radiant gaiety,
From you, clear and joyful as a fanfare
In the glistening morning light,
A plaintive note, a bizarre note
Escaped, faltering
Like a puny, filthy, sullen, horrible child,
Who would make his family blush,

And whom they have hidden for a long time
In a secret cellar.
Poor angel, it sang, your discordant note :
"That naught is certain here below,
That always, though it paint its face with utmost care
Man's selfishness reveals itself,
That it's a hard calling to be a lovely woman,
And that it is the banal task
Of the cold and silly danseuse who faints away
With a mechanical smile,
That to build on hearts is a foolish thing,
That all things break, love, and beauty,
Till Oblivion tosses them into his dossier
To give them back to Eternity!"
I've often evoked that enchanted moon,
The silence and the languidness,
And that horrible confidence whispered
In the heart's confessional.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Confession

Once, and once only, kind and gentle lady,
Your polished arm on mine you placed
(Deep down within my spirit, dark and shady,
I keep the memory uneffaced).
A medal, newly-coined, of flashing silver,
The full moon shone. The night was old.
Its solemn grandeur, like a mighty river,
Through sleeping Paris softly rolled.
Along the streets, by courtyard doors, cats darted
And passed in furtive, noiseless flight
With cars pricked ; or, like shades of friends departed,
Followed us slowly through the night.
Cutting this easy intimacy through,
That hatched from out that pearly light –
O rich resounding instrument, from you,
Who'd always thrilled with loud delight,

From you, till then as joyful as a peal
Of trumpets on a sparkling morn,
A cry so plaintive that it seemed unreal,
Was staggeringly torn.
Like some misborn, deformed, and monstrous kid
Who puts his family to the blush,
Whose presence in a cellar must be hid
And his existence in a hush !
Poor angel ! that harsh note was meant to sing
"That nothing in this world is certain,
And human egotism is the thing
Which all existence serves to curtain.
That it's an irksome task to be a beauty,
A boring job one has to face –
Like frigid dancers, smiling as a duty
With hard, mechanical grimace :
That building upon hearts is idiotic :
All cracks, love, beauty, and fraternity
Until Oblivion puts them in his pocket
To pawn them on to old Eternity !"
I often have recalled that moon of magic,
That languid hush on quays and marts,
And then this confidence, so grim and tragic,
In the confessional of hearts.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

L'Aube spirituelle

L'Aube spirituelle

Quand chez les débauchés l'aube blanche et vermeille
Entre en société de l'Idéal rongeur,
Par l'opération d'un mystère vengeur
Dans la brute assoupie un ange se réveille.
Des Cieux Spirituels l'inaccessible azur,
Pour l'homme terrassé qui rêve encore et souffre,
S'ouvre et s'enfonce avec l'attrance du gouffre.
Ainsi, chère Déesse, Etre lucide et pur,
Sur les débris fumeux des stupides orgies
Ton souvenir plus clair, plus rose, plus charmant,
À mes yeux agrandis voltige incessamment.
Le soleil a noirci la flamme des bougies ;
Ainsi, toujours vainqueur, ton fantôme est pareil,
Ame resplendissante, à l'immortel soleil !

– Charles Baudelaire

Spiritual Dawn

When debauchees are roused by the white, rosy dawn,
Escorted by the Ideal which gnaws at their hearts
Through the action of a mysterious, vengeful law,
In the somnolent brute an Angel awakens.
The inaccessible blue of Spiritual Heavens,
For the man thrown to earth who suffers and still dreams,
Opens and yawns with the lure of the abyss.
Thus, dear Goddess, Being, lucid and pure,
Over the smoking ruins of stupid orgies,

Your memory, clearer, more rosy, more charming,
Hovers incessantly before my widened eyes.
The sunlight has darkened the flame of the candles ;
Thus, ever triumphant, resplendent soul !
Your phantom is like the immortal sun !

– William Aggeler, 1954

Spiritual Dawn

When in the company of the Ideal
(That gnawing tooth) Dawn enters, white and pink,
The rooms of rakes – each sated beast can feel
An Angel waking through the fumes of drink.
For downcast Man, who dreams and suffers still,
The azure of the mystic heaven above,
With gulf-like vertigo, attracts his will.
So, Goddess, lucid Being of pure love,
Over the smoking wreck of feasts and scandals,
Your phantom, rosy and enchanting, flies
And still returns to my dilated eyes.
The sun has blackened out the flame of candles.
So your victorious phantom seems as one,
O blazing spirit, with the deathless Sun !

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Harmonie du soir

Harmonie du soir

Voici venir les temps où vibrant sur sa tige
Chaque fleur s'évapore ainsi qu'un encensoir ;
Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir ;
Valse mélancolique et langoureux vertige !
Chaque fleur s'évapore ainsi qu'un encensoir ;
Le violon frémit comme un cœur qu'on afflige ;
Valse mélancolique et langoureux vertige !
Le ciel est triste et beau comme un grand reposoir.
Le violon frémit comme un cœur qu'on afflige,
Un cœur tendre, qui hait le néant vaste et noir !
Le ciel est triste et beau comme un grand reposoir ;
Le soleil s'est noyé dans son sang qui se fige.
Un cœur tendre, qui hait le néant vaste et noir,
Du passé lumineux recueille tout vestige !
Le soleil s'est noyé dans son sang qui se fige...
Ton souvenir en moi luit comme un ostensoir !

– Charles Baudelaire

Evening Harmony

The season is at hand when swaying on its stem
Every flower exhales perfume like a censer ;
Sounds and perfumes turn in the evening air ;
Melancholy waltz and languid vertigo !
Every flower exhales perfume like a censer ;
The violin quivers like a tormented heart ;
Melancholy waltz and languid vertigo !

The sky is sad and beautiful like an immense altar.
The violin quivers like a tormented heart,
A tender heart, that hates the vast, black void !
The sky is sad and beautiful like an immense altar ;
The sun has drowned in his blood which congeals...
A tender heart that hates the vast, black void
Gathers up every shred of the luminous past !
The sun has drowned in his blood which congeals...
Your memory in me glitters like a monstrance !

– William Aggeler, 1954

Evening Harmony

Now comes the eve, when on its stem vibrates
Each flower, evaporating like a censer ;
When sounds and scents in the dark air grow denser ;
Drowsed swoon through which a mournful waltz pulsates !
Each flower evaporates as from a censer ;
The fiddle like a hurt heart palpitates ;
Drowsed swoon through which a mournful waltz pulsates ;
The sad, grand sky grows, altar-like, immenser.
The fiddle, like a hurt heart, palpitates,
A heart that hates oblivion, ruthless censor.
The sad, grand sky grows, altar-like, immenser.
The sun in its own blood coagulates...
A heart that hates oblivion, ruthless censor,
The whole of the bright past resuscitates.
The sun in its own blood coagulates...
And, monstrance-like, your memory flames intenser !

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Flacon

Le Flacon

Il est de forts parfums pour qui toute matière
Est poreuse. On dirait qu'ils pénètrent le verre.
En ouvrant un coffret venu de l'Orient
Dont la serrure grince et rechigne en criant,
Ou dans une maison déserte quelque armoire
Pleine de l'âcre odeur des temps, poudreuse et noire,
Parfois on trouve un vieux flacon qui se souvient,
D'où jaillit toute vive une âme qui revient.
Mille pensers dormaient, chrysalides funèbres,
Frémissant doucement dans les lourdes ténèbres,
Qui dégagent leur aile et prennent leur essor,
Teintés d'azur, glacés de rose, lamés d'or.
Voilà le souvenir enivrant qui voltige
Dans l'air troublé ; les yeux se ferment ; le Vertige
Saisit l'âme vaincue et la pousse à deux mains
Vers un gouffre obscurci de miasmes humains ;
II la terrasse au bord d'un gouffre séculaire,
Où, Lazare odorant déchirant son suaire,
Se meut dans son réveil le cadavre spectral
D'un vieil amour ranci, charmant et sépulcral.
Ainsi, quand je serai perdu dans la mémoire
Des hommes, dans le coin d'une sinistre armoire
Quand on m'aura jeté, vieux flacon désolé,
Décrépit, poudreux, sale, abject, visqueux, fêlé,
Je serai ton cercueil, aimable pestilence !
Le témoin de ta force et de ta virulence,
Cher poison préparé par les anges ! liqueur
Qui me ronge, ô la vie et la mort de mon coeur !

– Charles Baudelaire

The Perfume Flask

There are strong perfumes for which all matter
Is porous. One would say they go through glass.
On opening a coffer that has come from the East,
Whose creaking lock resists and grates,
Or in a deserted house, some cabinet
Full of the Past's acrid odor, dusty and black,
Sometimes one finds an antique phial which remembers,
Whence gushes forth a living soul returned to life.
Many thoughts were sleeping, death-like chrysalides,
Quivering softly in the heavy shadows,
That free their wings and rise in flight,
Tinged with azure, glazed with rose, spangled with gold.
That is the bewitching souvenir which flutters
In the troubled air ; the eyes close ; Dizziness
Seizes the vanquished soul, pushes it with both hands
Toward a darkened abyss of human pollution :
He throws it down at the edge of an ancient abyss,
Where, like stinking Lazarus tearing wide his shroud,
There moves as it wakes up, the ghostly cadaver
Of a rancid old love, charming and sepulchral.
Thus, when I'll be lost to the memory
Of men, when I shall be tossed into the corner
Of a dismal wardrobe, a desolate old phial,
Decrepit, cracked, slimy, dirty, dusty, abject,
Delightful pestilence ! I shall be your coffin,
The witness of your strength and of your virulence,
Beloved poison prepared by the angels ! Liqueur
That consumes me, O the life and death of my heart !

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Flask

Perfumes there are which through all things can pass
And make all matter porous, even glass ;
Old coffers from the Orient brought, whose locks
Grind sullenly when opening the box,

Or, in an empty house, some ancient chest,
Where time and dust and gloom were long compressed,
May yield a flask where memory survives,
And a soul flashes into future lives.

A thousand thoughts, funereal larvae, laid
Shuddering softly under palls of shade,
May suddenly their soaring wings unfold,
Stained azure, glazed with rose, or filmed with gold.

Intoxicating memory now flies
Into the dusk, and makes us close our eyes :
Vertigo draws the spirit which it grips
Towards some dark miasma of eclipse :

Beside an ancient pit he makes her fall,
Where Lazarus, sweet-scented, tears his pall
And wakes the spectral corpse of some now-cold,
Rancid, sepulchral love he knew of old.

So when I'm lost to human memory, thrown
In some old gloomy chest to lie alone,
A poor decrepit flask, cracked, abject, crusty
With dirt, opaque and sticky, damp and dusty,
I'll be your pall and shroud, beloved pest !
The witness of your venom, and its test,
Dear poison, angel-brewed with deadly art –
Life, death, and dear corrosion of my heart.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Poison

Le Poison

Le vin sait revêtir le plus sordide bouge
D'un luxe miraculeux,
Et fait surgir plus d'un portique fabuleux
Dans l'or de sa vapeur rouge,
Comme un soleil couchant dans un ciel nébuleux.

L'opium agrandit ce qui n'a pas de bornes,
Allonge l'illimité,
Approfondit le temps, creuse la volupté,
Et de plaisirs noirs et mornes
Remplit l'âme au delà de sa capacité.

Tout cela ne vaut pas le poison qui découle
De tes yeux, de tes yeux verts,
Lacs où mon âme tremble et se voit à l'envers...
Mes songes viennent en foule
Pour se désaltérer à ces gouffres amers.

Tout cela ne vaut pas le terrible prodige
De ta salive qui mord,
Qui plonge dans l'oubli mon âme sans remords,
Et charriant le vertige,
La roule défaillante aux rives de la mort !

– Charles Baudelaire

Poison

Wine knows how to adorn the most sordid hovel
With marvelous luxury
And make more than one fabulous portal appear

In the gold of its red mist
Like a sun setting in a cloudy sky.
Opium magnifies that which is limitless,
Lengthens the unlimited,
Makes time deeper, hollows out voluptuousness,
And with dark, gloomy pleasures
Fills the soul beyond its capacity.

All that is not equal to the poison which flows
From your eyes, from your green eyes,
Lakes where my soul trembles and sees its evil side...
My dreams come in multitude
To slake their thirst in those bitter gulfs.
All that is not equal to the awful wonder
Of your biting saliva,
Charged with madness, that plunges my remorseless soul
Into oblivion
And rolls it in a swoon to the shores of death.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Poisons

Wine can conceal a sordid room
In rich, miraculous disguise,
And make such porticoes arise
Out of its flushed and crimson fume
As makes the sunset in the skies.

Opium the infinite enlarges,
And lengthens all that is past measure.
It deepens time, and digs its treasure,
With sad, black raptures it o'ercharges
The soul, and surfeits it with pleasure.

Neither are worth the drug so strong
That you distil from your green eyes,
Lakes where I see my soul capsized
Head downwards : and where, in one throng,
I slake my dreams, and quench my sighs.

But to your spittle these seem naught –
It stings and burns. It steeps my thought

And spirit in oblivious gloom,
And, in its dizzy onrush caught,
Dashes it on the shores of doom.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Ciel brouillé

Ciel brouillé

On dirait ton regard d'une vapeur couvert;
Ton oeil mystérieux (est-il bleu, gris ou vert ?)
Alternativement tendre, rêveur, cruel,
Réfléchit l'indolence et la pâleur du ciel.

Tu rappelles ces jours blancs, tièdes et voilés,
Qui font se fondre en pleurs les coeurs ensorcelés,
Quand, agités d'un mal inconnu qui les tord,
Les nerfs trop éveillés raillent l'esprit qui dort.

Tu ressembles parfois à ces beaux horizons
Qu'allument les soleils des brumeuses saisons...
Comme tu resplendis, paysage mouillé
Qu'enflamment les rayons tombant d'un ciel brouillé !
Ô femme dangereuse, ô séduisants climats !
Adorerai-je aussi ta neige et vos frimas,
Et saurai-je tirer de l'implacable hiver
Des plaisirs plus aigus que la glace et le fer ?

– Charles Baudelaire

Cloudy Sky

One would say that your gaze was veiled with mist ;
Your mysterious eyes (are they blue, gray or green ?)
Alternately tender, dreamy, cruel,
Reflect the indolence and pallor of the sky.

You call to mind those days, white, soft, and mild,
That make enchanted hearts burst into tears,
When, shaken by a mysterious, wracking pain,

The nerves, too wide-awake, jeer at the sleeping mind.
You resemble at times those gorgeous horizons
That the sun sets ablaze in the seasons of mist...
How resplendent you are, landscape drenched with rain,
Aflame with rays that fall from a cloudy sky !
O dangerous woman, O alluring climates !
Will I also adore your snow and your hoar-frost,
And can I draw from your implacable winter
Pleasures keener than iron or ice ?

– William Aggeler, 1954

Misty Sky

One would have thought your eyes were veiled in haze
Strange eyes ! (Grey, green, or azure is their gaze ?)
It seems they would reflect, in each renewal,
The changing skies, dull, dreamy, fond, or cruel.
You know those days both warm and hazy, which
Melt into tears the hearts that they bewitch :
And when the nerves, uneasy to control,
Too-wide awake, upbraid the sleeping soul.
You, too, resemble such a lit horizon
As suns of misty seasons now bedizen...
As you shine out, a landscape fresh with rain
With misty sunbeams sparkling on the plain.
Dangerous girl, seductive as the weather !
Shall I adore your snows and frosts together ?
In your relentless winter shall I feel
A kiss more sharp than that of ice and steel ?

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Chat

Le Chat

I

Dans ma cervelle se promène,
Ainsi qu'en son appartement,
Un beau chat, fort, doux et charmant.
Quand il miaule, on l'entend à peine,
Tant son timbre est tendre et discret ;
Mais que sa voix s'apaise ou gronde,
Elle est toujours riche et profonde.
C'est là son charme et son secret.

Cette voix, qui perle et qui filtre
Dans mon fonds le plus ténébreux,
Me remplit comme un vers nombreux
Et me réjouit comme un philtre.

Elle endort les plus cruels maux
Et contient toutes les extases ;
Pour dire les plus longues phrases,
Elle n'a pas besoin de mots.

Non, il n'est pas d'archet qui morde
Sur mon coeur, parfait instrument,
Et fasse plus royalement
Chanter sa plus vibrante corde,
Que ta voix, chat mystérieux,
Chat séraphique, chat étrange,
En qui tout est, comme en un ange,
Aussi subtil qu'harmonieux !

II

De sa fourrure blonde et brune

Sort un parfum si doux, qu'un soir
J'en fus embaumé, pour l'avoir
Caressée une fois, rien qu'une.
C'est l'esprit familier du lieu ;
Il juge, il préside, il inspire
Toutes choses dans son empire ;
peut-être est-il fée, est-il dieu ?
Quand mes yeux, vers ce chat que j'aime
Tirés comme par un aimant,
Se retournent docilement
Et que je regarde en moi-même,
Je vois avec étonnement
Le feu de ses prunelles pâles,
Clairs fanaux, vivantes opales
Qui me contemplent fixement.

– Charles Baudelaire

The Cat

I

In my brain there walks about,
As though he were in his own home,
A lovely cat, strong, sweet, charming.
When he mews, one scarcely hears him,
His tone is so discreet and soft ;
But purring or growling, his voice
Is always deep and rich ;
That is his charm and secret.
That voice forms into drops, trickles
Into the depths of my being,
Fills me like harmonious verse
And gladdens me like a philtre.
It lulls to sleep the sharpest pains,
Contains all ecstasies ;
To say the longest sentences,
It has no need of words,
No, there's no bow that plays upon
My heart, that perfect instrument,

And makes its most vibrant chord
Sing more gloriously
Than your voice, mysterious cat,
Seraphic cat, singular cat,
In whom, as in angels, all is
As subtle as harmonious !

II

From his brown and yellow fur
Comes such sweet fragrance that one night
I was perfumed with it because
I caressed him once, once only.
A familiar figure in the place,
He presides, judges, inspires
Everything within his province ;
Perhaps he is a fay, a god ?
When my gaze, drawn as by a magnet,
Turns in a docile way
Toward that cat whom I love,
And when I look within myself,
I see with amazement
The fire of his pale pupils,
Clear signal-lights, living opals,
That contemplate me fixedly.

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Cat

I

A fine strong gentle cat is prowling
As in his bedroom, in my brain ;
So soft his voice, so smooth its strain,
That you can scarcely hear him miowling.
But should he venture to complain
Or scold, the voice is rich and deep :
And thus he manages to keep
The charm of his untroubled reign.
This voice, which seems to pearl and filter

Through my soul's inmost shady nook,
Fills me with poems, like a book,
And fortifies me, like a philtre.
His voice can cure the direst pain
And it contains the rarest raptures.
The deepest meanings, which it captures,
It needs no language to explain.
There is no bow that can so sweep
That perfect instrument, my heart :
Or make more sumptuous music start
From its most vibrant cord and deep,
Than can the voice of this strange elf,
This cat, bewitching and seraphic,
Subtly harmonious in his traffic
With all things else, and with himself.

II

So sweet a perfume seems to swim
Out of his fur both brown and bright,
I nearly was embalmed one night
From (only once) caressing him.
Familiar Lar of where I stay,
He rules, presides, inspires and teaches
All things to which his empire reaches.
Perhaps he is a god, or fay.
When to a cherished cat my gaze
Is magnet-drawn and then returns
Back to itself, it there discerns,
With strange excitement and amaze,
Deep down in my own self, the rays
Of living opals, torch-like gleams
And pallid fire of eyes, it seems,
That fixedly return my gaze.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Beau Navire

Le Beau Navire

Je veux te raconter, ô molle enchanteresse !
Les diverses beautés qui parent ta jeunesse ;
Je veux te peindre ta beauté,
Où l'enfance s'allie à la maturité.

Quand tu vas balayant l'air de ta jupe large,
Tu fais l'effet d'un beau vaisseau qui prend le large,
Chargé de toile, et va roulant
Suivant un rythme doux, et paresseux, et lent.

Sur ton cou large et rond, sur tes épaules grasses,
Ta tête se pavane avec d'étranges grâces ;
D'un air placide et triomphant
Tu passes ton chemin, majestueuse enfant.

Je veux te raconter, ô molle enchanteresse !
Les diverses beautés qui parent ta jeunesse ;
Je veux te peindre ta beauté,
Où l'enfance s'allie à la maturité.

Ta gorge qui s'avance et qui pousse la moire,
Ta gorge triomphante est une belle armoire
Dont les panneaux bombés et clairs
Comme les boucliers accrochent des éclairs ;

Boucliers provoquants, armés de pointes roses !
Armoire à doux secrets, pleine de bonnes choses,
De vins, de parfums, de liqueurs
Qui feraient délivrer les cerveaux et les coeurs !

Quand tu vas balayant l'air de ta jupe large
Tu fais l'effet d'un beau vaisseau qui prend le large,
Chargé de toile, et va roulant
Suivant un rythme doux, et paresseux, et lent.

Tes nobles jambes, sous les volants qu'elles chassent,
 Tourmentent les désirs obscurs et les agacent,
 Comme deux sorcières qui font
 Tourner un philtre noir dans un vase profond.
 Tes bras, qui se joueraient des précoce hercules,
 Sont des boas luisants les solides émules,
 Faits pour serrer obstinément,
 Comme pour l'imprimer dans ton coeur, ton amant.
 Sur ton cou large et rond, sur tes épaules grasses,
 Ta tête se pavane avec d'étranges grâces ;
 D'un air placide et triomphant
 Tu passes ton chemin, majestueuse enfant.

– Charles Baudelaire

The Beautiful Ship

I want to name for you, indolent sorceress !
 The divers marks of beauty which adorn your youth ;
 I want to describe your beauty,
 In which are blended childhood and maturity.
 When you go sweeping by in your full, flowing skirts,
 You resemble a trim ship as it puts to sea
 Under full sail and goes rolling
 Lazily, to a slow and easy rhythm.
 On your large, round neck, on your plump shoulders,
 Your head moves proudly and with a strange grace ;
 With a placid, triumphant air
 You go your way, majestic child.
 I want to name for you, indolent sorceress !
 The divers marks of beauty which adorn your youth ;
 I want to describe your beauty,
 In which are blended childhood and maturity.
 Your exuberant breast which swells your silken gown,
 Your triumphant breast is a lovely cabinet
 Whose panels, round and bright,
 Catch each flash of light like bucklers,
 Exciting bucklers, armed with rosy points !
 Cabinet of sweet secrets, crowded with good things,

With wines, with perfumes, with liqueurs
That would make delirious the minds and hearts of men !
When you go sweeping by in your full, flowing skirts,
You resemble a trim ship as it puts to sea
Under full sail and goes rolling
Lazily, to a slow and easy rhythm.
Your shapely legs beneath the flounces they pursue
Arouse and torment obscure desires
Like two sorceresses who stir
A black philtre in a deep vessel.
Your arms which would scorn precocious Hercules
Are the worthy rivals of glistening boas,
Made to clasp stubbornly
Your lover, as if to imprint him on your heart.
On your large, round neck, on your plump shoulders,
Your head moves proudly and with a strange grace ;
With a placid, triumphant air
You go your way, majestic child.

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Splendid Ship

Oh soft enchantress, I'll record with truth
The diverse beauties that adorn your youth.
Yes, I will paint your charm
Of womanhood with childhood arm in arm.
When you go sweeping your wide skirts, to me
You seem a splendid ship that out to sea
Spreads its full sails, and with them
Goes rolling in a soft, slow, lazy rhythm.
Over your tall, round neck and those plump shoulders,
Your head swans forth its pride to all beholders,
With grace triumphant, mild,
And strange, you go your way, majestic child.
Oh soft enchantress, I'll record with truth
The diverse beauties that adorn your youth.
Yes, I will paint your charm
Of womanhood with childhood arm in arm.

Your bosom juts and stretches every stitch,
Triumphant bosom, like a coffer rich
With bosses round and rare,
Like shields that draw the lightning from the air.
Provoking shields, with rosy points uplifted !
Coffer of secret charms, superbly gifted,
Whose scents, liqueurs, and wine
Turn heart and brain deliriously thine.
When you go sweeping your wide skirts, to me
You seem a splendid ship that out to sea
Spreads its full sails, and with them
Goes rolling in a soft, slow, lazy rhythm.
Your noble thighs, beneath the silks they swirl,
Torment obscure desires and tease me, girl ;
Like sorcerers they are
That stir black philtres in a deep, cool jar.
Your arms precocious Hercules would grace
And vie with pythons in their bright embrace :
The pressure they impart
Would print your lovers' image on your heart.
Over your tall, round neck and those plump shoulders
Your head swans forth its pride to all beholders,
With grace triumphant, mild,
And strange, you go your way, majestic child.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

L'invitation au voyage

L'invitation au voyage

Mon enfant, ma soeur,
Songe à la douceur
D'aller là-bas vivre ensemble !
Aimer à loisir,
Aimer et mourir
Au pays qui te ressemble !
Les soleils mouillés
De ces ciels brouillés
Pour mon esprit ont les charmes
Si mystérieux
De tes traîtres yeux,
Brillant à travers leurs larmes.
Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté,
Luxe, calme et volupté.
Des meubles luisants,
Polis par les ans,
Décoreraient notre chambre ;
Les plus rares fleurs
Mêlant leurs odeurs
Aux vagues senteurs de l'ambre,
Les riches plafonds,
Les miroirs profonds,
La splendeur orientale,
Tout y parlerait
À l'âme en secret
Sa douce langue natale.
Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté,
Luxe, calme et volupté.
Vois sur ces canaux

Dormir ces vaisseaux
Dont l'humeur est vagabonde ;
C'est pour assouvir
Ton moindre désir
Qu'ils viennent du bout du monde.
– Les soleils couchants
Revêtent les champs,
Les canaux, la ville entière,
D'hyacinthe et d'or ;
Le monde s'endort
Dans une chaude lumière.
Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté,
Luxe, calme et volupté.

– Charles Baudelaire

Invitation to the Voyage

My child, my sister,
Think of the rapture
Of living together there !
Of loving at will,
Of loving till death,
In the land that is like you !
The misty sunlight
Of those cloudy skies
Has for my spirit the charms,
So mysterious,
Of your treacherous eyes,
Shining brightly through their tears.
There all is order and beauty,
Luxury, peace, and pleasure.
Gleaming furniture,
Polished by the years,
Will ornament our bedroom ;
The rarest flowers
Mingling their fragrance
With the faint scent of amber,
The ornate ceilings,
The limpid mirrors,

The oriental splendor,
All would whisper there
Secretly to the soul
In its soft, native language.
There all is order and beauty,
Luxury, peace, and pleasure.
See on the canals
Those vessels sleeping.
Their mood is adventurous;
It's to satisfy
Your slightest desire
That they come from the ends of the earth.
– The setting suns
Adorn the fields,
The canals, the whole city,
With hyacinth and gold;
The world falls asleep
In a warm glow of light.
There all is order and beauty,
Luxury, peace, and pleasure.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Invitation to the Voyage

My daughter, my sister,
Consider the vista
Of living out there, you and I,
To love at our leisure,
Then, ending our pleasure,
In climes you resemble to die.
There the suns, rainy-wet,
Through clouds rise and set
With the selfsame enchantment to charm me
That my senses receive
From your eyes, that deceive,
When they shine through your tears to disarm me.
There'll be nothing but beauty, wealth, pleasure,
With all things in order and measure.
With old treasures furnished,

By centuries burnished,
To gleam in the shade of our chamber,
While the rarest of flowers
Vaguely mix through the hours
Their own with the perfume of amber :
Each sumptuous ceiling,
Each mirror revealing
The wealth of the East, will be hung
So the part and the whole
May speak to the soul
In its native, indigenous tongue.
There'll be nothing but beauty, wealth, pleasure,
With all things in order and measure.

On the channels and streams
See each vessel that dreams
In its whimsical vagabond way,
Since its for your least whim
The oceans they swim
From the ends of the night and the day.
The sun, going down, With its glory will crown
Canals, fields, and cities entire,
While the whole earth is rolled
In the jacinth and gold
Of its warming and radiant fire.
There'll be nothing but beauty, wealth, pleasure
With all things in order and measure.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

L'Irréparable

L'Irréparable

Pouvons-nous étouffer le vieux, le long Remords,
Qui vit, s'agit et se tortille
Et se nourrit de nous comme le ver des morts,
Comme du chêne la chenille ?
Pouvons-nous étouffer l'implacable Remords ?
Dans quel philtre, dans quel vin, dans quelle tisane,
Noierons-nous ce vieil ennemi,
Destructeur et gourmand comme la courtisane,
Patient comme la fourmi ?
Dans quel philtre ? – dans quel vin ? – dans quelle tisane ?
Dis-le, belle sorcière, oh ! dis, si tu le sais,
À cet esprit comblé d'angoisse
Et pareil au mourant qu'écrasent les blessés,
Que le sabot du cheval froisse,
Dis-le, belle sorcière, oh ! dis, si tu le sais,
À cet agonisant que le loup déjà flaire
Et que surveille le corbeau,
À ce soldat brisé ! s'il faut qu'il désespère
D'avoir sa croix et son tombeau ;
Ce pauvre agonisant que déjà le loup flaire !
Peut-on illuminer un ciel bourbeux et noir ?
Peut-on déchirer des ténèbres
Plus denses que la poix, sans matin et sans soir,
Sans astres, sans éclairs funèbres ?
Peut-on illuminer un ciel bourbeux et noir ?
L'Espérance qui brille aux carreaux de l'Auberge
Est soufflée, est morte à jamais !
Sans lune et sans rayons, trouver où l'on héberge

Les martyrs d'un chemin mauvais !
Le Diable a tout éteint aux carreaux de l'Auberge !
Adorable sorcière, aimes-tu les damnés ?
Dis, connais-tu l'irrémissible ?
Connais-tu le Remords, aux traits empoisonnés,
À qui notre coeur sert de cible ?
Adorable sorcière, aimes-tu les damnés ?
L'Irréparable ronge avec sa dent maudite
Notre âme, piteux monument,
Et souvent il attaque ainsi que le termite,
Par la base le bâtiment.
L'Irréparable ronge avec sa dent maudite !
– J'ai vu parfois, au fond d'un théâtre banal
Qu'enflammait l'orchestre sonore,
Une fée allumer dans un ciel infernal
Une miraculeuse aurore ;
J'ai vu parfois au fond d'un théâtre banal
Un être, qui n'était que lumière, or et gaze,
Terrasser l'énorme Satan ;
Mais mon coeur, que jamais ne visite l'extase,
Est un théâtre où l'on attend
Toujours. toujours en vain, l'Etre aux ailes de gaze !

– Charles Baudelaire

The Irreparable

Can we stifle the old, the lingering Remorse,
That lives, quivers and writhes,
And feeds on us like the worm on the dead,
Like the grub on the oak ?
Can we stifle implacable Remorse ?
In what philtre, in what potion, what wine,
Shall we drown this old enemy,
Destructive and greedy as a harlot,
Patient as the ant ?
In what philtre, in what potion, what wine ?
Tell it, fair sorceress, O ! tell it, if you know,
To this spirit filled with anguish,

So like a dying man crushed beneath the wounded,
Who is struck by the horses' shoes ;
Tell it, fair sorceress, O ! tell it, if you know,
To this dying man whom the wolf already scents
And whom the crow watches,
To this broken soldier ! if he must despair
Of having his cross and his grave,
This poor, dying man whom the wolf already scents !
Can one illuminate a black and miry sky ?
Can one tear asunder darkness
Thicker than pitch, without morning, without evening,
Without stars, without ominous lightning ?
Can one illuminate a black and miry sky ?
Hope that shines in the windows of the Inn
Is snuffed out, dead forever !
Without the moon, without light, to find where they lodge
The martyrs of an evil road !
The Devil has put out all the lights at the Inn !
Adorable sorceress, do you love the damned ?
Say, do you know the irremissible ?
Do you know Remorse, with the poisoned darts,
For whom our hearts serve as targets ?
Adorable sorceress, do you love the damned ?
The Irreparable gnaws with his accurst teeth
Our soul, pitiful monument,
And often he attacks like the termite
The foundations of the building.
The Irreparable gnaws with his accurst teeth !
– Sometimes I have seen at the back of a trite stage
Enlivened by a deep-toned orchestra,
A fairy set ablaze a miraculous dawn
In an infernal sky ;
Sometimes I have been at the back of a trite stage
A being who was only light, gold and gauze,
Throw down the enormous Satan ;
But my heart, which rapture never visits,
Is a playhouse where one awaits
Always, always in vain, the Being with gauze wings !

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Irreparable

How can we choke the old and long Remorse
Which lives, and squirms, and fights
And feeds on us as worms upon a corse,
Or, on the oak, its mites ?
How can we choke the old and long Remorse ?
What subtle philtre, wine, or drowsy draught
Will drown that ancient foe,
Greedy as whores in his disastrous craft,
Ant-patient, sure, and slow ?
What subtle philtre, wine or drowsy draught ?
Lovely enchantress, if you know it, say
To this soul whelmed with woes,
Dying, whom loads of wounded crush to clay
Under the horses' shoes :
Lovely enchantress, if you know it, say
To this poor moribund, while wolves yet stalk him
And ravens croak his doom,
To this spent soldier say if fate will baulk him
Even of a cross or tomb –
Say to this moribund, while wolves yet stalk him !
Can this black muddy sky be ever lighted,
The shades be ever torn,
Denser than pitch, to day and dusk benighted,
To lightning, stars, or morn ?
Can this black muddy sky be ever lighted ?
The candle Hope that shows the Inn to strangers
Is blown out, snuffed, and melted.
Lacking both moon and glimmer, how shall rangers
Of evil roads be sheltered ?
The devil snuffed the light that burned for strangers.
Sweet witch, do you love spirits lost to grace ?
Whose sins are not remitted ?
Say, do you know Remorse, with venom'd face,
By whom our hearts are spitted ?
Sweet witch, do you love spirits lost to grace ?
The Irreparable gnaws us where it lurks
And for our soul's defacement,
As on a monument the termite, works

Up from the very basement.
The Irreparable gnaws us where it lurks.
In tawdry theatres I've sometimes seen
How, to the blare of brasses,
Miraculous, to light some hellish scene,
Like dawn, a fairy passes ;
In tawdry theatres I've often seen
That by this fay of light, and gold, and gauzes,
Some monstrous fiend is slain.
But my heart knows no raptures or applauses –
A fleapit where, in vain,
One waits, and waits the creature winged with gauzes.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Causerie

Causerie

Vous êtes un beau ciel d'automne, clair et rose !
Mais la tristesse en moi monte comme la mer,
Et laisse, en refluant, sur ma lèvre morose
Le souvenir cuisant de son limon amer.

– Ta main se glisse en vain sur mon sein qui se pâme ;
Ce qu'elle cherche, amie, est un lieu saccagé
Par la griffe et la dent féroce de la femme.
Ne cherchez plus mon coeur ; les bêtes l'ont mangé.
Mon coeur est un palais flétris par la cohue ;
On s'y soûle, on s'y tue, on s'y prend aux cheveux !
– Un parfum nage autour de votre gorge nue !...
Ô Beauté, dur fléau des âmes, tu le veux !
Avec tes yeux de feu, brillants comme des fêtes,
Calcine ces lambeaux qu'ont épargnés les bêtes !

– Charles Baudelaire

Conversation

You are a lovely autumn sky, clear and rosy !
But sadness rises in me like the sea,
And as it ebbs, leaves on my sullen lips
The burning memory of its bitter slime.

– In vain does your hand slip over my swooning breast ;
What it seeks, darling, is a place plundered
By the claws and the ferocious teeth of woman.
Seek my heart no longer ; the beasts have eaten it.
My heart is a palace polluted by the mob ;

They get drunk there, kill, tear each other's hair !

– A perfume floats about your naked breast !...

O Beauty, ruthless scourge of souls, you desire it !

With the fire of your eyes, brilliant as festivals,

Bum these tatters which the beasts spared !

– William Aggeler, 1954

Conversation

You're like an autumn sky, rose, clear, and placid.

But sorrow whelms me, like the tide's assault,

And ebbing, leaves upon my lips the acid

And muddy-bitter memory of its salt.

Your hand may stroke my breast, but not console.

What it seeks there is but a hole, deep caverned

By women's claws and fangs, and ransacked whole.

Seek not my heart, on which the beasts have ravened.

My heart's a palace plundered by the rabble :

They tope, they kill, in blood and guts they scrabble :

– A perfume swims around your naked breast !

O Beauty, flail of spirits, you know best !

With your eyes' fire, lit up as for a spree,

Char the poor rags those beasts have left of me !

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Chant d'automne (1861)

Chant d'automne

I

Bientôt nous plongerons dans les froides ténèbres ;
Adieu, vive clarté de nos étés trop courts !
J'entends déjà tomber avec des chocs funèbres
Le bois retentissant sur le pavé des cours.
Tout l'hiver va rentrer dans mon être : colère,
Haine, frissons, horreur, labeur dur et forcé,
Et, comme le soleil dans son enfer polaire,
Mon coeur ne sera plus qu'un bloc rouge et glacé.
J'écoute en frémissant chaque bûche qui tombe
L'échafaud qu'on bâtit n'a pas d'écho plus sourd.
Mon esprit est pareil à la tour qui succombe
Sous les coups du bâlier infatigable et lourd.
Il me semble, bercé par ce choc monotone,
Qu'on cloue en grande hâte un cercueil quelque part.
Pour qui ? – C'était hier l'été ; voici l'automne !
Ce bruit mystérieux sonne comme un départ.

II

J'aime de vos longs yeux la lumière verdâtre,
Douce beauté, mais tout aujourd'hui m'est amer,
Et rien, ni votre amour, ni le boudoir, ni l'âtre,
Ne me vaut le soleil rayonnant sur la mer.
Et pourtant aimez-moi, tendre cœur ! soyez mère,
Même pour un ingrat, même pour un méchant ;
Amante ou soeur, soyez la douceur éphémère
D'un glorieux automne ou d'un soleil couchant.
Courte tâche ! La tombe attend ; elle est avide !

Ah ! laissez-moi, mon front posé sur vos genoux,
Goûter, en regrettant l'été blanc et torride,
De l'arrière-saison le rayon jaune et doux !

– Charles Baudelaire

Song of Autumn

I

Soon we shall plunge into the cold darkness ;
Farewell, vivid brightness of our short-lived summers !
Already I hear the dismal sound of firewood
Falling with a clatter on the courtyard pavements.
All winter will possess my being : wrath,
Hate, horror, shivering, hard, forced labor,
And, like the sun in his polar Hades,
My heart will be no more than a frozen red block.
All atremble I listen to each falling log ;
The building of a scaffold has no duller sound.
My spirit resembles the tower which crumbles
Under the tireless blows of the battering ram.
It seems to me, lulled by these monotonous shocks,
That somewhere they're nailing a coffin, in great haste.
For whom ? – Yesterday was summer ; here is autumn
That mysterious noise sounds like a departure.

II

I love the greenish light of your long eyes,
Sweet beauty, but today all to me is bitter ;
Nothing, neither your love, your boudoir, nor your hearth
Is worth as much as the sunlight on the sea.
Yet, love me, tender heart ! be a mother,
Even to an ingrate, even to a scapegrace ;
Mistress or sister, be the fleeting sweetness
Of a gorgeous autumn or of a setting sun.
Short task ! The tomb awaits ; it is avid !
Ah ! let me, with my head bowed on your knees,
Taste the sweet, yellow rays of the end of autumn,
While I mourn for the white, torrid summer !

– William Aggeler, 1954

Song of Autumn

I

Soon into frozen shades, like leaves, we'll tumble.
Adieu, short summer's blaze, that shone to mock.
I hear already the funereal rumble
Of logs, as on the paving-stones they shock.
Winter will enter in my soul to dwell –
Rage, hate, fear, horror, labour forced and dire !
My heart will seem, to sun that polar hell,
A dim, red, frozen block, devoid of fire.
Shuddering I hear the heavy thud of fuel.
The building of a gallows sounds as good !
My spirit, like a tower, reels to the cruel
Battering-ram in every crash of wood.
The ceaseless echoes rock me and appal.
They're nailing up a coffin, I'll be bound,
For whom ? – Last night was Summer. Here's the Fall.
There booms a farewell volley in the sound.

II

I like die greenish light in your long eyes,
Dear : but today all things are sour to me.
And naught, your hearth, your boudoir, nor your sighs
Are worth the sun that glitters on the sea.
Yet love me, tender heart, as mothers cherish
A thankless wretch, Lover or sister, be
Ephemeral sweetness of the suns that perish
Or glory of the autumn swift to flee.
Brief task ! The charnel yawns in hunger horrid,
Yet let me with my head upon your knees,
Although I mourn the summer, white and torrid
Taste these last yellow rays before they freeze.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

À une Madone (1861)

À une Madone

Ex-voto dans le goût espagnol

Je veux bâtir pour toi, Madone, ma maîtresse,
Un autel souterrain au fond de ma détresse,
Et creuser dans le coin le plus noir de mon coeur,
Loin du désir mondain et du regard moqueur,
Une niche, d'azur et d'or tout émaillée,
Où tu te dresseras, Statue émerveillée.
Avec mes Vers polis, treillis d'un pur métal
Savamment constellé de rimes de cristal
Je ferai pour ta tête une énorme Couronne ;
Et dans ma Jalouse, ô mortelle Madone
Je saurai te tailler un Manteau, de façon
Barbare, roide et lourd, et doublé de soupçon,
Qui, comme une guérite, enfermera tes charmes,
Non de Perles brodé, mais de toutes mes Larmes !
Ta Robe, ce sera mon Désir, frémissant,
Onduleux, mon Désir qui monte et qui descend,
Aux pointes se balance, aux vallons se repose,
Et revêt d'un baiser tout ton corps blanc et rose.
Je te ferai de mon Respect de beaux Souliers
De satin, par tes pieds divins humiliés,
Qui, les emprisonnant dans une molle étreinte
Comme un moule fidèle en garderont l'empreinte.
Si je ne puis, malgré tout mon art diligent
Pour Marchepied tailler une Lune d'argent
Je mettrai le Serpent qui me mord les entrailles
Sous tes talons, afin que tu foules et railles
Reine victorieuse et féconde en rachats
Ce monstre tout gonflé de haine et de crachats.

Tu verras mes Pensers, rangés comme les Cierges
Devant l'autel fleuri de la Reine des Vierges
Etoilant de reflets le plafond peint en bleu,
Te regarder toujours avec des yeux de feu ;
Et comme tout en moi te chérit et t'admire,
Tout se fera Benjoin, Encens, Oliban, Myrrhe,
Et sans cesse vers toi, sommet blanc et neigeux,
En Vapeurs montera mon Esprit orageux.
Enfin, pour compléter ton rôle de Marie,
Et pour mêler l'amour avec la barbarie,
Volupté noire ! des sept Péchés capitaux,
Bourreau plein de remords, je ferai sept Couteaux
Bien affilés, et comme un jongleur insensible,
Prenant le plus profond de ton amour pour cible,
Je les planterai tous dans ton Coeur pantelant,
Dans ton Coeur sanglotant, dans ton Coeur ruisselant !

– Charles Baudelaire

To a Madonna

Votive Offering in the Spanish Style

I want to build for you, Madonna, my mistress,
An underground altar in the depths of my grief
And carve out in the darkest corner of my heart,
Far from worldly desires and mocking looks,
A niche, all enameled with azure and with gold,
Where you shall stand, amazed Statue ;
With my polished Verses as a trellis of pure metal
Studded cunningly with rhymes of crystal,
I shall make for your head an immense Crown,
And from my Jealousy, O mortal Madonna,
I shall know how to cut a cloak in a fashion,
Barbaric, heavy, and stiff, lined with suspicion,
Which, like a sentry-box, will enclose your charms ;
Embroidered not with Pearls, but with all of my Tears !
Your Gown will be my Desire, quivering,
Undulant, my Desire which rises and which falls,
Balances on the crests, reposes in the troughs,
And clothes with a kiss your white and rose body.

Of my Self-respect I shall make you Slippers
Of satin which, humbled by your divine feet,
Will imprison them in a gentle embrace,
And assume their form like a faithful mold ;

If I can't, in spite of all my painstaking art,
Carve a Moon of silver for your Pedestal,
I shall put the Serpent which is eating my heart
Under your heels, so that you may trample and mock,
Triumphant queen, fecund in redemptions,
That monster all swollen with hatred and spittle.

You will see my Thoughts like Candles in rows
Before the flower-decked altar of the Queen of Virgins,
Starring with their reflections the azure ceiling,
And watching you always with eyes of fire.

And since my whole being admires and loves you,
All will become Storax, Benzoin, Frankincense, Myrrh,
And ceaselessly toward you, white, snowy pinnacle,
My turbulent spirit will rise like a vapor.

Finally, to complete your role of Mary,
And to mix love with inhumanity,
Infamous pleasure ! of the seven deadly sins,
I, torturer full of remorse, shall make seven
Well sharpened Daggers and, like a callous juggler,
Taking your deepest love for a target,
I shall plant them all in your panting Heart,
In your sobbing Heart, in your bleeding Heart !

– William Aggeler, 1954

To a Madonna

(Ex Voto in Spanish Style)

I'd build, Madonna, love, for my belief,
An altar in the dim crypt of my grief,
And in the darkest corner of my heart,
From mortal lust and mockery far apart,
Scoop you a niche, with gold and azure glaze,
Where you would stand in wonderment and gaze,
With my pure verses trellised, and all round

In constellated rhymes of crystal bound :
And with a huge tiara richly crowned.
Out of the Jealousy which rules my passion,
Mortal Madonna, I a cloak would fashion,
Barbarous, stiff, and heavy with my doubt,
Whereon as in a fourm you would fill out
And mould your lair. Of tears, not pearls, would be
The sparkle of its rich embroidery :
Your robe would be my lust, with waving flow,
Poising on tips, in valleys lying low,
And clothing, in one kiss, coral and snow.
In my Respect (for satin) you'll be shod
Which your white feet would humble to the clod,
While poisoning their flesh with tender hold
It kept their shape imprinted like a mould.
If for a footstool to support your shoon,
For all my art, I could not get the moon,
I'd throw the serpent, that devours my vitals
Under your trampling heels for his requitals,
Victorious queen, to spurn, bruise, and belittle
That monstrous worm blown-up with hate and spittle.
Round you my thoughts like candles should be seen
Around the flowered shrine of the virgins' Queen,
Reflected on a roof that's painted blue,
And aiming all their golden eyes at you.
Since nought is in me that you do not stir,
All will be incense, benjamin, and myrrh,
And up to you, white peak, in clouds will soar
My stormy soul, in rapture, to adore.
In fine, your role of Mary to perfect
And mingle barbarism with respect –
Of seven deadly sins, O black delight!
Remorseful torturer, to show my sleight,
I'll forge and sharpen seven deadly swords
And like a callous juggler on the boards,
Taking it for my target, I would dart
Them deep into your streaming, sobbing heart.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Chanson d'Après-midi (1861)

Chanson d'Après-midi

Quoique tes sourcils méchants
Te donnent un air étrange
Qui n'est pas celui d'un ange,
Sorcière aux yeux alléchants,
Je t'adore, ô ma frivole,
Ma terrible passion !
Avec la dévotion
Du prêtre pour son idole.
Le désert et la forêt
Embaument tes tresses rudes,
Ta tête a les attitudes
De l'éénigme et du secret.
Sur ta chair le parfum rôde
Comme autour d'un encensoir ;
Tu charmes comme le soir
Nymphe ténébreuse et chaude.
Ah ! les philtres les plus forts
Ne valent pas ta paresse,
Et tu connais la caresse
Ou fait revivre les morts !
Tes hanches sont amoureuses
De ton dos et de tes seins,
Et tu ravis les coussins
Par tes poses langoureuses.
Quelquefois, pour apaiser
Ta rage mystérieuse,
Tu prodigues, sérieuse,
La morsure et le baiser ;

Tu me déchires, ma brune,
Avec un rire moqueur,
Et puis tu mets sur mon coeur
Ton oeil doux comme la lune.
Sous tes souliers de satin,
Sous tes charmants pieds de soie
Moi, je mets ma grande joie,
Mon génie et mon destin,
Mon âme par toi guérie,
Par toi, lumière et couleur !
Explosion de chaleur
Dans ma noire Sibérie !

– Charles Baudelaire

Afternoon Song

Though your mischievous eyebrows
Give you a singular air,
Not that of an angel,
Sorceress with Siren's eyes,
I adore you, my madcap,
My ineffable passion !
With the pious devotion
Of a priest for his idol.
Your stiff tresses are scented
With the desert and forest,
Your head assumes the poses
Of the enigma and key.
Perfume lingers about your flesh
Like incense about a censer ;
You charm like the evening,
Tenebrous, passionate nymph.
Ah ! the most potent philtres
Are weaker than your languor,
And you know the caresses
That make the dead live again !
Your haunches are enamored
Of your back and your bosom

And you delight the cushions
With your languorous poses.
Sometimes, to alleviate
Your mysterious passion,
You lavish, resolutely,
Your bites and your kisses ;
You tear me open, dark beauty,
With derisive laughter,
And then look at my heart
With eyes as soft as moonlight
Under your satin slippers,
Under your dear silken feet,
I place all my happiness,
My genius and destiny,
My soul brought to life by you
By your clear light and color,
Explosion of heat
In my dark Siberia !

– William Aggeler, 1954

Song of Afternoon

Though your eyebrows' wicked slant
Give you an intriguing air
Which the angels do not share
Sorceress, whose eyes enchant –
My passion, terrible yet gay,
With all my heart I bow before you,
With that devotion to adore you
That priests to sacred idols pay.
Deserts and woods embalmed your hair,
Its movements give your head the stigma
Of sphinx-like secret and enigma,
Both in its attitude and air.
As round a censer vapours form,
About your flesh the perfumes wander.
The selfsame charms you seem to squander
As does an evening, dark yet warm,

The strongest philtres cannot craze
As does your indolent address
And you have mastered a caress
Dead corpses from their tombs to raise.
Your hips are amorous of your breast
And of your back : your languorous pose
Enchants the cushions where you doze
When in their depths you make your nest.
Sometimes in order to appease
Mysterious rages in your soul,
You bite and kiss without control.
Then with a mocking laugh you tease
My heart, brown beauty, tearing it :
Then over it the light is strewn
Of your eye, softer than the moon,
Till with its glance my soul is lit.
Underneath your satin shoes,
And underneath your silken feet,
My joy, my fate, my genius meet
To strew the pathway of my muse.
My soul is healed, restored and made complete
By you, all colour, warmth, and light,
In my Siberia a bright
Explosion as of tropic heat.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Sisina (1861)

Sisina

Imaginez Diane en galant équipage,
Parcourant les forêts ou battant les halliers,
Cheveux et gorge au vent, s'enivrant de tapage,
Superbe et défiant les meilleurs cavaliers !

Avez-vous vu Théroigne, amante du carnage,
Excitant à l'assaut un peuple sans souliers,
La joue et l'oeil en feu, jouant son personnage,
Et montant, sabre au poing, les royaux escaliers ?
Telle la Sisina ! Mais la douce guerrière
À l'âme charitable autant que meurtrière ;
Son courage, affolé de poudre et de tambours,
Devant les suppliants sait mettre bas les armes,
Et son coeur, ravagé par la flamme, a toujours,
Pour qui s'en montre digne, un réservoir de larmes.

– Charles Baudelaire

Sisina

Imagine Diana in elegant attire,
Roaming through the forest, or beating the thickets,
Hair flying in the wind, breast bare, drunk with the noise,
Superb, defying the finest horsemen !

Have you seen Théroigne that lover of carnage,
Urging a barefoot mob on to attack,
Her eyes and cheeks aflame, playing her role,
And climbing, sword in hand, the royal staircase ?
That is Sisina ! But the sweet amazon's soul

Is as charitable as it is murderous ;
Her courage, exalted by powder and by drums,
Before supplicants, knows how to lay down its arms,
And her heart, ravaged by love, has always,
For him who is worthy, a reservoir of tears.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Sisina

Picture Diana, gallantly arrayed,
Ranging the woods, elated with the chase,
With flying hair and naked breasts displayed,
Defying fleetest horsemen with her pace.
Know you Theroigne whom blood and fire exalt,
Hounding a shoeless rabble to the fray,
Up royal stairways heading the assault,
And mounting, sword in hand, to show the way ?
Such is Sisina. Terrible her arms.
But charity restrains her killing charms.
Though rolling drums and scent of powder madden
Her courage, – laying by its pikes and spears,
For those who merit, her scorched heart will sadden,
And open, in its depth, a well of tears.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Vers pour le portrait de M. Honoré Daumier (1868)

Vers pour le portrait de M. Honoré Daumier

Celui dont nous t'offrons l'image,
Et dont l'art, subtil entre tous,
Nous enseigne à rire de nous,
Celui-là, lecteur, est un sage.
C'est un satirique, un moqueur ;
Mais l'énergie avec laquelle
Il peint le Mal et sa séquelle
Prouve la beauté de son coeur.
Son rire n'est pas la grimace
De Melmoth ou de Méphisto
Sous la torche de l'Alecto
Qui les brûle, mais qui nous glace,
Leur rire, hélas ! de la gaieté
N'est que la douloureuse charge ;
Le sien rayonne, franc et large,
Comme un signe de sa bonté !

– Charles Baudelaire

Verses for the Portrait of M. Honoré Daumier

He whose portrait we offer you,
Whose art subtler than all others,
Teaches us to laugh at ourselves,
He is a sage, gentle reader.
He's a satirist, a scoffer ;

But the power with which he paints
Evil and his retinue
Attests the beauty of his heart.
His laughter is not the grimace
Of Melmoth or of Mephisto
Under Alecto's torch which burns them
But makes our blood run cold.
Their laughter, alas ! is only
A sad caricature of mirth ;
His radiates, hearty and free,
Like a symbol of his goodness !

– William Aggeler, 1954

Verses for Honoré Daumier's Portrait

The man whose image this presents,
In art more subtle than the rest,
Teaches us sagely, as is best,
To chuckle at our own expense.
In mockery he stands apart.
His energy defies an equal
In painting Evil and its sequel –
Which proves the beauty of his heart –
Melmoth or Mephostopheles,
His mirth has naught akin to theirs.
The flambeau of Alecto flares
To singe them, while it makes us freeze.
Their merriment they come to rue
So steeped in treachery and guile,
While his frank radiating smile
Declares him to be good and true.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Franciscae meae laudes

Franciscae meae laudes

Novis te cantabo chordis,
O novelletum quod ludis
In solitudine cordis.
Esto sertis implicata,
Ô femina delicata
Per quam solvuntur peccata !
Sicut beneficum Lethe,
Hauriam oscula de te,
Quae imbuta es magnete.
Quum vitiorum tempeglas
Turbabat omnes semitas,
Apparuisti, Deitas,
Velut stella salutaris
In naufragiis amaris.....
Suspendam cor tuis aris !
Piscina plena virtutis,
Fons æternæ juventutis
Labris vocem redde mutis !
Quod erat spurcum, cremasti ;
Quod rudius, exaequasti ;
Quod debile, confirmasti.
In fame mea taberna
In nocte mea lucerna,
Recte me semper gubernas.
Adde nunc vires viribus,
Dulce balneum suavibus
Unguentatum odoribus !
Meos circa lumbos mica,

O castitatis lorica,
Aqua tincta seraphica ;
Patera gemmis corusca,
Panis salsus, mollis esca,
Divinum vinum, Francisca !

– Charles Baudelaire

In Praise of My Frances

I'll sing to you on a new note,
O young hind that gambols gaily
In the solitude of my heart.
Be adorned with wreaths of flowers,
O delightful woman
By whom our sins are washed away !
As from a benign Lethe,
I shall drink kisses from you,
Who were given a magnet's strength.
When a tempest of vices
Was sweeping down on every path,
You appeared, O divinity !
Like the star of salvation
Above a disastrous shipwreck...
I shall place my heart on your altar !
Reservoir full of virtue,
Fountain of eternal youth,
Restore the voice to my mute lips !
You have burned that which was filthy,
Made smooth that which was rough,
Strengthened that which was weak.
In my hunger you are the inn,
In the darkness my lamp,
Lead me always on virtue's path.
Add your strength now to my strength,
Sweet bath scented
With pleasant perfumes !
Shine forth from my loins,
O cuirass of chastity,

That was dipped in seraphic water,
Cup glittering with precious stones,
Bread seasoned with salt, delectable dish,
Heavenly wine – My Frances.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Praises of My Francisca

(Verses to a learned and devout Milliner)

Upon new chords of you I sing.
And the new-born bud you bring
From solitude, the pure heart's Spring.
Your brows should be with garlands twined
Woman of delightful mind,
Who our trespasses unbind.
As the wondrous balm of Lethe,
Through thy kisses, I will breathe thee.
All are magnetised who see thee.
When my vices, wild and stormy,
From my wonted courses bore me
It was You appeared before me,
Star of Oceans ! you that alter
Courses, when the pilots falter –
Take my heart upon your altar.
Cistern full of virtuous ruth,
Fountain of eternal youth,
Give to dumbness speech and truth !
What was dirty, you cremated,
What uneven – you equated,
What was weak you re-created.
Inn, on the hungry roads I tramp,
And, in the dark, a guiding lamp
To steer the lost one back to camp.
To my strength add strength, O sweet
Bath, where scents and unguents meet !
Anoint me for some peerless feat !
Holy water most seraphic,

On the lusts in which I traffic
Flash your chastity ecstatic.
Bowl of gems where radiance dances.
Salt that the holy bread enhances,
And sacred wine – your name is Frances !

– Roy Campbell, 1952

À une Dame créole

À une Dame créole

Au pays parfumé que le soleil caresse,
J'ai connu, sous un dais d'arbres tout empourprés
Et de palmiers d'où pleut sur les yeux la paresse,
Une dame créole aux charmes ignorés.

Son teint est pâle et chaud ; la brune enchanteresse
A dans le cou des airs noblement maniérez ;
Grande et svelte en marchant comme une chasseresse,
Son sourire est tranquille et ses yeux assurés.
Si vous alliez, Madame, au vrai pays de gloire,
Sur les bords de la Seine ou de la verte Loire,
Belle digne d'orner les antiques manoirs,
Vous feriez, à l'abri des ombreuses retraites
Germer mille sonnets dans le coeur des poètes,
Que vos grands yeux rendraient plus soumis que vos noirs.

– Charles Baudelaire

To a Creole Lady

In the perfumed country which the sun caresses,
I knew, under a canopy of crimson trees
And palms from which indolence rains into your eyes,
A Creole lady whose charms were unknown.

Her complexion is pale and warm ; the dark enchantress
Affects a noble air with the movements of her neck.
Tall and slender, she walks like a huntress ;
Her smile is calm and her eye confident.
If you went, Madame, to the true land of glory,

On the banks of the Seine or along the green Loire,
Beauty fit to ornament those ancient manors,
You'd make, in the shelter of those shady retreats,
A thousand sonnets grow in the hearts of poets,
Whom your large eyes would make more subject than your
slaves.

– William Aggeler, 1954

To a Colonial Lady

In scented countries by the sun caressed
I've known, beneath a tent of purple boughs,
And palmtrees shedding slumber as they drowse,
A creole lady with a charm unguessed.
She's pale, and warm, and duskily beguiling ;
Nobility is moulded in her neck ;
Slender and tall she holds herself in check,
An huntress born, sure-eyed, and quiet-smiling.
Should you go, Madam, to the land of glory
Along the Seine or Loire, where you would merit
To ornament some mansion famed in story,
Your eyes would bum in those deep-shaded parts,
And breed a thousand rhymes in poets' hearts,
Tamed like the negro slaves that you inherit.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Moesta et errabunda

Moesta et errabunda

Dis-moi ton coeur parfois s'envole-t-il, Agathe,
Loin du noir océan de l'immonde cité
Vers un autre océan où la splendeur éclate,
Bleu, clair, profond, ainsi que la virginité ?
Dis-moi, ton coeur parfois s'envole-t-il, Agathe ?
La mer la vaste mer, console nos labeurs !
Quel démon a doté la mer, rauque chanteuse
Qu'accompagne l'immense orgue des vents grondeurs,
De cette fonction sublime de berceuse ?
La mer, la vaste mer, console nos labeurs !
Emporte-moi wagon ! enlève-moi, frégate !
Loin ! loin ! ici la boue est faite de nos pleurs !
– Est-il vrai que parfois le triste coeur d'Agathe
Dise : Loin des remords, des crimes, des douleurs,
Emporte-moi, wagon, enlève-moi, frégate ?
Comme vous êtes loin, paradis parfumé,
Où sous un clair azur tout n'est qu'amour et joie,
Où tout ce que l'on aime est digne d'être aimé,
Où dans la volupté pure le coeur se noie !
Comme vous êtes loin, paradis parfumé !
Mais le vert paradis des amours enfantines,
Les courses, les chansons, les baisers, les bouquets,
Les violons vibrant derrière les collines,
Avec les brocs de vin, le soir, dans les bosquets,
– Mais le vert paradis des amours enfantines,
L'innocent paradis, plein de plaisirs furtifs,
Est-il déjà plus loin que l'Inde et que la Chine ?
Peut-on le rappeler avec des cris plaintifs,

Et l'animer encor d'une voix argentine,
L'innocent paradis plein de plaisirs furtifs ?

– Charles Baudelaire

Grieving and Wandering

Tell me, does your heart sometimes fly away, Agatha,
Far from the black ocean of the filthy city,
Toward another ocean where splendor glitters,
Blue, clear, profound, as is virginity ?
Tell me, does your heart sometimes fly away, Agatha ?
The sea, the boundless sea, consoles us for our toil !
What demon endowed the sea, that raucous singer,
Whose accompanist is the roaring wind,
With the sublime function of cradle-rocker ?
The sea, the boundless sea, consoles us for our toil !
Take me away, carriage ! Carry me off, frigate !
Far, far away ! Here the mud is made with our tears !
– Is it true that sometimes the sad heart of Agatha
Says : Far from crimes, from remorse, from sorrow,
Take me away, carriage, carry me off, frigate ?
How far away you are, O perfumed Paradise,
Where under clear blue sky there's only love and joy,
Where all that one loves is worthy of love,
Where the heart is drowned in sheer enjoyment !
How far away you are, O perfumed Paradise !
But the green Paradise of childhood loves
The outings, the singing, the kisses, the bouquets,
The violins vibrating behind the hills,
And the evenings in the woods, with jugs of wine
– But the green Paradise of childhood loves,
That sinless Paradise, full of furtive pleasures,
Is it farther off now than India and China ?
Can one call it back with plaintive cries,
And animate it still with a silvery voice,
That sinless Paradise full of furtive pleasures ?

– William Aggeler, 1954

Moesta et Errabunda

Agatha, does your heart rise up and fly,
Far from the city's black and sordid sea
Towards a sea that's blue as any sky,
And clear and deep as pure virginity ?
Agatha, does your heart rise up and fly ?
The sea, the mighty sea, consoles our labour.
What demon taught the sea with raucous verse
To choir the organ which the winds belabour
And lullaby our sorrows like a nurse ?
The sea, the mighty sea, consoles our labour.
Train, bear me ; take me, ship, to other climes !
Far, far ! For here the mud is made of tears.
– Does Agatha's sad heart not say, at times,
"Far from remorses, sorrows, crimes, and fears,
Train, bear me ; take me, ship, to other climes" ?
How distant is that perfumed paradise !
Where all is joy and love with azure crowned,
Where all one loves is truly worth the price,
And hearts in pure voluptuousness are drowned.
How distant is that perfumed paradise !
But the green paradise of childish love,
Of races, songs, and kisses, and bouquets,
Of fiddles shrilling in the hills above,
And jars of wine, and woods, and dying rays –
But the green paradise of childish love,
innocent paradise of furtive joys,
Is it far off as India or Hong Kong ?
Could it be conjured by a plaintive voice
Or animated by a silver song –
That far off paradise of furtive joys ?

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Revenant

Le Revenant

Comme les anges à l'oeil fauve,
Je reviendrai dans ton alcôve
Et vers toi glisserai sans bruit
Avec les ombres de la nuit;
Et je te donnerai, ma brune,
Des baisers froids comme la lune
Et des caresses de serpent
Autour d'une fosse rampant.
Quand viendra le matin livide,
Tu trouveras ma place vide,
Où jusqu'au soir il fera froid.
Comme d'autres par la tendresse,
Sur ta vie et sur ta jeunesse,
Moi, je veux régner par l'effroi.

– Charles Baudelaire

The Ghost

Like angels with wild beast's eyes
I shall return to your bedroom
And silently glide toward you
With the shadows of the night;
And, dark beauty, I shall give you
Kisses cold as the moon
And the caresses of a snake
That crawls around a grave.
When the livid morning comes,

You'll find my place empty,
And it will be cold there till night.
I wish to hold sway over
Your life and youth by fear,
As others do by tenderness.

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Ghost

Like angels fierce and tawny-eyed,
Back to your chamber I will glide,
And noiselessly into your sight
Steal with the shadows of the night.
And I will bring you, brown delight,
Kisses as cold as lunar night
And the caresses of a snake
Revolving in a grave. At break
Of morning in its livid hue,
You'd find I had bequeathed to you
An empty place as cold as stone.
Others by tenderness and ruth
Would reign over your life and youth,
But I would rule by fear alone.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Sonnet d'automne (1861)

Sonnet d'automne

Ils me disent, tes yeux, clairs comme le cristal :
« Pour toi, bizarre amant, quel est donc mon mérite ? »
– Sois charmante et tais-toi ! Mon coeur, que tout irrite,
Excepté la candeur de l'antique animal,
Ne veut pas te montrer son secret infernal,
Berceuse dont la main aux longs sommeils m'invite,
Ni sa noire légende avec la flamme écrite.
Je hais la passion et l'esprit me fait mal !
Aimons-nous doucement. L'Amour dans sa guérison,
Ténébreux, embusqué, bande son arc fatal.
Je connais les engins de son vieil arsenal :
Crime, horreur et folie ! – Ô pâle marguerite !
Comme moi n'es-tu pas un soleil automnal,
Ô ma si blanche, ô ma si froide Marguerite ?

– Charles Baudelaire

Autumn Sonnet

They say to me, your eyes, clear as crystal :
“For you, bizarre lover, what is my merit then ?”
– Be charming and be still ! My heart, which all things irk,
Except the candor of the animals of old,
Does not wish to reveal its black secret to you,
Whose lulling hands invite me to long sleep,
Nor its somber legend written with flame.
I hate passion ; intelligence makes me suffer !
Let us love each other sweetly. Tenebrous Love,

Ambushed in his shelter, stretches his fatal bow.
I know all the weapons of his old arsenal :
Crime, horror, and madness ! – pale marguerite !
Are you not, like me, an autumnal sun,
O my Marguerite, so white and so cold ?

– William Aggeler, 1954

Autumn Sonnet

Your eyes like crystal ask me, clear and mute,
“in me, strange lover, what do you admire ?”
Be lovely : hush : my heart, whom all things tire
Except the candour of the primal brute,
Would hide from you the secret burning it
And its black legend written out in fire,
O soother of the sleep that I respire !
Passion I hate, and I am hurt by wit.
Let us love gently. In his lair laid low,
Ambushed in shades, Love strings his fatal bow.
I know his ancient arsenal complete,
Crime, horror, lunacy – O my pale daisy !
Are we not suns in Autumn, silver-hazy,
O my so white, so snow-cold Marguerite ?

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Tristesses de la lune

Tristesses de la lune

Ce soir, la lune rêve avec plus de paresse ;
Ainsi qu'une beauté, sur de nombreux coussins,
Qui d'une main distraite et légère caresse
Avant de s'endormir le contour de ses seins,
Sur le dos satiné des molles avalanches,
Mourante, elle se livre aux longues pâmoisons,
Et promène ses yeux sur les visions blanches
Qui montent dans l'azur comme des floraisons.
Quand parfois sur ce globe, en sa langueur oisive,
Elle laisse filer une larme furtive,
Un poète pieux, ennemi du sommeil,
Dans le creux de sa main prend cette larme pâle,
Aux reflets irisés comme un fragment d'opale,
Et la met dans son coeur loin des yeux du soleil.

– Charles Baudelaire

Sadness of the Moon

Tonight the moon dreams with more indolence,
Like a lovely woman on a bed of cushions
Who fondles with a light and listless hand
The contour of her breasts before falling asleep ;
On the satiny back of the billowing clouds,
Languishing, she lets herself fall into long swoons
And casts her eyes over the white phantoms
That rise in the azure like blossoming flowers.
When, in her lazy listlessness,

She sometimes sheds a furtive tear upon this globe,
A pious poet, enemy of sleep,
In the hollow of his hand catches this pale tear,
With the iridescent reflections of opal,
And hides it in his heart afar from the sun's eyes.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Sorrow of the Moon

More drowsy dreams the moon tonight. She rests
Like a proud beauty on heaped cushions pressing,
With light and absent-minded touch caressing,
Before she sleeps, the contour of her breasts.
On satin-shimmering, downy avalanches
She dies from swoon to swoon in languid change,
And lets her eyes on snowy visions range
That in the azure rise like flowering branches.
When sometimes to this earth her languor calm
Lets streak a stealthy tear, a pious poet,
The enemy of sleep, in his cupped palm,
Takes this pale tear, of liquid opal spun
With rainbow lights, deep in his heart to stow it
Far from the staring eyeballs of the Sun.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Les Chats

Les Chats

Les amoureux fervents et les savants austères
Aiment également, dans leur mûre saison,
Les chats puissants et doux, orgueil de la maison,
Qui comme eux sont frileux et comme eux sédentaires.
Amis de la science et de la volupté
Ils cherchent le silence et l'horreur des ténèbres ;
L'Erète les eût pris pour ses coursiers funèbres,
S'ils pouvaient au servage incliner leur fierté.
Ils prennent en songeant les nobles attitudes
Des grands sphinx allongés au fond des solitudes,
Qui semblent s'endormir dans un rêve sans fin ;
Leurs reins féconds sont pleins d'étincelles magiques,
Et des parcelles d'or, ainsi qu'un sable fin,
Etoilent vaguement leurs prunelles mystiques.

– Charles Baudelaire

Cats

Both ardent lovers and austere scholars
Love in their mature years
The strong and gentle cats, pride of the house,
Who like them are sedentary and sensitive to cold.
Friends of learning and sensual pleasure,
They seek the silence and the horror of darkness ;
Erebus would have used them as his gloomy steeds :
If their pride could let them stoop to bondage.
When they dream, they assume the noble attitudes

Of the mighty sphinxes stretched out in solitude,
Who seem to fall into a sleep of endless dreams ;
Their fertile loins are full of magic sparks,
And particles of gold, like fine grains of sand,
Spangle dimly their mystic eyes.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Cats

Sages austere and fervent lovers both,
In their ripe season, cherish cats, the pride
Of hearths, strong, mild, and to themselves allied
In chilly stealth and sedentary sloth.
Friends both to lust and learning, they frequent
Silence, and love the horror darkness breeds.
Erebus would have chosen them for steeds
To hearse, could their pride to it have bent.
Dreaming, the noble postures they assume
Of sphinxes stretching out into the gloom
That seems to swoon into an endless trance.
Their fertile flanks are full of sparks that tingle,
And particles of gold, like grains of shingle,
Vaguely be-star their pupils as they glance.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Les Hiboux

Les Hiboux

Sous les ifs noirs qui les abritent
Les hiboux se tiennent rangés
Ainsi que des dieux étrangers
Dardant leur oeil rouge. Ils méditent.
Sans remuer ils se tiendront
Jusqu'à l'heure mélancolique
Où, poussant le soleil oblique,
Les ténèbres s'établiront.
Leur attitude au sage enseigne
Qu'il faut en ce monde qu'il craigne
Le tumulte et le mouvement ;
L'homme ivre d'une ombre qui passe
Porte toujours le châtiment
D'avoir voulu changer de place.

– Charles Baudelaire

Owls

Under the dark yews which shade them,
The owls are perched in rows,
Like so many strange gods,
Darting their red eyes. They meditate.
Without budging they will remain
Till that melancholy hour
When, pushing back the slanting sun,
Darkness will take up its abode.
Their attitude teaches the wise

That in this world one must fear
Movement and commotion;
Man, enraptured by a passing shadow,
Forever bears the punishment
Of having tried to change his place.

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Owls

Within the shelter of black yews
The owls in ranks are ranged apart
Like foreign gods, whose eyeballs dart
Red fire. They meditate and muse.
Without a stir they will remain
Till, in its melancholy hour,
Thrusting the level sun from power,
The shade establishes its reign.
Their attitude instructs the sage,
Content with what is near at hand,
To shun all motion, strife, and rage.
Men, crazed with shadows that they chase,
Bear, as a punishment, the brand
Of having wished to change their place.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

La Pipe

La Pipe

Je suis la pipe d'un auteur ;
On voit, à contempler ma mine
D'Abyssinienne ou de Cafrine,
Que mon maître est un grand fumeur.
Quand il est comblé de douleur,
Je fume comme la chaumine
Où se prépare la cuisine
Pour le retour du laboureur.
J'enlace et je berce son âme
Dans le réseau mobile et bleu
Qui monte de ma bouche en feu,
Et je roule un puissant dictame
Qui charme son cœur et guérit
De ses fatigues son esprit.

– Charles Baudelaire

The Pipe

I am the pipe of an author ;
One sees by my color,
Abyssinian or Kaffir,
That my master's a great smoker.
When he is laden with sorrow,
I smoke like a cottage
Where they are preparing dinner
For the return of the ploughman.
I clasp and lull his soul

In the wavy blue web
That rises from my fiery mouth.
I give forth clouds of dittany
That warm his heart and cure
His mind of its fatigue.

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Author's Pipe

I am an author's pipe. To see me
And my outlandish shape to heed,
You'd know my master was a dreamy
Inveterate smoker of the weed.

When be is loaded down with care,
I like a stove will smoke and burn
Wherein the supper they prepare
Against the labourer's return.

I nurse his spirit with my charm
Swaying it in a soft, uncertain,
And vaguely-moving azure curtain.

I roll a potent cloud of balm
To lull his spirit into rest
And cure the sorrows in his breast.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

La Musique

La Musique

La musique souvent me prend comme une mer !
Vers ma pâle étoile,
Sous un plafond de brume ou dans un vaste éther,
Je mets à la voile ;
La poitrine en avant et les poumons gonflés
Comme de la toile
J'escalade le dos des flots amoncelés
Que la nuit me voile ;
Je sens vibrer en moi toutes les passions
D'un vaisseau qui souffre ;
Le bon vent, la tempête et ses convulsions
Sur l'immense gouffre
Me bercent. D'autres fois, calme plat, grand miroir
De mon désespoir !

– Charles Baudelaire

Music

Music often transports me like a sea !
Toward my pale star,
Under a ceiling of fog or a vast ether,
I get under sail ;
My chest thrust out and my lungs filled
Like the canvas,
I scale the slopes of wave on wave
That the night obscures ;
I feel vibrating within me all the passions

Of ships in distress ;
The good wind and the tempest with its convulsions
Over the vast gulf
Cradle me. At other times, dead calm, great mirror
Of my despair !

– William Aggeler, 1954

Music

Music uplifts me like the sea and races
Me to my distant star,
Through veils of mist or through ethereal spaces,
I sail on it afar.
With chest flung out and lungs like sails inflated
Into the depth of night
I escalate the backs of waves serrated,
That darkness veils from sight.
I feel vibrating in me the emotions
That storm-tossed ships must feel.
The fair winds and the tempests and the oceans
Sway my exultant keel.
Sometimes a vast, dead calm with glassy stare
Mirrors my dumb despair.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Sépulture

Sépulture

Si par une nuit lourde et sombre
Un bon chrétien, par charité,
Derrière quelque vieux décombre
Enterre votre corps vanté,
À l'heure où les chastes étoiles
Ferment leurs yeux appesantis,
L'araignée y fera ses toiles,
Et la vipère ses petits ;
Vous entendrez toute l'année
Sur votre tête condamnée
Les cris lamentables des loups
Et des sorcières faméliques,
Les ébats des vieillards lubriques
Et les complots des noirs filous.

– Charles Baudelaire

Sepulcher

If on a dismal, sultry night
Some good Christian, through charity,
Will bury your vaunted body
Behind the ruins of a building
At the hour when the chaste stars
Close their eyes, heavy with sleep,
The spider will make his webs there,
And the viper his progeny ;
You will hear all year long

Above your damned head
The mournful cries of wolves
And of the half-starved witches,
The frolics of lustful old men
And the plots of vicious robbers.

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Burial Of an Accursed Poet

If on a night obscure and deep,
Some decent Christian, out of ruth,
Buries behind some garbage-heap
The vaunted body of your youth :
There, when the chaster stars have set
And the moon her hammock slung
Will the spider weave his net
And the adder batch her young.
Your curse'd head beneath the ground
Will hear, through all the seasons then,
The dismal cries of wolves resound,
Old half-starved witches raising spooks,
The antics of obscene old men,
And black conspiracies of crooks.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Une gravure fantastique (1861)

Une gravure fantastique

Ce spectre singulier n'a pour toute toilette,
Grotesquement campé sur son front de squelette,
Qu'un diadème affreux sentant le carnaval.
Sans éperons, sans fouet, il essouffle un cheval,
Fantôme comme lui, rosse apocalyptique,
Qui bave des naseaux comme un épileptique.
Au travers de l'espace ils s'enfoncent tous deux,
Et foulent l'infini d'un sabot hasardeux.
Le cavalier promène un sabre qui flamboie
Sur les foules sans nom que sa monture broie,
Et parcourt, comme un prince inspectant sa maison,
Le cimetière immense et froid, sans horizon,
Où gisent, aux lueurs d'un soleil blanc et terne,
Les peuples de l'histoire ancienne et moderne.

– Charles Baudelaire

A Fantastic Print

That strange specter wears nothing more
Than a diadem, atrocious and tawdry,
Grotesquely fixed on his skeleton brow.
Without spurs, without whip, he winds a horse,
A phantom like himself, an apocalyptic steed
That foams at the nostrils like an epileptic.
Both of them are plunging through space
And trampling on the infinite with daring feet.
The horseman is waving a flaming sword

Over the nameless crowds who are crushed by his mount
And examines like a prince inspecting his house,
The graveyard, immense and cold, with no horizon,
Where lie, in the glimmer of a white, lifeless sun,
The races of history, ancient and modern.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Fantastic Engraving

A monstrous spectre carries on his forehead,
And at a rakish tilt, grotesquely horrid,
A crown such as at carnivals parade.
Without a Whip or spur he rides a jade,
A phantom-like apocalyptic moke,
Whose nostrils seem with rabid froth to smoke.
Across unbounded space the couple moves
Spurning infinity with reckless hooves.
The horseman waves a sword that lights the gloom
Of nameless crowds he tramples to their doom,
And, like a prince his mansion, goes inspecting
The graveyard, which, no skyline intersecting,
Contains, beneath a sun that's white and bleak,
Peoples of history, modern and antique.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Mort joyeux

Le Mort joyeux

Dans une terre grasse et pleine d'escargots
Je veux creuser moi-même une fosse profonde,
Où je puisse à loisir étaler mes vieux os
Et dormir dans l'oubli comme un requin dans l'onde.
Je hais les testaments et je hais les tombeaux ;
Plutôt que d'implorer une larme du monde,
Vivant, j'aimerais mieux inviter les corbeaux
À saigner tous les bouts de ma carcasse immonde.
Ô vers ! noirs compagnons sans oreille et sans yeux,
Voyez venir à vous un mort libre et joyeux ;
Philosophes viveurs, fils de la pourriture,
À travers ma ruine allez donc sans remords,
Et dites-moi s'il est encor quelque torture
Pour ce vieux corps sans âme et mort parmi les morts !

– Charles Baudelaire

The Joyful Corpse

In a rich, heavy soil, infested with snails,
I wish to dig my own grave, wide and deep,
Where I can at leisure stretch out my old bones
And sleep in oblivion like a shark in the wave.
I have a hatred for testaments and for tombs ;
Rather than implore a tear of the world,
I'd sooner, while alive, invite the crows
To drain the blood from my filthy carcass.
O worms ! black companions with neither eyes nor ears,

See a dead man, joyous and free, approaching you ;
Wanton philosophers, children of putrescence,
Go through my ruin then, without remorse,
And tell me if there still remains any torture
For this old soulless body, dead among the dead !

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Joyous Dead

In a fat, greasy soil, that's full of snails,
I'll dig a grave deep down, where I may sleep
Spreading my bones at ease, to drowse in deep
Oblivion, as a shark within the wave.

I hate all tombs, and testaments, and wills :
I want no human tears ; I'd like it more,
That ravens could attack me with their bills,
To broach my carcase of its living gore.

O worms ! black friends, who cannot hear or see,
A free and joyous corpse behold in me !
You philosophic souls, corruption-bred,
Plough through my ruins ! eat your merry way !
And if there are yet further torments, say,
For this old soulless corpse among the dead.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Tonneau de la Haine

Le Tonneau de la Haine

La Haine est le tonneau des pâles Danaïdes ;
La Vengeance éperdue aux bras rouges et forts
À beau précipiter dans ses ténèbres vides
De grands seaux pleins du sang et des larmes des morts,
Le Démon fait des trous secrets à ces abîmes,
Par où fuirraient mille ans de sueurs et d'efforts,
Quand même elle saurait ranimer ses victimes,
Et pour les pressurer ressusciter leurs corps.
La Haine est un ivrogne au fond d'une taverne,
Qui sent toujours la soif naître de la liqueur
Et se multiplier comme l'hydre de Lerne.
– Mais les buveurs heureux connaissent leur vainqueur,
Et la Haine est vouée à ce sort lamentable
De ne pouvoir jamais s'endormir sous la table.

– Charles Baudelaire

Hatred's Cask

Hatred is the cask of the pale Danaides ;
Bewildered Vengeance with arms red and strong
Vainly pours into its empty darkness
Great pailfuls of the blood and the tears of the dead ;
The Demon makes secret holes in this abyss,
Whence would escape a thousand years of sweat and strain,
Even if she could revive her victims,
Could restore their bodies, to squeeze them dry once more.
Hatred is a drunkard in a tavern,

Who feels his thirst grow greater with each drink
And multiply itself like the Lernaean hydra.

– While fortunate drinkers know they can be conquered,
Hatred is condemned to this lamentable fate,
That she can never fall asleep beneath the table.

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Cask of Hate

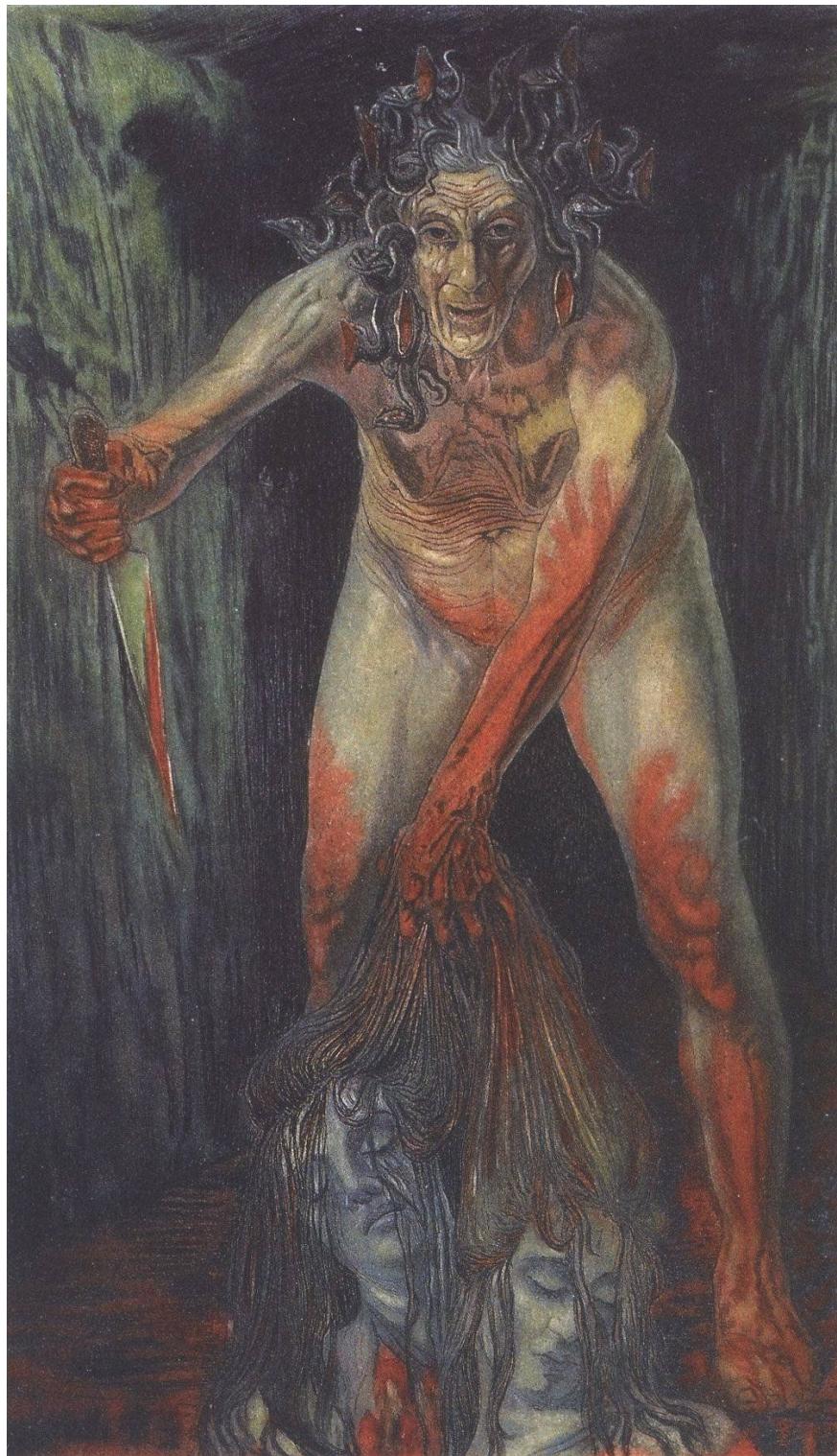
The Cask of the pale Danaids is Hate.
Vainly Revenge, with red strong arms employed,
Precipitates her buckets, in a spate
Of blood and tears, to feed the empty void.

The Fiend bores secret holes to these abysms
By which a thousand years of sweat and strain
Escape, though she'd revive their organisms
In order just to bleed them once again.

Hate is a drunkard in a tavern staying,
Who feels his thirst born of its very cure,
Like Lerna's hydra, multiplied by slaying.

Gay drinkers of their conqueror are sure,
And Hate is doomed to a sad fate, unable
Ever to fall and snore beneath the table.

– Roy Campbell, 1952



La Cloche fêlée

La Cloche fêlée

Il est amer et doux, pendant les nuits d'hiver,
D'écouter, près du feu qui palpite et qui fume,
Les souvenirs lointains lentement s'élever
Au bruit des carillons qui chantent dans la brume.

Bienheureuse la cloche au gosier vigoureux
Qui, malgré sa vieillesse, alerte et bien portante,
Jette fidèlement son cri religieux,
Ainsi qu'un vieux soldat qui veille sous la tente !

Moi, mon âme est fêlée, et lorsqu'en ses ennuis
Elle veut de ses chants peupler l'air froid des nuits,
Il arrive souvent que sa voix affaiblie
Semble le râle épais d'un blessé qu'on oublie
Au bord d'un lac de sang, sous un grand tas de morts
Et qui meurt, sans bouger, dans d'immenses efforts.

– Charles Baudelaire

The Flawed Bell

It is bitter and sweet on winter nights
To listen by the fire that smokes and palpitates,
To distant souvenirs that rise up slowly
At the sound of the chimes that sing in the fog.

Happy is the bell which in spite of age
Is vigilant and healthy, and with lusty throat
Faithfully sounds its religious call,
Like an old soldier watching from his tent !
I, my soul is flawed, and when, a prey to ennui,

She wishes to fill the cold night air with her songs,
It often happens that her weakened voice
Resembles the death rattle of a wounded man,
Forgotten beneath a heap of dead, by a lake of blood,
Who dies without moving, striving desperately.

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Cracked Bell

It's sweet and bitter, of a winter night,
To hear, beside the crackling, smoking log,
Far memories prepare themselves for flight
To carillons that sound amid the fog.
Happy's the bell whose vigorous throat on high,
in spite of time, is sound and still unspent,
To hurl his faithful and religious cry
Like an old soldier watching in his tent.
My soul is cracked, and when amidst its care
It tries with song to fill the frosty air,
Sometimes, its voice seems like the feeble croak
A wounded soldier makes, lost in the smoke,
Beneath a pile of dead, in bloody mire,
Trying, with fearful efforts, to expire.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Spleen (Pluviôse irrité)

Spleen

Pluviôse, irrité contre la ville entière,
De son urne à grands flots verse un froid ténébreux
Aux pâles habitants du voisin cimetière
Et la mortalité sur les faubourgs brumeux.

Mon chat sur le carreau cherchant une litière
Agite sans repos son corps maigre et galeux ;
L'âme d'un vieux poète erre dans la gouttière
Avec la triste voix d'un fantôme frileux.

Le bourdon se lamente, et la bûche enfumée
Accompagne en fausset la pendule enrhumée
Cependant qu'en un jeu plein de sales parfums,
Héritage fatal d'une vieille hydropique,
Le beau valet de coeur et la dame de pique
Causent sinistrement de leurs amours défunts.

– Charles Baudelaire

Spleen

January, irritated with the whole city,
Pours from his urn great waves of gloomy cold
On the pale occupants of the nearby graveyard
And death upon the foggy slums.

My cat seeking a bed on the tiled floor
Shakes his thin, mangy body ceaselessly ;
The soul of an old poet wanders in the rain-pipe
With the sad voice of a shivering ghost.
The great bell whines, the smoking log

Accompanies in falsetto the snuffling clock,
While in a deck of cards reeking of filthy scents,
My mortal heritage from some dropsical old woman,
The handsome knave of hearts and the queen of spades
Converse sinisterly of their dead love affair.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Spleen

The Month of Rains, incensed at life, outpours
Out of her urn, a dark chill, like a penance,
Over the graveyards and their wan, grey tenants
And folk in foggy suburbs out of doors.
My cat seeks out a litter on the ground
Twitching her scrawny body flecked with mange.
The soul of some old poet seems to range
The gutter, with a chill phantasmal sound.
The big bell tolls : damp hearth-logs seem to mock,
Whistling, the sniffle-snuffle of the clock,
While in the play of odours stale with must,
Reminders of a dropsical old crone,
The knave of hearts and queen of spades alone
Darkly discuss a passion turned to dust.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Spleen (J'ai plus de souvenirs)

Spleen

J'ai plus de souvenirs que si j'avais mille ans.
Un gros meuble à tiroirs encombré de bilans,
De vers, de billets doux, de procès, de romances,
Avec de lourds cheveux roulés dans des quittances,
Cache moins de secrets que mon triste cerveau.
C'est une pyramide, un immense caveau,
Qui contient plus de morts que la fosse commune.
– Je suis un cimetière abhorré de la lune,
Où comme des remords se traînent de longs vers
Qui s'acharnent toujours sur mes morts les plus chers.
Je suis un vieux boudoir plein de roses fanées,
Où gît tout un fouillis de modes surannées,
Où les pastels plaintifs et les pâles Boucher
Seuls, respirent l'odeur d'un flacon débouché.
Rien n'égale en longueur les boiteuses journées,
Quand sous les lourds flocons des neigeuses années
L'ennui, fruit de la morne incuriosité,
Prend les proportions de l'immortalité.
– Désormais tu n'es plus, ô matière vivante !
Qu'un granit entouré d'une vague épouvante,
Assoupi dans le fond d'un Sahara brumeux ;
Un vieux sphinx ignoré du monde insoucieux,
Oublié sur la carte, et dont l'humeur farouche
Ne chante qu'aux rayons du soleil qui se couche.

– Charles Baudelaire

Spleen

I have more memories than if I'd lived a thousand years.
A heavy chest of drawers cluttered with balance-sheets,
Processes, love-letters, verses, ballads,
And heavy locks of hair enveloped in receipts,
Hides fewer secrets than my gloomy brain.
It is a pyramid, a vast burial vault
Which contains more corpses than potter's field.
– I am a cemetery abhorred by the moon,
In which long worms crawl like remorse
And constantly harass my dearest dead.
I am an old boudoir full of withered roses,
Where lies a whole litter of old-fashioned dresses,
Where the plaintive pastels and the pale Bouchers,
Alone, breathe in the fragrance from an opened phial.
Nothing is so long as those limping days,
When under the heavy flakes of snowy years
Ennui, the fruit of dismal apathy,
Becomes as large as immortality.
– Henceforth you are no more, O living matter !
Than a block of granite surrounded by vague terrors,
Dozing in the depths of a hazy Sahara
An old sphinx ignored by a heedless world,
Omitted from the map, whose savage nature
Sings only in the rays of a setting sun.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Spleen

I have more memories than had I seen
Ten centuries. A huge chest that has been
Stuffed full of writs, bills, verses, balance-sheets
With golden curls wrapt up in old receipts
And love-letters – hides less than my sad brain,
A pyramid, a vault that must contain
More corpses than the public charnel stores.
I am a cemetery the moon abhors,
Where, like remorses, the long worms that trail

Always the dearest of my dead assail.
I am a boudoir full of faded roses
Where many an old outmoded dress reposes
And faded pastels and pale Bouchers only
Breathe a scent-flask, long-opened and left lonely...
Nothing can match those limping days for length
Where under snows of years, grown vast in strength,
Boredom (of listlessness the pale abortion)
Of immortality takes the proportion !
– From henceforth, living matter, you are nought
But stone surrounded by a dreadful thought :
Lost in some dim Sahara, an old Sphinx,
Of whom the world we live in never thinks.
Lost on the map, it is its surly way
Only to sing in sunset's fading ray.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Spleen (Je suis comme le roi)

Spleen

Je suis comme le roi d'un pays pluvieux,
Riche, mais impuissant, jeune et pourtant très vieux,
Qui, de ses précepteurs méprisant les courbettes,
S'ennuie avec ses chiens comme avec d'autres bêtes.
Rien ne peut l'égayer, ni gibier, ni faucon,
Ni son peuple mourant en face du balcon.
Du bouffon favori la grotesque ballade
Ne distrait plus le front de ce cruel malade ;
Son lit fleurdelisé se transforme en tombeau,
Et les dames d'atour, pour qui tout prince est beau,
Ne savent plus trouver d'impudique toilette
Pour tirer un souris de ce jeune squelette.
Le savant qui lui fait de l'or n'a jamais pu
De son être extirper l'élément corrompu,
Et dans ces bains de sang qui des Romains nous viennent,
Et dont sur leurs vieux jours les puissants se souviennent,
Il n'a su réchauffer ce cadavre hébété
Où coule au lieu de sang l'eau verte du Léthé

– Charles Baudelaire

Spleen

I am like the king of a rainy land,
Wealthy but powerless, both young and very old,
Who contemns the fawning manners of his tutors
And is bored with his dogs and other animals.
Nothing can cheer him, neither the chase nor falcons,

Nor his people dying before his balcony.
The ludicrous ballads of his favorite clown
No longer smooth the brow of this cruel invalid ;
His bed, adorned with fleurs-de-lis, becomes a grave ;
The lady's maids, to whom every prince is handsome,
No longer can find gowns shameless enough
To wring a smile from this young skeleton.
The alchemist who makes his gold was never able
To extract from him the tainted element,
And in those baths of blood come down from Roman times,
And which in their old age the powerful recall,
He failed to warm this dazed cadaver in whose veins
Flows the green water of Lethe in place of blood.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Spleen

I'm like the King of some damp, rainy clime,
Grown impotent and old before my time,
Who scorns the bows and scrapings of his teachers
And bores himself with hounds and all such creatures.
Naught can amuse him, falcon, steed, or chase :
No, not the mortal plight of his whole race
Dying before his balcony. The tune,
Sung to this tyrant by his pet buffoon,
Irks him. His couch seems far more like a grave.
Even the girls, for whom all kings seem brave,
Can think no toilet up, nor shameless rig,
To draw a smirk from this funereal prig.
The sage who makes him gold, could never find
The baser element that rots his mind.
Even those blood-baths the old Romans knew
And later thugs have imitated too,
Can't warm this skeleton to deeds of slaughter,
Whose only blood is Lethe's cold, green water.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Spleen (Quand le ciel bas et lourd)

Spleen

Quand le ciel bas et lourd pèse comme un couvercle
Sur l'esprit gémissant en proie aux longs ennuis,
Et que de l'horizon embrassant tout le cercle
Il nous verse un jour noir plus triste que les nuits ;

Quand la terre est changée en un cachot humide,
Où l'Espérance, comme une chauve-souris,
S'en va battant les murs de son aile timide
Et se cognant la tête à des plafonds pourris ;

Quand la pluie étalant ses immenses traînées
D'une vaste prison imite les barreaux,
Et qu'un peuple muet d'infâmes araignées
Vient tendre ses filets au fond de nos cerveaux,

Des cloches tout à coup sautent avec furie
Et lancent vers le ciel un affreux hurlement,
Ainsi que des esprits errants et sans patrie
Qui se mettent à geindre opiniâtrement.

– Et de longs corbillards, sans tambours ni musique,
Défilent lentement dans mon âme ; l'Espoir,
Vaincu, pleure, et l'Angoisse atroce, despotique,
Sur mon crâne incliné plante son drapeau noir.

– Charles Baudelaire

Spleen

When the low, heavy sky weighs like a lid
On the groaning spirit, victim of long ennui,
And from the all-encircling horizon
Spreads over us a day gloomier than the night ;
When the earth is changed into a humid dungeon,
In which Hope like a bat
Goes beating the walls with her timid wings
And knocking her head against the rotten ceiling ;
When the rain stretching out its endless train
Imitates the bars of a vast prison
And a silent horde of loathsome spiders
Comes to spin their webs in the depths of our brains,
All at once the bells leap with rage
And hurl a frightful roar at heaven,
Even as wandering spirits with no country
Burst into a stubborn, whimpering cry.
– And without drums or music, long hearse
Pass by slowly in my soul ; Hope, vanquished,
Weeps, and atrocious, despotic Anguish
On my bowed skull plants her black flag.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Spleen

When the cold heavy sky weighs like a lid
On spirits whom eternal boredom grips,
And the wide ring of the horizon's hid
In daytime darker than the night's eclipse :
When the world seems a dungeon, damp and small,
Where hope flies like a bat, in circles reeling,
Beating his timid wings against the wall
And dashing out his brains against the ceiling :
When trawling rains have made their steel-grey fibres
Look like the grilles of some tremendous jail,
And a whole nation of disgusting spiders
Over our brains their dusty cobwebs trail :

Suddenly bells are fiercely clanged about
And hurl a fearsome howl into the sky
Like spirits from their country hunted out
Who've nothing else to do but shriek and cry –
Then long processions without fifes or drums
Wind slowly through my soul. Hope, weeping, bows
To conquest. And atrocious Anguish comes
To plant his black flag on my drooping brows.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Obsession (1861)

Obsession

Grands bois, vous m'effrayez comme des cathédrales ;
Vous hurlez comme l'orgue ; et dans nos coeurs maudits,
Chambres d'éternel deuil où vibrent de vieux râles,
Répondent les échos de vos De profundis.

Je te hais, Océan ! tes bonds et tes tumultes,
Mon esprit les retrouve en lui ; ce rire amer
De l'homme vaincu, plein de sanglots et d'insultes,
Je l'entends dans le rire immense de la mer
Comme tu me plairais, ô nuit ! sans ces étoiles
Dont la lumière parle un langage connu !
Car je cherche le vide, et le noir, et le nu !
Mais les ténèbres sont elles-mêmes des toiles
Où vivent, jaillissant de mon oeil par milliers,
Des êtres disparus aux regards familiers.

– Charles Baudelaire

Obsession

Great woods, you frighten me like cathedrals ;
You roar like the organ ; and in our cursed hearts,
Rooms of endless mourning where old death-rattles sound,
Respond the echoes of your De profundis.

I hate you, Ocean ! your bounding and your tumult,
My mind finds them within itself ; that bitter laugh
Of the vanquished man, full of sobs and insults,
I hear it in the immense laughter of the sea.
How I would like you, Night ! without those stars

Whose light speaks a language I know !
For I seek emptiness, darkness, and nudity !
But the darkness is itself a canvas
Upon which live, springing from my eyes by thousands,
Beings with understanding looks, who have vanished.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Obsession

You forests, like cathedrals, are my dread :
You roar like organs. Our curst hearts, like cells
Where death forever rattles on the bed,
Echo your de Profundis as it swells.
My spirit hates you, Ocean ! sees, and loathes
Its tumults in your own. Of men defeated
The bitter laugh, that's full of sobs and oaths,
Is in your own tremendously repeated.
How you would please me, Night ! without your stars
Which speak a foreign dialect, that jars
On one who seeks the void, the black, the bare.
Yet even your darkest shade a canvas forms
Whereon my eye must multiply in swarms
Familiar looks of shapes no longer there.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Goût du néant (1861)

Le Goût du néant

Morne esprit, autrefois amoureux de la lutte,
L'Espoir, dont l'éperon attisait ton ardeur,
Ne veut plus t'enfourcher ! Couche-toi sans pudeur,
Vieux cheval dont le pied à chaque obstacle butte.
Résigne-toi, mon cœur ; dors ton sommeil de brute.
Esprit vaincu, fourbu ! Pour toi, vieux maraudeur,
L'amour n'a plus de goût, non plus que la dispute ;
Adieu donc, chants du cuivre et soupirs de la flûte !
Plaisirs, ne tentez plus un cœur sombre et boudeur !
Le Printemps adorable a perdu son odeur !
Et le Temps m'engloutit minute par minute,
Comme la neige immense un corps pris de roideur ;
– Je contemple d'en haut le globe en sa rondeur
Et je n'y cherche plus l'abri d'une cahute.
Avalanche, veux-tu m'emporter dans ta chute ?

– Charles Baudelaire

The Desire for Annihilation

Dejected soul, once anxious for the strife,
Hope, whose spur fanned your ardor into flame,
No longer wishes to mount you ! Lie down shamelessly,
Old horse who stumbles over every rut.
Resign yourself, my heart ; sleep your brutish sleep.
Conquered, founded spirit ! For you, old jade,
Love has no more relish, no more than war ;

Farewell then, songs of the brass and sighs of the flute !
Pleasure, tempt no more a dark, sullen heart !
Adorable spring has lost its fragrance !
And Time engulfs me minute by minute,
As the immense snow a stiffening corpse ;
I survey from above the roundness of the globe
And I no longer seek there the shelter of a hut.
Avalanche, will you sweep me along in your fall ?

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Thirst for the Void

My soul, you used to love the battle's rumble.
Hope, whose sharp spur once kindled you like flame,
Will mount on you no more. Rest, without shame,
Old charger, since at every step you stumble.
Sleep now the sleep of brutes, proud heart : be humble.
O broken raider, for your outworn mettle,
Love has no joys, no fight is worth disputing.
Farewell to all the trumpeting and fluting !
Pleasure, have done, when brooding shadows settle,
The blooms of spring are vanquished by the nettle.
As snows devour stiff corpses in their welter,
Time wolfs my soul in, minute after minute.
I've seen the world and everything that's in it,
And I no longer seek in it for shelter ;
Come, Avalanche ! and sweep me helter-skelter.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Alchimie de la douleur (1861)

Alchimie de la douleur

L'un t'éclaire avec son ardeur,
L'autre en toi met son deuil, Nature !
Ce qui dit à l'un : Sépulture !
Dit à l'autre : Vie et splendeur !
Hermès inconnu qui m'assistes
Et qui toujours m'intimidas,
Tu me rends l'égal de Midas,
Le plus triste des alchimistes ;
Par toi je change l'or en fer
Et le paradis en enfer ;
Dans le suaire des nuages
Je découvre un cadavre cher,
Et sur les célestes rivages
Je bâtis de grands sarcophages.

– Charles Baudelaire

The Alchemy of Sorrow

One man lights you with his ardor,
Another puts you in mourning, Nature !
That which says to one : sepulcher !
Says to another : life ! glory !
You have always frightened me,
Hermes the unknown, you who help me.
You make me the peer of Midas,
The saddest of all alchemists ;
Through you I change gold to iron

And make of paradise a hell ;
In the winding sheet of the clouds
I discover a beloved corpse,
And on the celestial shores
I build massive sarcophagi.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Alchemy of Sorrow

One puts all nature into mourning,
One lights her like a flaring sun –
What whispers "Burial" to the one
Cries to the other, "Life and Morning."
The unknown Hermes who assists
The role of Midas to reverse,
And makes me by a subtle curse
The saddest of all alchemists –
By him, my paradise to hell,
And gold to slag, is changed too well.
The clouds are winding-sheets, and I,
Bidding some dear-loved corpse farewell,
Along the shore-line of the sky,
Erect my vast sarcophagi.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Horreur sympathique (1861)

Horreur sympathique

De ce ciel bizarre et livide,
Tourmenté comme ton destin,
Quels pensers dans ton âme vide
Descendent ? réponds, libertin.

– Insatiably avid
For the dark and the uncertain,
I shall not whimper like Ovid
Chased from his Latin paradise.
Skies torn like the shores of the sea,

– Charles Baudelaire

Reflected Horror

From that sky, bizarre and livid,
Distorted as your destiny,
What thoughts into your empty soul
Descend ? Answer me, libertine.

– Insatiably avid
For the dark and the uncertain,
I shall not whimper like Ovid
Chased from his Latin paradise.
Skies torn like the shores of the sea,

You are the mirror of my pride ;
Your vast clouds in mourning
Are the black hearse of my dreams,
And your gleams are the reflection
Of the Hell which delights my heart.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Sympathetic Horror

From livid skies that, without end,
As stormy as your future roll,
What thoughts into your empty soul
(Answer me, libertine !) descend ?
– Insatiable yet for all
That turns on darkness, doom, or dice,
I'll not, like Ovid, mourn my fall,
Chased from the Latin paradise.
Skies, torn like seacoasts by the storm !
In you I see my pride take form,
And the huge clouds that rush in streams
Are the black hearse of my dreams,
And your red rays reflect the hell,
In which my heart is pleased to dwell.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Calumet de Paix (1868)

Le Calumet de Paix

(Imité de Longfellow)

I

Or Gitche Manito, le Maître de la Vie,
Le Puissant, descendit dans la verte prairie,
Dans l'immense prairie aux coteaux montueux ;
Et là, sur les rochers de la Rouge Carrière,
Dominant tout l'espace et baigné de lumière,
Il se tenait debout, vaste et majestueux.

Alors il convoqua les peuples innombrables,
Plus nombreux que ne sont les herbes et les sables.
Avec sa main terrible il rompit un morceau
Du rocher, dont il fit une pipe superbe,
Puis, au bord du ruisseau, dans une énorme gerbe,
Pour s'en faire un tuyau, choisit un long roseau.

Pour la bourrer il prit au saule son écorce ;
Et lui, le Tout-Puissant, Créateur de la Force,
Debout, il alluma, comme un divin fanal,
La Pipe de la Paix. Debout sur la Carrière
Il fumait, droit, superbe et baigné de lumière.
Or pour les nations c'était le grand signal.

Et lentement montait la divine fumée
Dans l'air doux du matin, onduleuse, embaumée.
Et d'abord ce ne fut qu'un sillon ténébreux ;
Puis la vapeur se fit plus bleue et plus épaisse,
Puis blanchit ; et montant, et grossissant sans cesse,
Elle alla se briser au dur plafond des cieux.
Des plus lointains sommets des Montagnes Rocheuses,

Depuis les lacs du Nord aux ondes tapageuses,
Depuis Tawasentha, le vallon sans pareil,
Jusqu'à Tuscaloosa, la forêt parfumée,
Tous virent le signal et l'immense fumée
Montant paisiblement dans le matin vermeil.

Les Prophètes disaient : « Voyez-vous cette bande
De vapeur, qui, semblable à la main qui commande,
Oscille et se détache en noir sur le soleil ?
C'est Gitche Manito, le Maître de la Vie,
Qui dit aux quatre coins de l'immense prairie :
'Je vous convoque tous, guerriers, à mon conseil !'. »
Par le chemin des eaux, par la route des plaines,
Par les quatre côtés d'où soufflent les haleines
Du vent, tous les guerriers de chaque tribu, tous,
Comprenant le signal du nuage qui bouge,
Vinrent docilement à la Carrière Rouge
Où Gitche Manito leur donnait rendez-vous.

Les guerriers se tenaient sur la verte prairie,
Tous équipés en guerre, et la mine aguerrie,
Bariolés ainsi qu'un feuillage automnal ;
Et la haine qui fait combattre tous les êtres,
La haine qui brûlait les yeux de leurs ancêtres
Incendiait encor leurs yeux d'un feu fatal.

Et leurs yeux étaient pleins de haine héréditaire.
Or Gitche Manito, le Maître de la Terre,
Les considérait tous avec compassion,
Comme un père très-bon, ennemi du désordre,
Qui voit ses chers petits batailler et se mordre.
Tel Gitche Manito pour toute nation.

Il étendit sur eux sa puissante main droite
Pour subjuguer leur coeur et leur nature étroite,
Pour rafraîchir leur fièvre à l'ombre de sa main ;
Puis il leur dit avec sa voix majestueuse,
Comparable à la voix d'une eau tumultueuse
Qui tombe et rend un son monstrueux, surhumain :

II

« O ma postérité, déplorable et chérie !
O mes fils ! écoutez la divine raison.
C'est Gitche Manito, le Maître de la Vie,

Qui vous parle ! Celui qui dans votre patrie
A mis l'ours, le castor, le renne et le bison.
Je vous ai fait la chasse et la pêche faciles ;
Pourquoi donc le chasseur devient-il assassin ?
Le marais fut par moi peuplé de volatiles ;
Pourquoi n'êtes-vous pas contents, fils indociles ?
Pourquoi l'homme fait-il la chasse à son voisin ?
Je suis vraiment bien las de vos horribles guerres.
Vos prières, vos voeux mêmes sont des forfaits !
Le péril est pour vous dans vos humeurs contraires,
Et c'est dans l'union qu'est votre force. En frères
Vivez donc, et sachez vous maintenir en paix.
Bientôt vous recevrez de ma main un Prophète
Qui viendra vous instruire et souffrir avec vous.
Sa parole fera de la vie une fête ;
Mais si vous méprisez sa sagesse parfaite,
Pauvres enfants maudits, vous disparaîtrez tous !
Effacez dans les flots vos couleurs meurtrières.
Les roseaux sont nombreux et le roc est épais ;
Chacun en peut tirer sa pipe. Plus de guerres,
Plus de sang ! Désormais vivez comme des frères,
Et tous, unis, fumez le Calumet de Paix ! »

III

Et soudain tous, jetant leurs armes sur la terre,
Lavent dans le ruisseau les couleurs de la guerre
Qui luisaient sur leurs fronts cruels et triomphants.
Chacun creuse une pipe et cueille sur la rive
Un long roseau qu'avec adresse il enjolive.
Et l'Esprit souriait à ses pauvres enfants !
Chacun s'en retourna l'âme calme et ravie,
Et Gitche Manito, le Maître de la Vie,
Remonta par la porte entr'ouverte des cieux.
– À travers la vapeur splendide du nuage
Le Tout-Puissant montait, content de son ouvrage,
Immense, parfumé, sublime, radieux !

– Charles Baudelaire

The Peace Pipe

In Imitation of Longfellow

I

Now, Guitchi Manitou, the Master of Life,
The Powerful, descended into the green prairie,
Into the immense prairie encircled by mountains ;
And there, on the rocks of the Red Quarry,
Dominating space and bathed in light,
He stood erect, vast and majestic.

Then he convoked the countless peoples,
More numerous than blades of grass and grains of sand.
With his terrible hand he broke off a piece
of rock and made a wonderful pipe bowl,
And, on the edge of the stream, from an enormous sheaf of
reeds,
He chose one long reed for a pipe stem.
To fill it, he took bark from the willow,
And, standing, he, the All-Powerful, Creator of Authority,
He lit, like a divine beacon,
The Peace Pipe. Standing upon the Quarry,
He smoked, erect, proud, and bathed in light.
Now, for the nations this was the great signal.
And slowly the divine smoke rose
In the gentle morning air, undulating, fragrant.
And at first it was no more than a dark trail ;
Then the vapor became bluer and thicker,
Then white ; and ceaselessly rising and growing larger,
It broke against the hard ceiling of the heavens.
From the furthest summits of the Rocky Mountains,
To the Northern lakes with their boisterous waves,
From Tawasentha, the matchless valley,
As far as Tuscaloosa, the perfumed forest,
All saw the signal and the immense billows of smoke
Rising peacefully in the rosy morning sky.
The Prophets said : "Do you see that band
Of vapor that, like the hand that commands,
Flickers and stands out black against the sun ?
That is Guitchi Manitou, the Master of Life,

Who says to the four corners of the immense prairie :
'Warriors, I convoke you all to my council !'"
On the paths of the waters, on the routes of the plains,
From the four quarters from which blow the breath
Of the winds, all of the warriors of every tribe, all,
Understanding the moving cloud signal,
Came obediently to the Red Quarry
Where Guitchi Manitou had called them to meet with him.
The warriors stood upon the green prairie,
All dressed for war, with warlike faces,
Streaked with many colors like the Autumn leaves ;
And the hatred that makes all beings fight,
The hatred that burned in the eyes of their ancestors,
Still lit their eyes with a fatal fire.
And their eyes were full of hereditary hatred.
Now Guitchi Manitou, the Master of the Earth,
Contemplated them all with compassion,
Like a very kind father, enemy of disorder,
Who sees his dear children fight and claw.
So Guitchi Manitou contemplated every nation.
He stretched forth upon them his powerful right hand
To subjugate their hearts and their narrow natures,
To cool their fever in the shade of his hand ;
Then he told them with his majestic voice,
Like the sound of tumultuous waters,
Falling and sending forth a monstrous, superhuman noise :

II

"Oh deplorable and beloved posterity !
Oh my sons ! Listen to divine reason.
It is Guitchi Manitou, the Master of Life,
Who speaks to you ! He who placed in your land
The bear, the beaver, the elk, and the bison.
I made hunting and fishing easy for you ;
Why then does the hunter become an assassin ?
I stocked the swamps with birds ;
Why then are you not content, indocile sons ?
Why does man hunt his own neighbor ?
I am truly tired of your horrible wars.
Your prayers, even your promises are offenses !

Danger rests in your contrary natures,
And force lies in union. Live then
As brothers, and learn to keep the peace.
Soon you will receive from my hand a Prophet
Who will come to instruct you and to suffer with you.
His word will make a festival out of life ;
But if you disdain his perfect wisdom,
Poor, condemned children, you will all disappear !
Expunge in the waves your murderous paints.
The reeds are many and the rock is thick ;
Each one of you may make from them a pipe. No more wars,
No more blood ! Henceforth live as brothers,
And all, united, smoke the Peace Pipe !"

III

And suddenly all of them, throwing down their arms,
Wash off in the stream the war paint
That had gleamed on their cruel and triumphant faces.
Each among them hollows out a pipe bowl and gathers on the
shore
A long reed with which to embellish it.
And the Spirit smiled at his poor children !
Each went home with a calm and enraptured soul,
And Guitchi Manitou, the Master of Life,
Reascended through the open door of the heavens.
– Through the splendid vapor of the clouds,
The All-Powerful rose, happy with his work,
Immense, perfumed, sublime, radiant !

– Cat Nilan, 1999

La Prière d'un païen (1868)

La Prière d'un païen

Ah ! ne ralentis pas tes flammes ;
Réchaaffe mon coeur engourdi,
Volupté, torture des âmes !
Diva ! Supplicem exaudî !
Déesse dans l'air répandue,
Flamme dans notre souterrain !
Exauce une âme morfondue,
Qui te consacre un chant d'airain.
Volupté, sois toujours ma reine !
Prends le masque d'une sirène
Faite de chair et de velours,
Ou verse-moi tes sommeils lourds
Dans le vin informe et mystique,
Volupté, fantôme élastique !

– Charles Baudelaire

A Pagan's Prayer

Ah ! do not dampen your ardor ;
Warm my numb heart again,
Pleasure, torture of souls !
Goddess ! hear me, I beseech you !
Goddess who permeates the air,
Flame in our underground cavern !
Grant the prayer of a soul bored utterly,
Who offers you a brazen hymn.
Pleasure, be my queen forever !

Put on a siren's mask
Fashioned of flesh and of velvet
Or pour on me your heavy sleep,
In wine, formless and mystical,
O Pleasure, elastic phantom !

– William Aggeler, 1954

Pagan Prayer

Don't stint the fires with which you flare.
Warm up my dull heart to delight,
O Pleasure, torture of the sprite,
O Goddess, hear my fervent prayer !
Goddess, who through the ether pass,
Flame in this subterranean hole !
Raise up a chilled and stricken soul
Who lifts to you his peal of brass.
O Pleasure, always be my queen !
In flesh and velvet to be seen,
Mask your beauty like a siren :
Or else my soul with sleep environ
Drained from the formless mystic wine,
Elastic phantom ! which is thine.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Couvercle (1868)

Le Couvercle

En quelque lieu qu'il aille, ou sur mer ou sur terre,
Sous un climat de flamme ou sous un soleil blanc,
Serviteur de Jésus, courtisan de Cythère,
Mendiant ténébreux ou Crésus rutilant,
Citadin, campagnard, vagabond, sédentaire,
Que son petit cerveau soit actif ou soit lent,
Partout l'homme subit la terreur du mystère,
Et ne regarde en haut qu'avec un oeil tremblant.
En haut, le Ciel ! Ce mur de caveau qui l'étouffe,
Plafond illuminé par un opéra bouffe
Où chaque histrion foule un sol ensanglanté ;
Terreur du libertin, espoir du fol ermite ;
Le Ciel ! Couvercle noir de la grande marmite
Où bout l'imperceptible et vaste Humanité.

– Charles Baudelaire

The Cover

Wherever he may go, on land or sea,
Under a blazing sky or a pale sun,
Servant of Jesus, courtier of Cythera,
Somber beggar or glittering Croesus,
City-dweller, rustic, vagabond, stay-at-home,
Whether his little brain be sluggish or alert,
Everywhere man feels the terror of mystery
And looks up at heaven only with frightened eyes
Above, the Sky ! that cavern wall that stifles him,

That ceiling lighted by a comic opera
Where every player treads on blood-stained soil ;
Terror of the lecher, hope of the mad recluse :
The Sky ! black cover of the great cauldron
In which boils vast, imperceptible Humanity.

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Lid

Wherever Man may go, by earth or ocean,
Beneath a sky of fire, or sun snow-cold,
Whether to Christ or Venus his devotion,
In gloomy want, or glittering with gold ;
Citizen, vagabond, stamplicker, farmer,
Be his small brain slow-witted, quick, or sly,
For this strange terror he can find no armour
Nor look to heaven save with trembling eye.
Above, the Sky, that cellar-ceiling, stifles,
Lit up for comic farce, where struts and trifles
Each mummer on a floor of blood and mire.
Terror of rakes, the crazy hermits' hope –
Beneath its cauldron-lid mankind must grope,
Never above its margin to aspire.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

L'imprévu (1868)

L'imprévu

Harpagon, qui veillait son père agonisant,
Se dit, rêveur, devant ces lèvres déjà blanches :
« Nous avons au grenier un nombre suffisant,
Ce me semble, de vieilles planches ? »

Célimène roucoule et dit : « Mon coeur est bon,
Et naturellement, Dieu m'a faite très belle. »
– Son coeur ! coeur racorni, fumé comme un jambon,
Recuit à la flamme éternelle !

Un gazetier fumeux, qui se croit un flambeau,
Dit au pauvre, qu'il a noyé dans les ténèbres :
« Où donc l'aperçois-tu, ce créateur du Beau,
Ce Redresseur que tu célèbres ? »

Mieux que tous, je connais certain voluptueux
Qui bâille nuit et jour, et se lamente, et pleure,
Répétant, l'impuissant et le fat : « Oui, je veux
Etre vertueux, dans une heure ! »

L'horloge, à son tour, dit à voix basse : « Il est mûr,
Le damné ! J'avertis en vain la chair infecte.
L'homme est aveugle, sourd, fragile, comme un mur
Qu'habite et que ronge un insecte ! »

Et puis, Quelqu'un paraît, que tous avaient nié,
Et qui leur dit, railleur et fier : « Dans mon ciboire,
Vous avez, que je crois, assez communiqué
À la Joyeuse Messe noire ?

Chacun de vous m'a fait un temple dans son coeur ;
Vous avez, en secret, baisé ma fesse immonde !
Reconnaissez Satan à son rire vainqueur,
Enorme et laid comme le monde !

Avez-vous donc pu croire, hypocrites surpris,
Qu'on se moque du maître, et qu'avec lui l'on triche,
Et qu'il soit naturel de recevoir deux prix,
D'aller au Ciel et d'être riche ?
Il faut que le gibier paye le vieux chasseur
Qui se morfond longtemps à l'affût de la proie.
Je vais vous emporter à travers l'épaisseur,
Compagnons de ma triste joie,
À travers l'épaisseur de la terre et du roc,
À travers les amas confus de votre cendre,
Dans un palais aussi grand que moi, d'un seul bloc,
Et qui n'est pas de pierre tendre ;
Car il est fait avec l'universel Péché,
Et contient mon orgueil, ma douleur et ma gloire ! »
– Cependant, tout en haut de l'univers juché,
Un ange sonne la victoire
De ceux dont le cœur dit : « Que béni soit ton fouet,
Seigneur ! que la douleur, ô Père, soit bénie !
Mon âme dans tes mains n'est pas un vain jouet,
Et ta prudence est infinie. »
Le son de la trompette est si délicieux,
Dans ces soirs solennels de célestes vendanges,
Qu'il s'inflitre comme une extase dans tous ceux
Dont elle chante les louanges.

– Charles Baudelaire

The Unforeseen

Harpagon watching over his dying father ;
Mused, looking at those lips that were already white :
“It seems to me we have in the attic
A sufficient number of old boards ?”
Célimene coos and says : “My heart is kind,
And naturally enough, God made me very fair.”
– Her heart, a shriveled heart like a ham smoked and seared,
At the eternal flame !
A smoky journalist who thinks he is a light
Says to the poor wretch he has plunged into darkness :

"Where do you see him, this creator of beauty,
This Knight-errant whom you extol ?"

I know better than anyone, a sensualist
Who yawns night and day, and laments and weeps,
Repeating, the impotent fop : "Of course, I wish
To be virtuous in an hour !"

The clock in turn says in a low voice : "He is ripe,
The damned one ! In vain do I warn the stinking flesh.
Man is blind and deaf, fragile as a wall
That is the home of gnawing insects !"

And then appears Someone all had denied,
Who proud and mocking says : "From my ciborium
You have communicated rather frequently,
I think, at the joyous black Mass ?"

Each of you has made a shrine for me in his heart ;
And you have secretly kissed my unclean haunches !
Recognize Satan by his conquering laughter,
Immense and ugly as the world !

Could you have believed, surprised hypocrites,
That one makes fun of the master, that one cheats him,
That it's reasonable to receive two rewards,
To be rich and go to Heaven ?

The game must pay the hunter who stands shivering
For a long time on the watch for his prey.
I'm going to take you away through the thickness,
Companions in my gloomy joy,

Through the thickness of the earth and the rock,
Through the unshapen pile of your ashes
Into a palace huge as I, a single block,
That is not fashioned of soft stone ;

For it is made of universal Sin,
And contains my pride, my sorrow and my glory !"
But meanwhile, perched on the top of the universe
An Angel sounds the victory

Of those whose hearts say : "Blessed be your whip,
Lord ! O Father, blessed be suffering !
My soul in your hands is not an idle plaything
And your prudence is infinite."

The sound of the trumpet is O ! so delightful

On the solemn evenings of heavenly harvest,
That it permeates like an ecstasy all those
Whose praises the trumpet sings.

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Unforeseen

Harpagon watched his father slowly dying
And musing on his white lips as they shrunk,
Said, "There is lumber in the outhouse lying
It seems : old boards and junk."
Celimene cooed, and said, "How good I am
And, naturally, God made my looks excell"
(Her callous heart, thrice-smoked like salted ham,
Will burn in endless Hell !)
A smoky scribbler, to himself a beacon,
Says to the wretch whom he has plunged in shade –
"Where's the Creator you so loved to speak on,
The Saviour you portrayed ?"
But best of all I know a certain rogue
Who yawns and weeps, lamenting night and day
(Impotent fathead) in the same old brogue,
"I will be good – one day !"
The clock says in a whisper, "He is ready
The damned one, whom I warned of his disaster.
He's blind, and deaf, and like a wall unsteady,
Where termites mine the plaster."
Then one appeared whom all of them denied
And said with mocking laughter "To my manger
You've all come ; to the Black Mass I provide
Not one of you's a stranger.
You've built me temples in your hearts of sin.
You've kissed my buttocks in your secret mirth.
Know me for Satan by this conquering grin,
As monstrous as the Earth.
D'you think, poor hypocrites surprised red-handed
That you can trick your lord without a hitch ;
And that by guile two prizes can be landed –

Heaven, and being rich ?
The wages of the huntsman is his quarry,
Which pays him for the chills he gets while stalking
Companions of my revels grim and sorry
I am going to take you walking,
Down through the denseness of the soil and rock,
Down through the dust and ash you leave behind,
Into a palace, built in one sole block,
Of stone that is not kind :
For it is built of Universal Sin
And holds of me all that is proud and glorious"
– Meanwhile an angel, far above the din,
Sends forth a peal victorious
For all whose hearts can say, "I bless thy rod ;
And blessed be the griefs that on us fall.
My soul is but a toy, Eternal God,
Thy wisdom all in all!"
And so deliciously that trumpet blows
On evenings of celestial harvestings,
It makes a rapture in the hearts of those
Whose love and praise it sings.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

L'Examen de minuit (1868)

L'Examen de minuit

La pendule, sonnant minuit,
Ironiquement nous engage
À nous rappeler quel usage
Nous fîmes du jour qui s'enfuit :
– Aujourd'hui, date fatidique,
Vendredi, treize, nous avons,
Malgré tout ce que nous savons,
Mené le train d'un hérétique.
Nous avons blasphémé Jésus,
Des Dieux le plus incontestable !
Comme un parasite à la table
De quelque monstrueux Crésus,
Nous avons, pour plaire à la brute,
Digne vassale des Démons,
Insulté ce que nous aimons
Et flatté ce qui nous rebute ;
Contristé, servile bourreau,
Le faible qu'à tort on méprise ;
Salué l'énorme Bêtise,
La Bêtise au front de taureau ;
Baisé la stupide Matière
Avec grande dévotion,
Et de la putréfaction
Béni la blafarde lumière.
Enfin, nous avons, pour noyer
Le vertige clans le délire,
Nous, prêtre orgueilleux de la Lyre,
Dont la gloire est de déployer
L'ivresse des choses funèbres,

Bu sans soif et mangé sans faim !...

– Vite soufflons la lampe, afin
De nous cacher dans les ténèbres !

– Charles Baudelaire

Examination of Conscience at Midnight

The clock striking midnight
Ironically invites us
To call to mind what use we made
Of the day that is fleeing :
– Today, a fateful date,
Friday the thirteenth we have
In spite of everything we know
Lived the life of a heretic ;
We have blasphemed Jesus,
The one God one cannot deny !
Like a parasite at the table
Of some monstrous Croesus,
We have, to please the brute,
Worthy vassal of the Demons,
Hurled insults at that which we love
And flattered what repulses us.
Servile hangman, we have saddened
The weak man, wrongfully despised,
Saluted enormous Folly,
Folly with the brow of a bull ;
Kissed with great devotion
Stupid and unfeeling Matter
And bestowed our blessing on
The wan light of putrefaction ;
Finally we have, to drown
Vertigo in delirium,
We, the proud priest of the Lyre,
Whose glory is to show
The rapture of sorrowful things,
Drunk without thirst, eaten without hunger !
– Quickly let us snuff out the lamp,
So we may hide in the darkness !

– William Aggeler, 1954

Midnight Enquiry

The clocks strike midnight one by one
Ironically to remind us,
And ask what profit we have won
Out of the day we've left behind us.
The Thirteenth, Friday, as it chances !
A fatal date ; when all is said,
In spite of all we know, we've led
The most heretical of dances.

Today we've spent blaspheming Jesus,
The incontestable, sole Lord ;
Like a base sponger at the board
Of some intolerable Croesus,
We have, to please the beast within us,
The Devil's worthy advocate,
Defamed all that whose love should win us,
And flattered all that we should hate.

The weak man, like a bullying coward,
We harmed, and wrongly did despise ;
We worshipped Folly, where he towered,
Huge bull-horned monster, to the skies.
We have lain kissing stupid Matter
With great devotion to its presence,
And of Corruption stooped to flatter
The wan, mephitic phosphorescence.

To drown our vertigo entire
And our delirium to nourish –
Proud priest of the immortal Lyre
Whose glory it has been to flourish
The rapture of funereal things –
We've eaten without appetite,
Unthirsting drunk of muddy springs.
Come, quick, my soul, blow out the light,
To hide in shades of blackest night !

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Madrigal triste (1868)

Madrigal triste

I

Que m'importe que tu sois sage ?
Sois belle ! Et sois triste ! Les pleurs
Ajoutent un charme au visage,
Comme le fleuve au paysage ;
L'orage rajeunit les fleurs.
Je t'aime surtout quand la joie
S'enfuit de ton front terrassé ;
Quand ton coeur dans l'horreur se noie ;
Quand sur ton présent se déploie
Le nuage affreux du passé.
Je t'aime quand ton grand oeil verse
Une eau chaude comme le sang ;
Quand, malgré ma main qui te berce,
Ton angoisse, trop lourde, perce
Comme un râle d'agonisant.
J'aspire, volupté divine !
Hymne profond, délicieux !
Tous les sanglots de ta poitrine,
Et crois que ton coeur s'illumine
Des perles que versent tes yeux.

II

Je sais que ton coeur, qui regorge
De vieux amours déracinés,
Flamboie encor comme une forge,
Et que tu couves sous ta gorge
Un peu de l'orgueil des damnés ;

Mais tant, ma chère, que tes rêves
N'auront pas reflété l'Enfer,
Et qu'en un cauchemar sans trêves,
Songeant de poisons et de glaives,
Éprise de poudre et de fer,
N'ouvrant à chacun qu'avec crainte,
Déchiffrant le malheur partout,
Te convulsant quand l'heure tinte,
Tu n'auras pas senti l'étreinte
De l'irrésistible Dégout,
Tu ne pourras, esclave reine
Qui ne m'aimes qu'avec effroi,
Dans l'horreur de la nuit malsaine
Me dire, l'âme de cris pleine :
« Je suis ton égale, ô mon Roi ! »

– Charles Baudelaire

Gloomy Madrigal

I

What's it to me that you are sage ?
Be beautiful ! and be sad ! Tears
Add a charm to the countenance
As a stream does to a landscape ;
Storms make the flowers fresh again.

I love you most of all when joy
Flees from your oppressed brow,
When your heart is drowned in horror,
When the frightful cloud of the Past
Is spread out over your Present.

I love you when your large eyes shed
Tears as hot as blood, when
In spite of my hand which lulls you
Your unbearable pain comes through
Like a dying man's death-rattle.

I breathe in, heavenly pleasure !
Profound, delightful hymn !
Every sob from your breast

And I believe your heart lights up
With the pearls that your eyes pour out !

II

I know, your heart, overflowing
With old, uprooted loves,
Still blazes like a forge
And that there smolders in your breast
Something of the pride of the damned ;
But my sweet, so long as your dreams
Have not reflected Hell,
While in a nightmare without respite,
Dreaming of poisons and daggers,
Enamored with powder and steel,
Answering the door fearfully,
Seeing misfortune everywhere,
Convulsing when the hour strikes,
You have not felt yourself embraced
By irresistible Disgust ;
You cannot, slave and queen
Who love me only with terror,
In the unhealthy night's horror
Say to me, your soul full of cries,
"I am your equal, O my King !"

– William Aggeler, 1954

Sad Madrigal

I

That you are good what does it matter ?
Be sad : be beautiful ! The rain
Rejuvenates the flowering plain.
As streams do landscapes, teardrops flatter
Your face. Your looks, by weeping, gain.
When joy from your dejected forehead
Has fled, your heart is in the power
Of torment, and, to make you cower,
The huge cloud of your past, with horrid

Black shadow, overlooms the hour,
I love you most : and when your eye
Pours water hot as blood in battle,
And when, despite the fact that I
Am nursing you, you give a cry
Like death, an agonising rattle.
Delicious hymn, profound delight,
Pleasure divine ! I breathe with zest
The sobs arising from your breast.
I think your heart must blaze the light
Of pearls that from your eyes are pressed.

II

I know your heart once more disgorges
Its old uprooted love-affairs :
And flaming with the heat of forges
You feel the pride of vanished orgies,
Which makes the damned put on such airs.
But now ere yet your evil dreams
Reflect the red flames of the Pit,
While in an endless nightmare scheming
Of poison-draughts and daggers gleaming,
Cold steel and powder tempt your wit :
While yet in fear the door you answer
And see all things with vague mistrust :
Free from his grasp, O dear entrancer,
And not yet partnered for a dancer
With irresistible Disgust,
You'll never claim, both queen and slave,
Who only love me with affright
In the sick silence of the night,
And while your feelings inly rave –
To match with me in power or might.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

L'Avertisseur (1868)

L'Avertisseur

Tout homme digne de ce nom
A dans le coeur un Serpent jaune,
Installé comme sur un trône,
Qui, s'il dit : « Je veux, » répond : « Non ! »
Plonge tes yeux dans les yeux fixes
Des Satyresses ou des Nixes,
La Dent dit : « Pense à ton devoir ! »
Fais des enfants, plante des arbres,
Polis des vers, sculpte des marbres,
La Dent dit : « Vivras-tu ce soir ? »
Quoi qu'il ébauche ou qu'il espère,
L'homme ne vit pas un moment
Sans subir l'avertissement
De l'insupportable Vipère.

– Charles Baudelaire

The Warner

Every man worthy of the name
Has in his heart a yellow Snake
Installed as if upon a throne,
Who, if he says : "I will!" answers : "No!"
Plunge your eyes into the fixed gaze
Of Satyresses or Nixies,
The Fang says : "Think of your duty!"
Beget children, set out trees,
Polish verses, sculpture marble,

The Fang says : "Will you be alive tonight?"
Whatever he may plan or hope,
Man does not live for an instant
Without enduring the warning
Of the unbearable Viper.

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Fang

Each Man who's fit to be so called
A Serpent in his heart has got,
As though upon a throne installed,
Who when he says "I will," says "Not."
If your gaze the gaze transfixes
O satyresses or of nixies,
The Fang says, "Is your duty done?"
Breed brats, plant trees, perform your task,
Write verse, chip stone – the Fang will ask,
"Will you be there at set of sun?"
Men scheme each night and hope each morning,
Yet no man grows one moment riper
But suffers, at each turn, the warning
Of the insufferable viper.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

À une Malabaraise (1868)

À une Malabaraise

Tes pieds sont aussi fins que tes mains, et ta hanche
Est large à faire envie à la plus belle blanche ;
À l'artiste pensif ton corps est doux et cher ;
Tes grands yeux de velours sont plus noirs que ta chair.
Aux pays chauds et bleus où ton Dieu t'a fait naître,
Ta tâche est d'allumer la pipe de ton maître,
De pourvoir les flacons d'eaux fraîches et d'odeurs,
De chasser loin du lit les moustiques rôdeurs,
Et, dès que le matin fait chanter les platanes,
D'acheter au bazar ananas et bananes.
Tout le jour, où tu veux, tu mènes tes pieds nus,
Et fredonnes tout bas de vieux airs inconnus ;
Et quand descend le soir au manteau d'écarlate,
Tu poses doucement ton corps sur une natte,
Où tes rêves flottants sont pleins de colibris,
Et toujours, comme toi, gracieux et fleuris.
Pourquoi, l'heureuse enfant, veux-tu voir notre France,
Ce pays trop peuplé que fauche la souffrance,
Et, confiant ta vie aux bras forts des marins,
Faire de grands adieux à tes chers tamarins ?
Toi, vêtue à moitié de mousselines frêles,
Frisonnante là-bas sous la neige et les grêles,
Comme tu pleurerais tes loisirs doux et francs
Si, le corset brutal emprisonnant tes flancs
Il te fallait glaner ton souper dans nos fanges
Et vendre le parfum de tes charmes étranges,
Oeil pensif, et suivant, dans nos sales brouillards,
Des cocotiers absents les fantômes épars !

– Charles Baudelaire

To a Malabar Woman

Your feet are as slender as your hands and your hips
Are broad ; they'd make the fairest white woman jealous ;
To the pensive artist your body's sweet and dear ;
Your wide, velvety eyes are darker than your skin.
In the hot blue country where your God had you born
It is your task to light the pipe of your master,
To keep the flasks filled with cool water and perfumes,
To drive far from his bed the roving mosquitoes,
And as soon as morning makes the plane-trees sing, to
Buy pineapples and bananas at the bazaar.
All day long your bare feet follow your whims,
And, very low, you hum old, unknown melodies ;
And when evening in his scarlet cloak descends,
You stretch out quietly upon a mat and there
Your drifting dreams are full of humming-birds and are
Like you, always pleasant and adorned with flowers.
Why, happy child, do you wish to see France,
That over-peopled country which suffering mows down,
And entrusting your life to the strong arms of sailors,
Bid a last farewell to your dear tamarinds ?
You, half-dressed in filmy muslins,
Shivering over there in the snow and the hail,
How you would weep for your free, pleasant leisure, if,
With a brutal corset imprisoning your flanks,
You had to glean your supper in our muddy streets
And sell the fragrance of your exotic charms,
With pensive eye, following in our dirty fogs
The sprawling phantoms of the absent coco palms !

– William Aggeler, 1954

To a Girl from Malabar

Your feet are finer than your hands, and bigger
Your haunch than plumpest white ones are. Your figure
Is to a pensive artist dear and fresh.
Your velvet eyes are darker than your flesh.
In hot blue lands, where your God gave you being,

Your task, lighting your master's pipe, and seeing
The jars well filled with lymph, the flasks with scent,
Or switching the mosquitoes – there you went,
When dawn sang through the rustling planes, to buy
Plantains or pineapples from the nearby
Bazaar. All day, at will, barefoot you passed
Humming old unknown tunes : and when at last
The sun went down, bright red, across the flat,
You flung your body on the wicker mat ;
And full of humming birds, your floating dream
Was gay and flowery as you always seem.
How, happy child, did you come here to France,
This overpeopled land, by what mischance,
When to your tamarinds you bade adieu
Confiding in the sailors of the crew ?
But now half-clothed in muslin frail and thin,
While frost and sleet assail your shivering skin,
With brutal corsets poisoning you fast,
How you must long for the old, carefree past !
Now you must glean your dinners from the mud
And sell the perfumes of your flesh and blood,
In our foul mists, with pensive eye still straying
To catch a glimpse of phantom palm trees swaying.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

La Voix (1868)

La Voix

Mon berceau s'adossait à la bibliothèque,
Babel sombre, où roman, science, fabliau,
Tout, la cendre latine et la poussière grecque,
Se mêlaient. J'étais haut comme un in-folio.
Deux voix me parlaient. L'une, insidieuse et ferme,
Disait : « La Terre est un gâteau plein de douceur ;
Je puis (et ton plaisir serait alors sans terme !)
Te faire un appétit d'une égale grosseur. »
Et l'autre : « Viens ! oh ! viens voyager dans les rêves,
Au delà du possible, au delà du connu ! »
Et celle-là chantait comme le vent des grèves,
Fantôme vagissant, on ne sait d'où venu,
Qui caresse l'oreille et cependant l'effraie.
Je te répondis : « Oui ! douce voix ! » C'est d'alors
Que date ce qu'on peut, hélas ! nommer ma plaie
Et ma fatalité. Derrière les décors
De l'existence immense, au plus noir de l'abîme,
Je vois distinctement des mondes singuliers,
Et, de ma clairvoyance extatique victime,
Je traîne des serpents qui mordent mes souliers.
Et c'est depuis ce temps que, pareil aux prophètes,
J'aime si tendrement le désert et la mer ;
Que je ris dans les deuils et pleure dans les fêtes,
Et trouve un goût suave au vin le plus amer ;
Que je prends très souvent les faits pour des mensonges,
Et que, les yeux au ciel, je tombe dans des trous.
Mais la voix me console et dit : « Garde tes songes :
Les sages n'en ont pas d'aussi beaux que les fous ! »

– Charles Baudelaire

The Voice

The back of my crib was against the library,
That gloomy Babel, where novels, science, fabliaux,
Everything, Latin ashes and Greek dust,
Were mingled. I was no taller than a folio.
Two voices used to speak to me. One, sly and firm,
Would say : "The Earth's a cake full of sweetness ;
I can (and then there'd be no end to your pleasure !)
Give you an appetite of equal size."
And the other : "Come travel in dreams
Beyond the possible, beyond the known !"
And it would sing like the wind on the strand,
That wailing ghost, one knows not whence it comes,
That caresses the ear and withal frightens it.
I answered you : "Yes ! gentle voice !" It's from that time
That dates what may be called alas ! my wound
And my fatality. Behind the scenes
Of life's vastness, in the abyss' darkest corner
I see distinctly bizarre worlds,
And ecstatic victim of my own clairvoyance,
I drag along with me, serpents that bite my shoes.
And it's since that time that, like the prophets,
I love so tenderly the desert and the sea ;
That I laugh at funerals and weep at festivals
And find a pleasant taste in the most bitter wine ;
That very often I take facts for lies
And that, my eyes raised heavenward, I fall in holes.
But the Voice consoles me and it says : "Keep your dreams ;
Wise men do not have such beautiful ones as fools !"

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Voice

My cot was next the library, a Babel
Where fiction jostled science, myth and fable.
Greek dust with Roman ash there met the sight.
And I was but a folio in height
When two Voices addressed me. "Earth's a cake,"

Said one, "and full of sweetness. I can make
Your appetite to its proportions equal
Forever and forever without sequel."
Another said "Come, rove in dreams, with me,
Past knowledge, thought or possibility."
That voice sang like the wind along the shore
And, though caressing, frightened me the more.
I answered "O sweet Voice!" and from that date
Could never name my sorrow or my fate.
Behind the giant scenery of this life
I see strange worlds : with my own self at strife,
Ecstatic victim of my second sight,
I trail huge snakes, that at my ankles bite.
And like an ancient prophet, from that time,
I've loved the desert, found the sea sublime ;
I've wept at festivals and laughed at wakes :
And found in sourest wines a sweet that slakes ;
Falsehoods for facts I love to swallow whole,
And often fall, star-gazing, in a hole.
But the Voice cheers – "Keep dreaming. It's a rule
No sage can dream such beauty as a fool."

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Hymne (1868)

Hymne

À la très chère, à la très belle
Qui remplit mon cœur de clarté,
À l'ange, À l'idole immortelle,
Salut en l'immortalité !

Elle se répand dans ma vie
Comme un air imprégné de sel,
Et dans mon âme inassouvie
Verse le goût de l'éternel.

Sachet toujours frais qui parfume
L'atmosphère d'un cher réduit,
Encensoir oublié qui fume
En secret à travers la nuit,
Comment, amour incorruptible,
T'exprimer avec vérité ?
Grain de musc qui gis, invisible,
Au fond de mon éternité !

À la très bonne, à la très belle
Qui fait ma joie et ma santé,
À l'ange, à l'idole immortelle,
Salut en l'immortalité !

– Charles Baudelaire

Hymn

To the dearest, fairest woman
Who sets my heart ablaze with light,
To the angel, the immortal idol,

Greetings in immortality !
She permeates my life
Like air impregnated with salt
And into my unsated soul
Pours the taste for the eternal.
Sachet, ever fresh, that perfumes
The atmosphere of a dear nook,
Forgotten censer smoldering
Secretly through the night,
Everlasting love, how can I
Describe you truthfully ?
Grain of musk that lies unseen
In the depths of my eternity !
To the dearest, fairest woman
Who is my health and my delight
To the angel, the immortal idol,
Greetings in immortality !

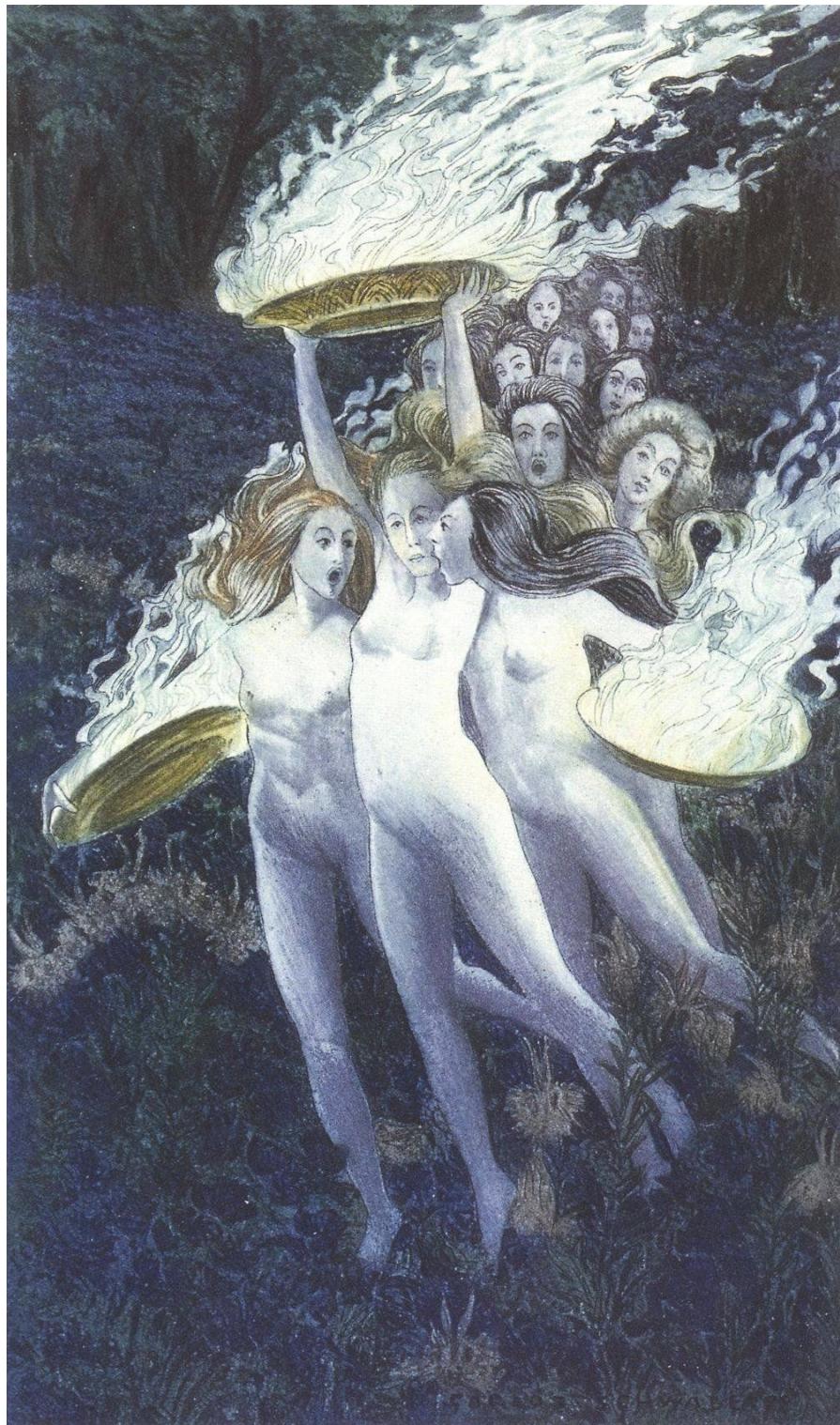
– William Aggeler, 1954

Hymn

To the most lovely, the most dear,
The Angel, and the deathless grail
Who fill my heart with radiance clear –
In immortality all hail !
Into my life she flows translated
As saline breezes fill the sky,
And pours into my soul unsated
The taste of what can never die.
Sachet, forever fresh, perfuming
Some quiet nook of hid delight ;
A lone forgotten censer fuming
In secrecy across the night.
How, flawless love, with truth impart
Your purity and keep it whole,
O unseen grain of musk who art
The core of my eternal soul ?
To the most lovely, the most dear,

The angel, and the deathless grail,
Who fill my life with radiance clear –
In immortality all hail !

– Roy Campbell, 1952



Le Rebelle (1868)

Le Rebelle

Un Ange furieux fond du ciel comme un aigle,
Du mécréant saisit à plein poing les cheveux,
Et dit, le secouant : « Tu connaîtras la règle !
(Car je suis ton bon Ange, entends-tu ?) Je le veux !
Sache qu'il faut aimer, sans faire la grimace,
Le pauvre, le méchant, le tortu, l'hébété,
Pour que tu puisses faire à Jesus, quand il passe,
Un tapis triomphal avec ta charité.
Tel est l'Amour ! Avant que ton coeur ne se blase,
À la gloire de Dieu rallume ton extase ;
C'est la Volupté vraie aux durables appas ! »
Et l'Ange, châtiant autant, ma foi ! qu'il aime,
De ses poings de géant torture l'anathème ;
Mais le damné répond toujours : « Je ne veux pas ! »

– Charles Baudelaire

The Rebel

A furious Angel swoops down like an eagle,
Grabs a fistful of the infidel's hair,
And shaking him says : "You shall know the rule !
(For I am your good angel, do you hear ?) You shall !
Know that you must love without making a wry face
The pauper, the scoundrel, the hunchback, the dullard,
So that you can make for Jesus when he passes
A triumphal carpet of your love.
Such is love ! Before your heart becomes indifferent,

Relight your ecstasy before the glory of God ;
That is the true Voluptuousness with the lasting charms !"
The Angel who gives punishment equal to his love
Beats the anathema with his giant fists ;
But the damned one still answers : "I shall not !"

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Rebel

An angel from the sky swoops like an eagle,
Seizes the culprit's hair in his strong fist,
And shakes him, saying "You must know what's legal
For I am your Good Angel. I insist.
Know you must cherish, without wry grimaces,
The poor, deformed, blockheaded, sick, and vile :
And thus unroll for Christ's triumphal paces
The carpet of your charity in style.
For such is Love ! Before your heart grows dim,
Light up your heart from God and burn for him.
That is the true delight that lasts for ever."
The Angel, by his love filled with more ardour,
With giant fists belabours him the harder.
The damned soul always answers, "I will never."

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Les Yeux de Berthe (1868)

Les Yeux de Berthe

Vous pouvez mépriser les yeux les plus célèbres,
Beaux yeux de mon enfant, par où filtre et s'enfuit
Je ne sais quoi de bon, de doux comme la Nuit !
Beaux yeux, versez sur moi vos charmantes ténèbres !
Grands yeux de mon enfant, arcanes adorés,
Vous ressemblez beaucoup à ces grottes magiques
Où, derrière l'amas des ombres léthargiques,
Scintillent vaguement des trésors ignorés !
Mon enfant a des yeux obscurs, profonds et vastes,
Comme toi, Nuit immense, éclairés comme toi !
Leurs feux sont ces penseurs d'Amour, mêlés de Foi,
Qui pétillent au fond, voluptueux ou chastes.

– Charles Baudelaire

Bertha's Eyes

You can hold in contempt the most famous eyes,
Beautiful eyes of my child, whence filters and flees
A certain something as kind, as sweet as the Night !
Beautiful eyes pour your charming shadows upon me !
Urge eyes of my child, adored mysteries,
You greatly resemble those magical grottos
In which, behind the heap of lethargic shadows,
Unknown treasures sparkle indistinctly !
My child has eyes, dark, profound and immense
Like you, vast Night, lighted like you !
Their fires are those thoughts of Love mingled with Faith

Which sparkle in their depths, voluptuous or chaste.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Bertha's Eyes

The most illustrious gaze you may despise,
Eyes of my child, where filters and takes flight
I know not what of goodness, soft as night.
Pour out on me your lovely shade, dear eyes !
Great eyes of my dear child ! arcanes adored !
You seem like magic caves where shadow darkles
And, through the mass of crowded gloom, there sparkles
And scintillates some richly treasured hoard.
My girl has eyes as deep, vast, and serene
As you, O night, immense, and lit like you ;
Their fires are thoughts of Love, with faith shot through,
Voluptuous, and chaste, though sparkling keen.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Jet d'eau (1868)

Le Jet d'eau

Tes beaux yeux sont las, pauvre amante !
Reste longtemps, sans les rouvrir,
Dans cette pose nonchalante
Où t'a surprise le plaisir.
Dans la cour le jet d'eau qui jase,
Et ne se tait ni nuit ni jour,
Entretient doucement l'extase
Où ce soir m'a plongé l'amour.
La gerbe épanouie
En mille fleurs,
Où Phoebé réjouie
Met ses couleurs,
Tombe comme une pluie
De larges pleurs.
Ainsi ton âme qu'incendie
L'éclair brûlant des voluptés
S'élance, rapide et hardie,
Vers les vastes cieux enchantés.
Puis elle s'épanche, mourante,
En un flot de triste langueur,
Qui par une invisible pente
Descend jusqu'au fond de mon cœur.
La gerbe épanouie
En mille fleurs,
Où Phoebé réjouie
Met ses couleurs,
Tombe comme une pluie
De larges pleurs.
Ô toi, que la nuit rend si belle,

Qu'il m'est doux, penché vers tes seins,
D'écouter la plainte éternelle
Qui sanglote dans les bassins !
Lune, eau sonore, nuit bénie,
Arbres qui frissonnez autour,
Votre pure mélancolie
Est le miroir de mon amour.
La gerbe épanouie
En mille fleurs,
Où Phœbé réjouie
Met ses couleurs,
Tombe comme une pluie
De larges pleurs.

– Charles Baudelaire

The Fountain

My poor mistress ! your lovely eyes
Are tired, leave them closed and keep
For long the nonchalant pose
In which pleasure surprised you,
In the court the bubbling fountain
That's never silent night or day
Sweetly sustains the ecstasy
Into which love plunged me tonight.
The sheaf unfolds into
Countless flowers
In which joyful Phœbe
Puts her colors :
It drops like a shower
Of heavy tears.
Thus your soul which is set ablaze
By the burning flash of pleasure
Springs heavenward, fearless and swift,
Toward the boundless, enchanted skies.
And then it overflows, dying
In a wave of languid sadness
That by an invisible slope
Descends to the depths of my heart.

The sheaf unfolds into
Countless flowers
In which joyful Phoebe
Puts her colors :
It drops like a shower
Of heavy tears.

Oh you whom the night makes so fair,
How sweet, bending over your breast,
To listen to the endless plaint
Of the sobbing of the fountains !
Moon, singing water, blessed night,
Trees that quiver round about us,
Your innocent melancholy
Is the mirror of my love.

The sheaf unfolds into
Countless flowers
In which joyful Phoebe
Puts her colors :
It drops like a shower
Of heavy tears.

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Fountain

My darling of a sweetheart, close,
For a long time, your great, tired eyes,
Keeping them in that languid pose
Where pleasure took them by surprise.
Out in the court the fountain chatters
And does not cease by day or night.
The swoon of ecstasy it flatters
In which love plunges me tonight.

Its sheaf uprears
A myriad flowers,
While Phoebe sheers
Through pearl-flushed hours,
To rain down tears
In glittering showers.
So does your flashing soul ignite

In lightnings of voluptuous bliss
And rushes reckless up the height
As though the enchanted sky to kiss ;
Then it relaxes, grows more fine,
And in sad languor falls apart
Down an invisible incline
Into the deep well of my heart.
Its sheaf uprears
A myriad flowers,
While Phoebe sheers
Through pearl-flushed hours,
To rain down tears
In glittering showers.
O you whom night so beautifies
How sweet unto your breast to bend
And hear the water as it sighs
Into the ponds without an end
Moon, singing water, blessed night
And trees that tremble up above –
Your melancholy charms my sprite
And is the mirror of my love.
Its sheaf uprears
A myriad flowers,
While Phoebe sheers
Through pearl-flushed hours,
To rain down tears
In glittering showers.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

La Rançon (1868)

La Rançon

L'homme a, pour payer sa rançon,
Deux champs au tuf profond et riche,
Qu'il faut qu'il remue et défriche
Avec le fer de la raison ;
Pour obtenir la moindre rose,
Pour extorquer quelques épis,
Des pleurs salés de son front gris
Sans cesse il faut qu'il les arrose.
L'un est l'Art, et l'autre l'Amour.
– Pour rendre le juge propice,
Lorsque de la stricte justice
Paraîtra le terrible jour,
Il faudra lui montrer des granges
Pleines de moissons, et des fleurs
Dont les formes et les couleurs
Gagnent le suffrage des Anges.

– Charles Baudelaire

The Ransom

Man has, for paying his ransom,
Two fields of rich, deep, porous rock
That he must clear and cultivate
With the iron of his reason ;
To obtain the sorriest rose,
To extort a few ears of grain,
He must water them constantly

With salty sweat from his gray brow.
One is Art and the other Love.
– To win the judge's favor
When the terrible day
Of dispassionate justice dawns,
He will have to show granaries
Filled with harvests and with flowers
Whose forms and colors will
Win the suffrage of the Angels.

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Ransom

Man, for his ransom, has two fields,
Two fields of tufa, deep and rich,
Which he must duly delve and ditch.
His reason is the hoe he wields.

In order to extort one rose,
Or to produce a few poor cars,
He has to squander showers of tears
In watering the seeds he sows.

One field is Art, the other Love ;
And both must for his favour bloom
When the strict judge appears above
Upon the dreadful day of doom.

Man's granges must be filled to burst
With crops and flowers, whose form and shade
Must win the angels' suffrage first
Before his ransom can be paid.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Bien loin d'ici (1868)

Bien loin d'ici

C'est ici la case sacrée
Où cette fille très parée,
Tranquille et toujours préparée,
D'une main éventant ses seins,
Et son coude dans les coussins,
Écoute pleurer les bassins :
C'est la chambre de Dorothée.
– La brise et l'eau chantent au loin
Leur chanson de sanglots heurtée
Pour bercer cette enfant gâtée.
Du haut en bas, avec grand soin.
Sa peau délicate est frottée
D'huile odorante et de benjoin.
– Des fleurs se pâment dans un coin.

– Charles Baudelaire

Very Far From Here

This is the sacred dwelling
In which that much adorned maiden
Calm and always prepared
Listens to the fountains weeping,
Fanning her breast with her hand,
Her elbow resting on the cushions ;
It's the bedroom of Dorothy.
– Far off the breeze and waters sing
Their broken, sobbing song

To lull to sleep this pampered child.
From head to foot, with greatest care
Her delicate skin is polished
With perfumed oil and benzoin.
– Flowers swoon in a corner.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Far Away From Here

This is the room, the sacred nest
Of that girl so richly dressed,
Tranquil and ready for her guest.
With one hand she fans her nipples
Elbow on the couch at rest
Listening to the ponds and ripples.
This room is Dorothy's. The play
Of wind and water, far away,
With fainting song and rhythmic sobs,
Through her reverie hums and throbs.
From head to toe with greatest care
Her skin is polished, to adorn her
With benjamin and oils as rare...
Some flowers are swooning in a corner.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Coucher du Soleil Romantique (1868)

Le Coucher du Soleil Romantique

Que le soleil est beau quand tout frais il se lève,
Comme une explosion nous lançant son bonjour !
– Bienheureux celui-là qui peut avec amour
Saluer son coucher plus glorieux qu'un rêve !
Je me souviens !... J'ai vu tout, fleur, source, sillon,
Se pâmer sous son oeil comme un coeur qui palpite...
– Courons vers l'horizon, il est tard, courons vite,
Pour attraper au moins un oblique rayon !
Mais je poursuis en vain le Dieu qui se retire ;
L'irrésistible Nuit établit son empire,
Noire, humide, funeste et pleine de frissons ;
Une odeur de tombeau dans les ténèbres nage,
Et mon pied peureux froisse, au bord du marécage,
Des crapauds imprévus et de froids limaçons.

– Charles Baudelaire

The Sunset of Romanticism

How beautiful the Sun is when newly risen
He hurls his morning greetings like an explosion !
– Fortunate the one who can lovingly salute
His setting, more glorious than a dream !
I remember !... I have seen all, flower, stream, furrow,
Swoon under his gaze like a palpitating heart...
– Let us run to the horizon, it's late,

Let us run fast, to catch at least a slanting ray !
But I pursue in vain the sinking god ;
Irresistible Night, black, damp, deadly,
Full of shudders, establishes his reign ;
The odor of the tomb swims in the shadows
And at the marsh's edge my timid foot
Treads upon slimy snails and unexpected toads.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Romantic Sunset

How lovely is the sun, when, freshly soaring,
Like an explosion, first he bids "Good-Day."
Happy the man, on gorgeous sunsets poring,
Who can salute with love its parting ray.
I've seen all things, flower, furrow, pond, and rill,
Swoon in his gaze like a poor heart that dies.
Run to the skyline. It is late. We still
May catch one parting ray before it flies.
But it's in vain I chase my God receding.
Night irresistible, damp, black, unheeding
Establishes her empire, full of fear.
Amongst the shades a grave-like odour trails.
My naked feet walk into chilly snails
And bullfrogs unforeseen along the mere.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Sur 'Le Tasse en prison' d'Eugène Delacroix (1868)

Sur 'Le Tasse en prison' d'Eugène Delacroix

Le poète au cachot, débraillé, maladif,
Roulant un manuscrit sous son pied convulsif,
Mesure d'un regard que la terreur enflamme
L'escalier de vertige où s'abîme son âme.
Les rires enivrants dont s'emplit la prison
Vers l'étrange et l'absurde invitent sa raison ;
Le Doute l'environne, et la Peur ridicule,
Hideuse et multiforme, autour de lui circule.
Ce génie enfermé dans un taudis malsain,
Ces grimaces, ces cris, ces spectres dont l'essaim
Tourbillonne, ameuté derrière son oreille,
Ce rêveur que l'horreur de son logis réveille,
Voilà bien ton emblème, Âme aux songes obscurs,
Que le Réel étouffe entre ses quatre murs !

– Charles Baudelaire

On 'Tasso in Prison' by Eugene Delacroix

The poet in the dungeon, sickly and unkempt,
Rolling a manuscript under his convulsed foot,
Measures with a look that terror enflames
The stairway of vertigo down which his soul plunges.
The intoxicating laughs that fill the prison
Invite his reason to the strange and the absurd ;
Doubt surrounds him and ridiculous Fear,

Hideous and multiform, flows all about him.
This genius imprisoned in a noisome hovel,
Those grimaces, those cries, that swarm of ghosts
Gathered in a pack, swirls behind his car,
This dreamer wakened by the horror of his lodgings,
That's indeed your symbol, Soul with the obscure dreams,
Whom Reality stifles inside its four walls !

– William Aggeler, 1954

On Delacroix's Picture of Tasso in Prison

The poet, sick, and with his chest half bare
Tramples a manuscript in his dark stall,
Gazing with terror at the yawning stair
Down which his spirit finally must fall.
Intoxicating laughs which fill his prison
Invite him to the Strange and the Absurd.
With ugly shapes around him have arisen
Both Doubt and Terror, multiform and blurred.
This genius cooped in an unhealthy hovel,
These cries, grimaces, ghosts that squirm and grovel
Whirling around him, mocking as they call,
This dreamer whom these horrors rouse with screams,
They are your emblem, Soul of misty dreams
Round whom the Real erects its stifling wall.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Gouffre (1868)

Le Gouffre

Pascal avait son gouffre, avec lui se mouvant.
– Hélas ! tout est abîme, – action, désir, rêve,
Parole ! Et sur mon poil qui tout droit se relève
Mainte fois de la Peur je sens passer le vent.
En haut, en bas, partout, la profondeur, la grève,
Le silence, l'espace affreux et captivant...
Sur le fond de mes nuits Dieu de son doigt savant
Dessine un cauchemar multiforme et sans trêve.
J'ai peur du sommeil comme on a peur d'un grand trou,
Tout plein de vague horreur, menant on ne sait où ;
Je ne vois qu'infini par toutes les fenêtres,
Et mon esprit, toujours du vertige hanté,
Jalouse du néant l'insensibilité.
– Ah ! ne jamais sortir des Nombres et des Êtres !

– Charles Baudelaire

The Abyss

Pascal had his abyss that moved along with him.
– Alas ! all is abysmal, – action, desire, dream,
Word ! and over my hair which stands on end
I feel the wind of Fear pass frequently.
Above, below, on every side, the depth, the strand,
The silence, space, hideous and fascinating...
On the background of my nights God with clever hands
Sketches an unending nightmare of many forms.
I'm afraid of sleep as one is of a great hole

Full of obscure horrors, leading one knows not where ;
I see only infinite through every window,
And my spirit, haunted by vertigo, is jealous
Of the insensibility of nothingness.
– Ah ! Never to go out from Numbers and Beings !

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Gulf

Wherever Pascal went, his gulf was spread,
All is abyss – dream, act, desire, or word !
And often by the wind of terror stirred
I've felt the hair shoot upright on my head.
High up, low down, all round, the depth descending,
The verge, the silence, the dread captor, Space.
Behind my nights I see God's finger trace
A Nightmare multiform yet never-ending.
I dread my sleep like some enormous hole
Full of vague horror, leading to no goal.
All windows bare the infinite to me.
My soul, in its vertiginous endeavour,
Envies the senseless void – Ah, never never
From entities or numbers to be free !

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Les Plaintes d'un Icare (1868)

Les Plaintes d'un Icare

Les amants des prostituées
Sont heureux, dispos et repus ;
Quant à moi, mes bras sont rompus
Pour avoir étreint des nuées.
C'est grâce aux astres nonpareils,
Qui tout au fond du ciel flamboient,
Que mes yeux consumés ne voient
Que des souvenirs de soleils.
En vain j'ai voulu de l'espace
Trouver la fin et le milieu ;
Sous je ne sais quel oeil de feu
Je sens mon aile qui se casse ;
Et brûlé par l'amour du beau,
Je n'aurai pas l'honneur sublime
De donner mon nom à l'abîme
Qui me servira de tombeau.

– Charles Baudelaire

The Complaints of an Icarus

The lovers of prostitutes
Are happy, healthy, and sated ;
As for me, my arms are weary
Because I have embraced the clouds,
It is thanks to the peerless stars
That flame in the depth of the sky
That my burned out eyes see

Only the memories of suns.
I tried in vain to find
The middle and the end of space;
I know not under what fiery eye
I feel my pinions breaking;
Burned by love of the beautiful
I shan't have the sublime honor
Of giving my name to the abyss
That will serve me as a tomb.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Complaint of an Icarus

Those who love whores are well-endowed,
Spry, and well-fed, and cheerful-spoken.
But, as for me, my arms are broken
From trying to embrace a cloud.
To what two peerless stars have done
That kindle in the farthest skies,
I owe it that my burnt-out eyes
Know only memories of the sun.
In vain I've tried to find the pole
And the equator-line of space.
I know not by what burning gaze
The wings were molten from my soul.
By love of beauty singed, I fall
Yet fail the honour and the bliss
To give my name to the abyss
Which serves me for my tomb and pall.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Recueillement (1868)

Recueillement

Sois sage, ô ma Douleur, et tiens-toi plus tranquille.
Tu réclamas le Soir ; il descend ; le voici :
Une atmosphère obscure enveloppe la ville,
Aux uns portant la paix, aux autres le souci.
Pendant que des mortels la multitude vile,
Sous le fouet du Plaisir, ce bourreau sans merci,
Va cueillir des remords dans la fête servile,
Ma Douleur, donne-moi la main ; viens par ici,
Loin d'eux. Vois se pencher les défuntas Années,
Sur les balcons du ciel, en robes surannées ;
Surgir du fond des eaux le Regret souriant ;
Le soleil moribond s'endormir sous une arche,
Et, comme un long linceul traînant à l'Orient,
Entends, ma chère, entends la douce Nuit qui marche.

– Charles Baudelaire

Méditation

Be quiet and more discreet, O my Grief.
You cried out for the Evening ; even now it falls :
A gloomy atmosphere envelopes the city,
Bringing peace to some, anxiety to others.
While the vulgar herd of mortals, under the scourge
Of Pleasure, that merciless torturer,
Goes to gather remorse in the servile festival,
My Grief, give me your hand ; come this way
Far from them. See the dead years in old-fashioned gowns

Lean over the balconies of heaven ;
Smiling Regret rise from the depths of the waters ;
The dying Sun fall asleep beneath an arch, and
Listen, darling, to the soft footfalls of the Night
That traits off to the East like a long winding-sheet.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Meditation

Be good, my Sorrow : hush now : settle down.
You sighed for dusk, and now it comes : look there !
A denser atmosphere obscures the town,
To some restoring peace, to others care.
While the lewd multitude, like hungry beasts,
By pleasure scourged (no thug so fierce as he !)
Go forth to seek remorse among their feasts –
Come, take my hand ; escape from them with me.
From balconies of sky, around us yet,
Lean the dead years in fashions that have ceased.
Out of the depth of waters smiles Regret.
The sun sinks moribund beneath an arch,
And like a long shroud rustling from the East,
Hark, Love, the gentle Night is on the march.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

L'Héautontimorouménos

L'Héautontimorouménos

À J.G.F.

Je te frapperai sans colère
Et sans haine, comme un boucher,
Comme Moïse le rocher
Et je ferai de ta paupière,
Pour abreuver mon Saharah
Jaillir les eaux de la souffrance.
Mon désir gonflé d'espérance
Sur tes pleurs salés nagera
Comme un vaisseau qui prend le large,
Et dans mon cœur qu'ils souleveront
Tes chers sanglots retentiront
Comme un tambour qui bat la charge !
Ne suis-je pas un faux accord
Dans la divine symphonie,
Grâce à la vorace Ironie
Qui me secoue et qui me mord
Elle est dans ma voix, la criarde !
C'est tout mon sang ce poison noir !
Je suis le sinistre miroir
Où la mégère se regarde.
Je suis la plaie et le couteau !
Je suis le soufflet et la joue !
Je suis les membres et la roue,
Et la victime et le bourreau !
Je suis de mon cœur le vampire,
– Un de ces grands abandonnés
Au rire éternel condamnés

Et qui ne peuvent plus sourire !

– Charles Baudelaire

The Man Who Tortures Himself

To J. G. F.

I shall strike you without anger
And without hate, like a butcher,
As Moses struck the rock !
And from your eyelids I shall make
The waters of suffering gush forth
To inundate my Sahara.
My desire swollen with hope
Will float upon your salty tears
Like a vessel which puts to sea,
And in my heart that they'll make drunk
Your beloved sobs will resound
Like a drum beating the charge !
Am I not a discord
In the heavenly symphony,
Thanks to voracious Irony
Who shakes me and who bites me ?
She's in my voice, the termagant !
All my blood is her black poison !
I am the sinister mirror
In which the vixen looks.
I am the wound and the dagger !
I am the blow and the cheek !
I am the members and the wheel,
Victim and executioner !
I'm the vampire of my own heart
– One of those utter derelicts
Condemned to eternal laughter,
But who can no longer smile !

– William Aggeler, 1954

Heautontimoroumenos

To J. G. F.

I'll strike you, but without the least
Anger – as butchers poll an ox,
Or Moses, when he struck the rocks –
That from your eyelid thus released,
The lymph of suffering may brim
To slake my desert of its drought.
So my desire, by hope made stout,
Upon your salty tears may swim,
Like a proud ship, far out from shore.
Within my heart, which they'll confound
With drunken joy, your sobs will sound
Like drums that beat a charge in war.

Am I not a faulty chord
In all this symphony divine,
Thanks to the irony malign
That shakes and cuts me like a sword ?

It's in my voice, the raucous jade !
It's in my blood's black venom too !
I am the looking-glass, wherethrough
Megera sees herself portrayed !

I am the wound, and yet the blade !
The smack, and yet the cheek that takes it !
The limb, and yet the wheel that breaks it,
The torturer, and he who's flayed !

One of the sort whom all revile,
A Vampire, my own blood I quaff,
Condemned to an eternal laugh
Because I know not how to smile.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

L'Irrémédiable

L'Irrémédiable

I

Une Idée, une Forme, un Etre
Parti de l'azur et tombé
Dans un Styx bourbeux et plombé
Où nul oeil du Ciel ne pénètre ;
Un Ange, imprudent voyageur
Qu'a tenté l'amour du difforme,
Au fond d'un cauchemar énorme
Se débattant comme un nageur,
Et luttant, angoisses funèbres !
Contre un gigantesque remous
Qui va chantant comme les fous
Et pirouettant dans les ténèbres ;
Un malheureux ensorcelé
Dans ses tâtonnements fuites
Pour fuir d'un lieu plein de reptiles,
Cherchant la lumière et la clé ;
Un damné descendant sans lampe
Au bord d'un gouffre dont l'odeur
Trahit l'humide profondeur
D'éternels escaliers sans rampe,
Où veillent des monstres visqueux
Dont les larges yeux de phosphore
Font une nuit plus noire encore
Et ne rendent visibles qu'eux ;
Un navire pris dans le pôle
Comme en un piège de cristal,
Cherchant par quel détroit fatal

Il est tombé dans cette geôle ;
– Emblèmes nets, tableau parfait
D'une fortune irrémédiable
Qui donne à penser que le Diable
Fait toujours bien tout ce qu'il fait !

II

Tête-à-tête sombre et limpide
Qu'un coeur devenu son miroir !
Puits de Vérité, clair et noir
Où tremble une étoile livide,
Un phare ironique, infernal
Flambeau des grâces sataniques,
Soulagement et gloire uniques,
– La conscience dans le Mal !

– Charles Baudelaire

Beyond Redemption

I

An Idea, a Form, a Being
Which left the azure sky and fell
Into a leaden, miry Styx
That no eye in Heaven can pierce ;
An Angel, imprudent voyager
Tempted by love of the deformed,
In the depths of a vast nightmare
Flailing his arms like a swimmer,
And struggling, mortal agony !
Against a gigantic whirlpool
That sings constantly like madmen
And pirouettes in the darkness ;
An unfortunate, enchanted,
Outstretched hands groping futilely,
Looking for the light and the key,
To flee a place filled with reptiles ;
A damned soul descending endless stairs
Without banisters, without light,

On the edge of a gulf of which
The odor reveals the humid depth,
Where slimy monsters are watching,
Whose eyes, wide and phosphorescent,
Make the darkness darker still
And make visible naught but themselves ;
A ship caught in the polar sea
As though in a snare of crystal,
Seeking the fatal strait through which
It came into that prison ;
– Patent symbols, perfect picture
Of an irremediable fate
Which makes one think that the Devil
Always does well whatever he does !

II

Somber and limpid tête-à-tête –
A heart become its own mirror !
Well of Truth, clear and black,
Where a pale star flickers,
A hellish, ironic beacon,
Torch of satanical blessings,
Sole glory and only solace
– The consciousness of doing evil.

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Irremediable

I

A Form, Idea, or Essence, chased
Out of the azure sky, and shot
Into a leaden Styx where not
A star can pierce the muddy waste :
An angel, rash explorer, who,
Tempted by love of strange deformity,
Caught in a nightmare of enormity,
Fights like a swimmer, wrestling through
A monstrous whorl of eddying spume,

In deathly anguish, from him flinging
The wave that, like an idiot singing,
Goes pirouetting through the gloom :
A wretch enchanted, who, to flee
A den of serpents, gropes about
In desperation vain, without
Discovering a match or key :
A damned soul, who, with no lamp,
Stands by a gulf, whose humid scent
Betrays the depth of the descent
Of endless stairs without a ramp,
Where slimy monsters watch the track
Whose eyeballs phosphoresce and glow
Only to make the night more black
And nought except themselves to show :
A vessel that the pole betrays,
Caught in a crystal trap all round,
And seeking by what fatal sound
It ever entered such a maze : –
Clear emblems ! measuring the level
Of irremediable dooms,
Which make us see bow well the Devil
Performs whatever he presumes !

II

Strange tête-à-tête ! the heart, its own
Mirror, its own confession hears !
Deep well where Truth is trembling shown
And like a livid star appears,
Ironic beacon and infernal
Torch of satanic grace, but still
Sole glory and relief eternal,
– Conscience that operates in Ill !

– Roy Campbell, 1952

L'Horloge (1861)

L'Horloge

Horloge ! dieu sinistre, effrayant, impassible,
Dont le doigt nous menace et nous dit : « *Souviens-toi !*
Les vibrantes Douleurs dans ton coeur plein d'effroi
Se planteront bientôt comme dans une cible ;

Le Plaisir vaporeux fuit vers l'horizon
Ainsi qu'une sylphide au fond de la coulisse ;
Chaque instant te dévore un morceau du délice
À chaque homme accordé pour toute sa saison.

Trois mille six cents fois par heure, la Seconde
Chuchote : *Souviens-toi !* – Rapide, avec sa voix
D'insecte, Maintenant dit : Je suis Autrefois,
Et j'ai pompé ta vie avec ma trompe immonde !

Remember ! Souviens-toi ! prodigue ! Esto memor !
(Mon gosier de métal parle toutes les langues.)
Les minutes, mortel folâtre, sont des gangues
Qu'il ne faut pas lâcher sans en extraire l'or !

Souviens-toi que le Temps est un joueur avide
Qui gagne sans tricher, à tout coup ! c'est la loi.
Le jour décroît ; la nuit augmente ; *Souviens-toi !*
Le gouffre a toujours soif ; la clepsydre se vide.

Tantôt sonnera l'heure où le divin Hasard,
Où l'auguste Vertu, ton épouse encor vierge,
Où le Repentir même (oh ! la dernière auberge !),
Où tout te dira Meurs, vieux lâche ! il est trop tard ! »

– Charles Baudelaire

The Clock

Impassive clock! Terrifying, sinister god,
Whose finger threatens us and says : "Remember !
The quivering Sorrows will soon be shot
Into your fearful heart, as into a target ;
Nebulous pleasure will flee toward the horizon
Like an actress who disappears into the wings ;
Every instant devours a piece of the pleasure
Granted to every man for his entire season.
Three thousand six hundred times an hour, Second
Whispers : *Remember !* – Immediately
With his insect voice, Now says : I am the Past
And I have sucked out your life with my filthy trunk !
Remember ! Souviens-toi, spendthrift ! Esto memor !
(My metal throat can speak all languages.)
Minutes, blithesome mortal, are bits of ore
That you must not release without extracting the gold !
Remember, Time is a greedy player
Who wins without cheating, every round ! It's the law.
The daylight wanes ; the night deepens ; *remember !*
The abyss thirsts always ; the water-clock runs low.
Soon will sound the hour when divine Chance,
When august Virtue, your still virgin wife,
When even Repentance (the very last of inns !),
When all will say : Die, old coward ! it is too late !"

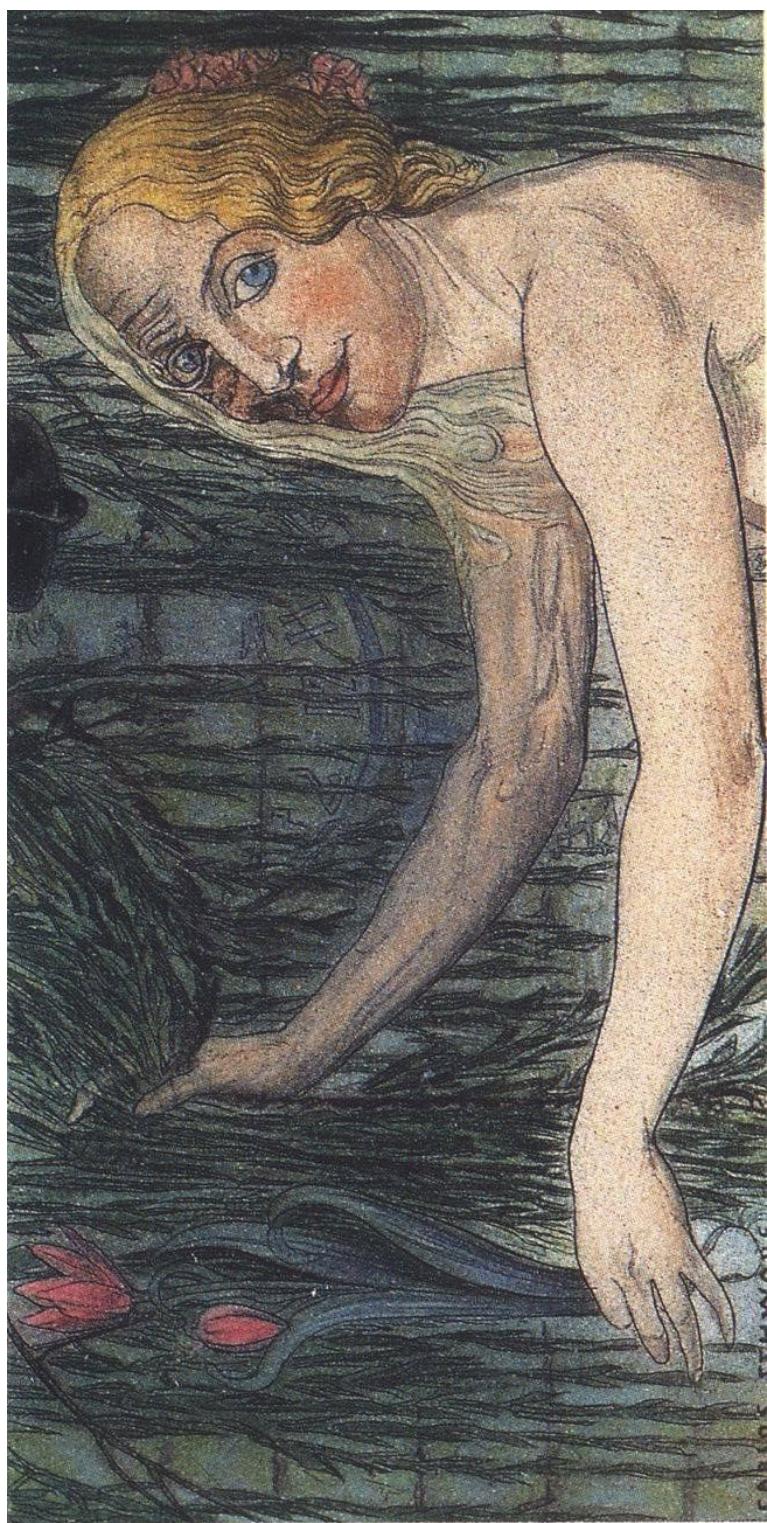
– William Aggeler, 1954

The Clock

The Clock, calm evil god, that makes us shiver,
With threatening finger warns us each apart :
"Remember ! Soon the vibrant woes will quiver,
Like arrows in a target, in your heart.
To the horizon Pleasure will take flight
As flits a vaporous sylphide to the wings.
Each instant gnaws a crumb of the delight
That for his season every mortal brings.

Three thousand times and more, each hour, the second
Whispers '*Remember!*' Like an insect shrill
The present chirps, 'With Nevermore I'm reckoned,
I've pumped your lifeblood with my loathsome bill.'
Remember! Souviens-toi! Esto Memor!
My brazen windpipe speaks in every tongue.
Each moment, foolish mortal, is like ore
From which the precious metal must be wrung.
Remember. Time the gamester (it's the law)
Wins always, without cheating. Daylight wanes.
Night deepens. The abyss with gulfy maw
Thirsts on unsated, while the hour-glass drains.
Sooner or later, now, the time must be
When Hazard, Virtue (your still-virgin mate),
Repentance, (your last refuge), or all three –
Will tell you, 'Die, old Coward. It's too late!' "

– Roy Campbell, 1952



TABLEAUX PARISIENS

PARISIAN SCENES

Paysage (1861)

Paysage

Je veux, pour composer chastement mes églogues,
Coucher auprès du ciel, comme les astrologues,
Et, voisin des clochers écouter en rêvant
Leurs hymnes solennels emportés par le vent.
Les deux mains au menton, du haut de ma mansarde,
Je verrai l'atelier qui chante et qui bavarde ;
Les tuyaux, les clochers, ces mâts de la cité,
Et les grands ciels qui font rêver d'éternité.

Il est doux, à travers les brumes, de voir naître
L'étoile dans l'azur, la lampe à la fenêtre
Les fleuves de charbon monter au firmament
Et la lune verser son pâle enchantement.
Je verrai les printemps, les étés, les automnes ;
Et quand viendra l'hiver aux neiges monotones,
Je fermerai partout portières et volets
Pour bâtir dans la nuit mes féériques palais.
Alors je rêverai des horizons bleuâtres,
Des jardins, des jets d'eau pleurant dans les albâtres,
Des baisers, des oiseaux chantant soir et matin,
Et tout ce que l'Idylle a de plus enfantin.
L'Emeute, tempêtant vainement à ma vitre,
Ne fera pas lever mon front de mon pupitre ;
Car je serai plongé dans cette volupté
D'évoquer le Printemps avec ma volonté,
De tirer un soleil de mon coeur, et de faire
De mes pensers brûlants une tiède atmosphère.

– Charles Baudelaire

The Landscape

I would, to compose my eclogues chastely,
Lie down close to the sky like an astrologer,
And, near the church towers, listen while I dream
To their solemn anthems borne to me by the wind.
My chin cupped in both hands, high up in my garret
I shall see the workshops where they chatter and sing,
The chimneys, the belfries, those masts of the city,
And the skies that make one dream of eternity.

It is sweet, through the mist, to see the stars
Appear in the heavens, the lamps in the windows,
The streams of smoke rise in the firmament
And the moon spread out her pale enchantment.
I shall see the springtimes, the summers, the autumns ;
And when winter comes with its monotonous snow,
I shall close all the shutters and draw all the drapes
So I can build at night my fairy palaces.
Then I shall dream of pale blue horizons, gardens,
Fountains weeping into alabaster basins,
Of kisses, of birds singing morning and evening,
And of all that is most childlike in the Idyl.
Riot, storming vainly at my window,
Will not make me raise my head from my desk,
For I shall be plunged in the voluptuousness
Of evoking the Springtime with my will alone,
Of drawing forth a sun from my heart, and making
Of my burning thoughts a warm atmosphere.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Landscape

More chasteness to my eclogues it would give,
Sky-high, like old astrologers to live,
A neighbour of the belfries : and to hear
Their solemn hymns along the winds career.
High in my attic, chin in hand, I'd swing
And watch the workshops as they roar and sing,
The city's masts – each steeple, tower, and flue –

And skies that bring eternity to view.
Sweet, through the mist, to see illumed again
Stars through the azure, lamps behind the pane,
Rivers of carbon irrigate the sky,
And the pale moon pour magic from on high.
I'd watch three seasons passing by, and then
When winter came with dreary snows, I'd pen
Myself between closed shutters, bolts, and doors,
And build my fairy palaces indoors.
A dream of blue horizons I would garble
With thoughts of fountains weeping on to marble,
Of gardens, kisses, birds that ceaseless sing,
And all the Idyll holds of childhood's spring.
The riots, brawling past my window-pane,
From off my desk would not divert my brain.
Because I would be plunged in pleasure still,
Conjuring up the Springtime with my will,
And forcing sunshine from my heart to form,
Of burning thoughts, an atmosphere that's warm.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Soleil

Le Soleil

Le long du vieux faubourg, où pendent aux masures
Les persiennes, abri des sécrètes luxures,
Quand le soleil cruel frappe à traits redoublés
Sur la ville et les champs, sur les toits et les blés,
Je vais m'exercer seul à ma fantasque escrime,
Flairant dans tous les coins les hasards de la rime,
Trébuchant sur les mots comme sur les pavés
Heurtant parfois des vers depuis longtemps rêvés.
Ce père nourricier, ennemi des chloroses,
Eveille dans les champs les vers comme les roses ;
Il fait s'évaporer les soucis vers le ciel,
Et remplit les cerveaux et les ruches le miel.
C'est lui qui rajeunit les porteurs de béquilles
Et les rend gais et doux comme des jeunes filles,
Et commande aux moissons de croître et de mûrir
Dans le coeur immortel qui toujours veut fleurir !
Quand, ainsi qu'un poète, il descend dans les villes,
Il ennoblit le sort des choses les plus viles,
Et s'introduit en roi, sans bruit et sans valets,
Dans tous les hôpitaux et dans tous les palais.

– Charles Baudelaire

The Sun

Along the old street on whose cottages are hung
The slatted shutters which hide secret lecheries,
When the cruel sun strikes with increased blows

The city, the country, the roofs, and the wheat fields,
I go alone to try my fanciful fencing,
Scenting in every corner the chance of a rhyme,
Stumbling over words as over paving stones,
Colliding at times with lines dreamed of long ago.
This foster-father, enemy of chlorosis,
Makes verses bloom in the fields like roses ;
He makes cares evaporate toward heaven,
And fills with honey hives and brains alike.
He rejuvenates those who go on crutches
And gives them the sweetness and gaiety of girls,
And commands crops to flourish and ripen
In those immortal hearts which ever wish to bloom !
When, like a poet, he goes down into cities,
He ennobles the fate of the lowliest things
And enters like a king, without servants or noise,
All the hospitals and all the castles.

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Sun

Along the outskirts where, close-sheltering
Hid lusts, dilapidated shutters swing,
When the sun strikes, redoubling waves of heat
On town, and field, and roof, and dusty street –
I prowl to air my prowess and kill time,
Stalking, in likely nooks, the odds of rhyme,
Tripping on words like cobbles as I go
And bumping into lines dreamed long ago.
This all-providing Sire, foe to chloroses,
Wakes verses in the fields as well as roses
Evaporates one's cares into the breeze,
Filling with honey brains and hives of bees,
Rejuvenating those who go on crutches
And bringing youthful joy to all he touches,
Life to those precious harvests he imparts
That grow and ripen in our deathless hearts.
Poet-like, through the town he seems to smile
Ennobling fate for all that is most vile ;

And king-like, without servants or display,
Through hospitals and mansions makes his way.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Lola de Valence (1868)

Lola de Valence

Entre tant de beautés que partout on peut voir,
Je contemple bien, amis, que le désir balance ;
Mais on voit scintiller en Lola de Valence
Le charme inattendu d'un bijou rose et noir.

– Charles Baudelaire

Lola of Valencia

Among such beauties as one can see everywhere
I understand, my friends, that desire hesitates ;
But one sees sparkling in Lola of Valencia
The unexpected charm of a black and rose jewel.

– William Aggeler, 1954

On Manet's Picture 'Lola of Valencia'

Amongst the myriad flowers on beauty's stem
It's hard to choose. Such crowds there are of them
But Lola burns with unexpected fuel
The radiance of a black and rosy jewel.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

La Lune offensée (1868)

La Lune offensée

Ô Lune qu'adoraient discrètement nos pères,
Du haut des pays bleus où, radieux sérail,
Les astres vont te suivre en pimpant attirail,
Ma vieille Cynthia, lampe de nos repaires,
Vois-tu les amoureux sur leurs grabats prospères,
De leur bouche en dormant montrer le frais émail ?
Le poète buter du front sur son travail ?
Ou sous les gazons secs s'accoupler les vipères ?
Sous ton domino jaune, et d'un pied clandestin,
Vas-tu, comme jadis, du soir jusqu'au matin,
Baiser d'Endymion les grâces surannées ?
– « Je vois ta mère, enfant de ce siècle appauvri,
Qui vers son miroir penche un lourd amas d'années,
Et plâtre artistement le sein qui t'a nourri ! »

– Charles Baudelaire

The Offended Moon

O Moon whom our ancestors discreetly adored,
Radiant seraglio ! from the blue countries' height
To which the stars follow you in dashing attire,
My ancient Cynthia, lamp of our haunts,
Do you see the lovers on their prosperous pallets,
Showing as they sleep, the cool enamel of their mouths ?
The poet beating his forehead over his work ?
Or the vipers coupling under the withered grass ?
Under your yellow domino, with quiet step,

Do you go as in days of old from morn till night
To kiss the faded charms of Endymion ?

– “I see your mother, child of this impoverished age,
Bending toward her mirror a heavy weight of years,
Skillfully disguising the breast that nourished you !”

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Moon Offended

O moon, to whom our fathers used to pray,
From your blue home, where, odalisques of light,
The stars will follow you in spruce array,
Old Cynthia, lantern of our dens by night,
Do you see sleeping lovers on their couches
Reveal the cool enamel of their teeth :
The poet at his labours, how he crouches :
And vipers – how they couple on the heath ?
In yellow domino, with stealthy paces,
Do you yet steal with clandestine embraces
To clasp Endymion’s pale, millenial charm ?
– “I see your mother, by her mirror, buckled
By weight of years, poor child of death and harm !
Patching with art the breast at which you suckled !”

– Roy Campbell, 1952

À une Mendiante rousse

À une Mendiante rousse

Blanche fille aux cheveux roux,
Dont la robe par ses trous
Laisse voir la pauvreté
Et la beauté,
Pour moi, poète chétif,
Ton jeune corps maladif,
Plein de taches de rousseur,
À sa douceur.

Tu portes plus galamment
Qu'une reine de roman
Ses cothurnes de velours
Tes sabots lourds.

Au lieu d'un haillon trop court,
Qu'un superbe habit de cour
Traîne à plis bruyants et longs
Sur tes talons ;

En place de bas troués
Que pour les yeux des roués
Sur ta jambe un poignard d'or
Reluise encor ;

Que des noeuds mal attachés
Dévoilent pour nos péchés
Tes deux beaux seins, radieux
Comme des yeux ;

Que pour te déshabiller
Tes bras se fassent prier
Et chassent à coups mutins
Les doigts lutins,

Perles de la plus belle eau,
Sonnets de maître Belleau
Par tes galants mis aux fers
Sans cesse offerts,
Valetaille de rimeurs
Te dédiant leurs primeurs
Et contemplant ton soulier
Sous l'escalier,
Maint page épris du hasard,
Maint seigneur et maint Ronsard
Epieraient pour le déduit
Ton frais réduit !
Tu compterais dans tes lits
Plus de baisers que de lis
Et rangerais sous tes lois
Plus d'un Valois !
– Cependant tu vas gueusant
Quelque vieux débris gisant
Au seuil de quelque Véfour
De carrefour ;
Tu vas lorgnant en dessous
Des bijoux de vingt-neuf sous
Dont je ne puis, oh ! Pardon !
Te faire don.
Va donc, sans autre ornement,
Parfum, perles, diamant,
Que ta maigre nudité,
Ô ma beauté !

– Charles Baudelaire

To an Auburn-Haired Beggar-Maid

Pale girl with the auburn hair,
Whose dress through its tears and holes
Reveals your poverty
And your beauty,
For me, an ailing poet,
Your body, young and sickly,

Spotted with countless freckles,
Has its sweetness.

You wear with more elegance
Your wooden clogs than the queen
In a romance her sandals
Trimmed with velvet.

Instead of a scanty rag,
Let a glittering court dress
Trail with its long, rustling folds
Over your heels ;

In place of stockings with holes,
Let, for the eyes of roués,
A golden poniard glisten
In your garter ;

Let ill-tied ribbons give way
And unveil, so we may sin,
Your two lovely breasts, radiant
As shining eyes ;

Let your arms demand entreating
To uncover your body
And repel with saucy blows
Roguish fingers,

Pearls of the finest water,
Sonnets by Master Belleau
Constantly offered by swains
Held in love's chains,

Plebeian versifiers
Offering first books to you
And ogling your slippered foot
From under the stair ;

Many a page fond of love's chance,
Many a Ronsard and lord
For amusement would spy on
Your chilly hut !

You could count in your beds
More kisses than fleurs-de-lis
And subject to your power
Many Valois !

– However, you go begging

Some moldy refuse lying
On the steps of some Véfour
At the crossroads ;
You go furtively eyeing
Baubles at twenty-nine sous,
Of which I can't, oh ! pardon !
Make you a gift.
Go, with no more adornment,
Perfume or pearl or diamond,
Than your slender nudity,
O my beauty !

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Red-Haired Beggar Girl

White girl with flame-red hair,
Whose garments, here and there,
Give poverty to view,
And beauty too.

To me, poor puny poet,
Your body, as you show it,
With freckles on your arms,
Has yet its charms.

You wear with prouder mien
Than in Romance a queen
Her velvet buskins could –
Your clogs of wood.

In place of tatters short
Let some rich robe of court
Swirl with its silken wheels
After your heels :

In place of stockings holed
A dagger made of gold,
To light the lecher's eye,
Flash on your thigh :

Let ribbons slip their bows
And for our sins disclose
A breast whose radiance vies

Even with your eyes.
To show them further charms
Let them implore your arms,
And these, rebuking, humble
Fingers that fumble
With proffered pearls aglow
And sonnets of Belleau,
Which, fettered by your beauty,
They yield in duty.
Riffraff of scullion-rhymers
Would dedicate their primers
Under the stairs to view
Only your shoe.
Each page-boy lucky-starred,
Each marquis, each Ronsard
Would hang about your bower
To while an hour.
You'd count, among your blisses,
Than lilies far more kisses,
And boast, among your flames,
Some royal names.
Yet now your beauty begs
For scraps on floors, and dregs
Else destined to the gutter,
As bread and butter.
You eye, with longing tense,
Cheap gauds for thirty cents,
Which, pardon me, these days
I cannot raise.
No scent, or pearl, or stone,
But nothing save your own
Thin nudity for dower,
Pass on, my flower !

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Cygne (1861)

Le Cygne

À Victor Hugo

I

Andromaque, je pense à vous ! Ce petit fleuve,
Pauvre et triste miroir où jadis resplendit
L'immense majesté de vos douleurs de veuve,
Ce Simoïs menteur qui par vos pleurs grandit,
A fécondé soudain ma mémoire fertile,
Comme je traversais le nouveau Carrousel.
Le vieux Paris n'est plus (la forme d'une ville
Change plus vite, hélas ! que le cœur d'un mortel) ;
Je ne vois qu'en esprit tout ce camp de baraqués,
Ces tas de chapiteaux ébauchés et de fûts,
Les herbes, les gros blocs verdis par l'eau des flaques,
Et, brillant aux carreaux, le bric-à-brac confus.
Là s'étalait jadis une ménagerie ;
Là je vis, un matin, à l'heure où sous les cieux
Froids et clairs le Travail s'éveille, où la voirie
Pousse un sombre ouragan dans l'air silencieux,
Un cygne qui s'était évadé de sa cage,
Et, de ses pieds palmés frottant le pavé sec,
Sur le sol raboteux traînait son blanc plumage.
Près d'un ruisseau sans eau la bête ouvrant le bec
Baignait nerveusement ses ailes dans la poudre,
Et disait, le cœur plein de son beau lac natal :
« Eau, quand donc pleuvras-tu ? quand tonneras-tu, foudre ? »
Je vois ce malheureux, mythe étrange et fatal,
Vers le ciel quelquefois, comme l'homme d'Ovide,

Vers le ciel ironique et cruellement bleu,
Sur son cou convulsif tendant sa tête avide
Comme s'il adressait des reproches à Dieu !

II

Paris change ! mais rien dans ma mélancolie
N'a bougé ! palais neufs, échafaudages, blocs,
Vieux faubourgs, tout pour moi devient allégorie
Et mes chers souvenirs sont plus lourds que des rocs.
Aussi devant ce Louvre une image m'opprime :
Je pense à mon grand cygne, avec ses gestes fous,
Comme les exilés, ridicule et sublime
Et rongé d'un désir sans trêve ! et puis à vous,
Andromaque, des bras d'un grand époux tombée,
Vil bétail, sous la main du superbe Pyrrhus,
Auprès d'un tombeau vide en extase courbée
Veuve d'Hector, hélas ! et femme d'Hélénus !
Je pense à la négresse, amaigrie et phtisique
Piétinant dans la boue, et cherchant, l'oeil hagard,
Les cocotiers absents de la superbe Afrique
Derrière la muraille immense du brouillard ;
À quiconque a perdu ce qui ne se retrouve
Jamais, jamais ! à ceux qui s'abreuvent de pleurs
Et tètent la Douleur comme une bonne louve !
Aux maigres orphelins séchant comme des fleurs !
Ainsi dans la forêt où mon esprit s'exile
Un vieux Souvenir sonne à plein souffle du cor !
Je pense aux matelots oubliés dans une île,
Aux captifs, aux vaincus !... à bien d'autres encor !

– Charles Baudelaire

The Swan

To Victor Hugo

I

Andromache, I think of you ! – That little stream,
That mirror, poor and sad, which glittered long ago

With the vast majesty of your widow's grieving,
That false Simois swollen by your tears,
Suddenly made fruitful my teeming memory,
As I walked across the new Carrousel.
– Old Paris is no more (the form of a city
Changes more quickly, alas ! than the human heart) ;
I see only in memory that camp of stalls,
Those piles of shafts, of rough hewn cornices, the grass,
The huge stone blocks stained green in puddles of water,
And in the windows shine the jumbled bric-a-brac.
Once a menagerie was set up there ;
There, one morning, at the hour when Labor awakens,
Beneath the clear, cold sky when the dismal hubbub
Of street-cleaners and scavengers breaks the silence,
I saw a swan that had escaped from his cage,
That stroked the dry pavement with his webbed feet
And dragged his white plumage over the uneven ground.
Beside a dry gutter the bird opened his beak,
Restlessly bathed his wings in the dust
And cried, homesick for his fair native lake :
"Rain, when will you fall ? Thunder, when will you roll ?"
I see that hapless bird, that strange and fatal myth,
Toward the sky at times, like the man in Ovid,
Toward the ironic, cruelly blue sky,
Stretch his avid head upon his quivering neck,
As if he were reproaching God !

II

Paris changes ! but naught in my melancholy
Has stirred ! New palaces, scaffolding, blocks of stone,
Old quarters, all become for me an allegory,
And my dear memories are heavier than rocks.
So, before the Louvre, an image oppresses me :
I think of my great swan with his crazy motions,
Ridiculous, sublime, like a man in exile,
Relentlessly gnawed by longing ! and then of you,
Andromache, base chattel, fallen from the embrace
Of a mighty husband into the hands of proud Pyrrhus,
Standing bowed in rapture before an empty tomb,
Widow of Hector, alas ! and wife of Helenus !

I think of the negress, wasted and consumptive,
Trudging through muddy streets, seeking with a fixed gaze
The absent coco-palms of splendid Africa
Behind the immense wall of mist ;
Of whoever has lost that which is never found
Again ! Never ! Of those who deeply drink of tears
And suckle Pain as they would suck the good she-wolf !
Of the puny orphans withering like flowers !
Thus in the dim forest to which my soul withdraws,
An ancient memory sounds loud the hunting horn !
I think of the sailors forgotten on some isle,
– Of the captives, of the vanquished !... of many others too !

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Swan

To Victor Hugo

I

Andromache ! – This shallow stream, the brief
Mirror you once so grandly overcharged
With your vast majesty of widowed grief,
This lying Simois your tears enlarged,
Evoked your name, and made me think of you,
As I was crossing the new Carrousel.
– Old Paris is no more (cities renew,
Quicker than human hearts, their changing spell).
In mind I see that camp of huts, the muddle
Of rough-hewn roofs and leaning shafts for miles,
The grass, green logs stagnating in the puddle,
Where bric-a-brac lay glittering in piles.
Once a menagerie parked there.
And there it chanced one morning, when from slumber freed,
Labour stands up, and Transport through still air
Rumbles its sombre hurricane of speed, –
A swan escaped its cage : and as its feet
With finny palms on the harsh pavement scraped,
Trailing white plumage on the stony street,

In the dry gutter for fresh water gaped.
Nervously bathing in the dust, in wonder
It asked, remembering its native stream,
"When will the rain come down ? When roll the thunder ?"
I see it now, strange myth and fatal theme !
Sometimes, like Ovid's wretch, towards the sky
(Ironically blue with cruel smile)
Its neck, convulsive, reared its head on high
As though it were its Maker to revile.

II

Paris has changed, but in my grief no change.
New palaces and scaffoldings and blocks,
To me, are allegories, nothing strange.
My memories are heavier than rocks.
Passing the Louvre, one image makes me sad :
That swan, like other exiles that we knew,
Grandly absurd, with gestures of the mad,
Gnawed by one craving ! – Then I think of you,
Who fell from your great husband's arms, to be
A beast of freight for Pyrrhus, and for life,
Bowed by an empty tomb in ecstasy –
Great Hector's widow ! Helenus's wife !
I think, too, of the starved and phthisic negress
Tramping the mud, who seeks, with haggard eye,
The palms of Africa, and for some egress
Out of this great black wall of foggy sky :
Of those who've lost what they cannot recover :
Of those who slake with tears their lonely hours
And milk the she-wolf, Sorrow, for their mother :
And skinny orphans withering like flowers.
So in the forest of my soul's exile,
Remembrance winds his horn as on he rides.
I think of sailors stranded on an isle,
Captives, and slaves – and many more besides.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Les Sept vieillards (1861)

Les Sept vieillards

À Victor Hugo

Fourmillante cité, cité pleine de rêves,
Où le spectre en plein jour raccroche le passant !
Les mystères partout coulent comme des sèves
Dans les canaux étroits du colosse puissant.
Un matin, cependant que dans la triste rue
Les maisons, dont la brume allongeait la hauteur,
Simulaient les deux quais d'une rivière accrue,
Et que, décor semblable à l'âme de l'acteur,
Un brouillard sale et jaune inondait tout l'espace,
Je suivais, roidissant mes nerfs comme un héros
Et discutant avec mon âme déjà lasse,
Le faubourg secoué par les lourds tombereaux.
Tout à coup, un vieillard dont les guenilles jaunes
Imitaient la couleur de ce ciel pluvieux,
Et dont l'aspect aurait fait pleuvoir les aumônes,
Sans la méchanceté qui luisait dans ses yeux,
M'apparut. On eût dit sa prunelle trempée
Dans le fiel ; son regard aiguisait les frimas,
Et sa barbe à longs poils, roide comme une épée,
Se projetait, pareille à celle de Judas.
Il n'était pas voûté, mais cassé, son échine
Faisant avec sa jambe un parfait angle droit,
Si bien que son bâton, parachevant sa mine,
Lui donnait la tournure et le pas maladroit
D'un quadrupède infirme ou d'un juif à trois pattes.
Dans la neige et la boue il allait s'empêtrant,
Comme s'il écrasait des morts sous ses savates,

Hostile à l'univers plutôt qu'indifférent.
 Son pareil le suivait : barbe, oeil, dos, bâton, loques,
 Nul trait ne distinguait, du même enfer venu,
 Ce jumeau centenaire, et ces spectres baroques
 Marchaient du même pas vers un but inconnu.
 À quel complot infâme étais-je donc en butte,
 Ou quel méchant hasard ainsi m'humiliait ?
 Car je comptai sept fois, de minute en minute,
 Ce sinistre vieillard qui se multipliait !
 Que celui-là qui rit de mon inquiétude
 Et qui n'est pas saisi d'un frisson fraternel
 Songe bien que malgré tant de décrépitude
 Ces sept monstres hideux avaient l'air éternel !
 Aurais-je, sans mourir, contemplé le huitième,
 Sosie inexorable, ironique et fatal
 Dégoûtant Phénix, fils et père de lui-même ?
 – Mais je tournai le dos au cortège infernal.
 Exaspéré comme un ivrogne qui voit double,
 Je rentrai, je fermai ma porte, épouvanté,
 Malade et morfondu, l'esprit fiévreux et trouble,
 Blessé par le mystère et par l'absurdité !
 Vainement ma raison voulait prendre la barre ;
 La tempête en jouant déroutait ses efforts,
 Et mon âme dansait, dansait, vieille gabarre
 Sans mâts, sur une mer monstrueuse et sans bords !

– Charles Baudelaire

The Seven Old Men

To Victor Hugo

Teeming, swarming city, city full of dreams,
 Where specters in broad day accost the passer-by !
 Everywhere mysteries flow like the sap in a tree
 Through the narrow canals of the mighty giant.
 One morning, while in a gloomy street the houses,
 Whose height was increased by the mist, simulated
 The quais of a swollen river, and while
 – A setting that was like the actor's soul –

A dirty yellow fog inundated all space,
I was following, steeling my nerves like a hero,
Arid arguing with my already weary soul,
A squalid street shaken by the heavy dump-carts.
Suddenly an old man whose tattered yellow clothes
Were of the same color as the rainy heavens,
And whose aspect would have brought him showers of alms
If his eyes had not gleamed with so much wickedness,
Appeared to me. One would have said his eyes were drenched
With gall ; his look sharpened the winter's chill,
And his long shaggy beard, like that of Judas,
Projected from his chin as stiffly as a sword.
He was not bent over, but broken ; his back-bone
Made with his legs a perfect right angle,
So that his stick, completing the picture,
Gave him the appearance and clumsy gait
Of a lame quadruped or a three-legged Jew.
He went hobbling along in the snow and the mud
As if he were crushing the dead under his shoes ;
Hostile, rather than indifferent to the world,
His likeness followed him : beard, eye, back, stick, tatters,
No mark distinguished this centenarian twin,
Who came from the same hell, and these baroque specters
Were walking with the same gait toward an unknown goal.
Of what infamous plot was I then the object,
Or what evil chance humiliated me thus ?
For I counted seven times in as many minutes
That sinister old man who multiplied himself !
Let him who laughs at my disquietude,
And who is not seized with a fraternal shudder,
Realize that in spite of such decrepitude
Those hideous monsters had an eternal look !
Could I, without dying, have regarded the eighth,
Unrelenting Sosia, ironic and fatal,
Disgusting Phoenix, son and father of himself ?
– But I turned my back on that hellish procession.
Exasperated like a drunk who sees double,
I went home ; I locked the door, terrified,
Chilled to the bone and ill, my mind fevered, confused,
Hurt by that mysterious and absurd happening !

Vainly my reason tried to take the helm ;
The frolicsome tempest baffled all its efforts,
And my soul, old sailing barge without masts,
Kept dancing, dancing, on a monstrous, shoreless sea !

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Seven Old Men

To Victor Hugo

Ant-seething city, city full of dreams,
Where ghosts by daylight tug the passer's sleeve.
Mystery, like sap, through all its conduit-streams,
Quickens the dread Colossus that they weave.
One early morning, in the street's sad mud,
Whose houses, by the fog increased in height,
Seemed wharves along a riverside in flood :
When with a scene to match the actor's plight,
Foul yellow mist had filled the whole of space :
Steeling my nerves to play a hero's part,
I coaxed my weary soul with me to pace
The backstreets shaken by each lumbering cart.
A wretch appeared whose tattered, yellow clothing,
Matching the colour of the raining skies,
Could make it shower down alms – but for the loathing
Malevolence that glittered in his eyes.
The pupils of his eyes, with bile injected,
Seemed with their glance to make the frost more raw.
Stiff as a sword, his long red beard projected,
Like that of Judas, level with his jaw.
He was not bent, but broken, with the spine
Forming a sharp right-angle to the straight,
So that his stick, to finish the design,
Gave him the stature and the crazy gait
Of a three-footed Jew, or crippled hound.
He plunged his soles into the slush as though
To crush the dead ; and to the world around
Seemed less of an indifferent than a foe.
His image followed him, (back, stick, and beard

In nothing differed) spawned from the same hole,
A centenarian twin. Both spectres steered
With the same gait to the same unknown goal.
To what foul plot was I exposed ? of what
Humiliating hazard made the jeer ?
For seven times, (I counted) was begot
This sinister, self multiplying fear !
Let him mark well who laughs at my despair
With no fraternal shudder in reply...
Those seven loathsome monsters had the air,
Though rotting through, of what can never die.
Disgusting Phoenix, his own sire and father !
Could I have watched an eighth instalment spawn
Ironic, fateful, grim – nor perished rather ?
But from that hellish cortège I'd withdrawn.
Perplexed as drunkards when their sight is doubled,
I locked my room, sick, fevered, chilled with fright :
With all my spirit sorely hurt and troubled
By so ridiculous yet strange a sight.
Vainly my reason for the helm was striving :
The tempest of my efforts made a scorn.
My soul like a dismasted wreck went driving
Over a monstrous sea without a bourn.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Les Petites Vieilles (1861)

Les Petites Vieilles

À Victor Hugo

I

Dans les plis sinueux des vieilles capitales,
Où tout, même l'horreur, tourne aux enchantements,
Je guette, obéissant à mes humeurs fatales,
Des êtres singuliers, décrépits et charmants.
Ces monstres disloqués furent jadis des femmes,
Eponine ou Laïs ! Monstres brisés, bossus
Ou tordus, aimons-les ! ce sont encor des âmes.
Sous des jupons troués et sous de froids tissus
Ils rampent, flagellés par les bises iniques,
Frémistant au fracas roulant des omnibus,
Et serrant sur leur flanc, ainsi que des reliques,
Un petit sac brodé de fleurs ou de rébus ;
Ils trottent, tout pareils à des marionnettes ;
Se traînent, comme font les animaux blessés,
Ou dansent, sans vouloir danser, pauvres sonnettes
Où se pend un Démon sans pitié ! Tout cassés
Qu'ils sont, ils ont des yeux perçants comme une vrille,
Luisants comme ces trous où l'eau dort dans la nuit ;
Ils ont les yeux divins de la petite fille
Qui s'étonne et qui rit à tout ce qui reluit.
– Avez-vous observé que maints cercueils de vieilles
Sont presque aussi petits que celui d'un enfant ?
La Mort savante met dans ces bières pareilles
Un symbole d'un goût bizarre et captivant,
Et lorsque j'entrevois un fantôme débile

Traversant de Paris le fourmillant tableau,
Il me semble toujours que cet être fragile
S'en va tout doucement vers un nouveau berceau ;
À moins que, méditant sur la géométrie,
Je ne cherche, à l'aspect de ces membres discords,
Combien de fois il faut que l'ouvrier varie
La forme de la boîte où l'on met tous ces corps.
– Ces yeux sont des puits faits d'un million de larmes,
Des creusets qu'un métal refroidi pailleta...
Ces yeux mystérieux ont d'invincibles charmes
Pour celui que l'austère Infortune allaita !

II

De Frascati défunt Vestale enamourée ;
Prêtresse de Thalie, hélas ! dont le souffleur
Enterré sait le nom ; célèbre évaporée
Que Tivoli jadis ombragea dans sa fleur,
Toutes m'enivrent ; mais parmi ces êtres frêles
Il en est qui, faisant de la douleur un miel,
Ont dit au Dévouement qui leur prêtait ses ailes :
Hippogriffe puissant, mène-moi jusqu'au ciel !
L'une, par sa patrie au malheur exercée,
L'autre, que son époux surchargea de douleurs,
L'autre, par son enfant Madone transpercée,
Toutes auraient pu faire un fleuve avec leurs pleurs !

III

Ah ! que j'en ai suivi de ces petites vieilles !
Une, entre autres, à l'heure où le soleil tombant
Ensanglante le ciel de blessures vermeilles,
Pensive, s'asseyait à l'écart sur un banc,
Pour entendre un de ces concerts, riches de cuivre,
Dont les soldats parfois inondent nos jardins,
Et qui, dans ces soirs d'or où l'on se sent revivre,
Versent quelque héroïsme au coeur des citadins.
Celle-là, droite encor, fière et sentant la règle,
Humait avidement ce chant vif et guerrier ;
Son oeil parfois s'ouvrait comme l'oeil d'un vieil aigle ;
Son front de marbre avait l'air fait pour le laurier !

IV

Telles vous cheminez, stoïques et sans plaintes,
À travers le chaos des vivantes cités,
Mères au coeur saignant, courtisanes ou saintes,
Dont autrefois les noms par tous étaient cités.
Vous qui fûtes la grâce ou qui fûtes la gloires,
Nul ne vous reconnaît ! un ivrogne incivil
Vous insulte en passant d'un amour dérisoire ;
Sur vos talons gambade un enfant lâche et vil.
Honteuses d'exister, ombres ratatinées,
Peureuses, le dos bas, vous côtoyez les murs ;
Et nul ne vous salue, étranges destinées !
Débris d'humanité pour l'éternité mûrs !
Mais moi, moi qui de loin tendrement vous surveille,
L'oeil inquiet, fixé sur vos pas incertains,
Tout comme si j'étais votre père, ô merveille !
Je goûte à votre insu des plaisirs clandestins :
Je vois s'épanouir vos passions novices ;
Sombres ou lumineux, je vis vos jours perdus ;
Mon coeur multiplié jouit de tous vos vices !
Mon âme resplendit de toutes vos vertus !
Ruines ! ma famille ! ô cerveaux congénères !
Je vous fais chaque soir un solennel adieu !
Où serez-vous demain, Eves octogénaires,
Sur qui pèse la griffe effroyable de Dieu ?

– Charles Baudelaire

Little Old Women

To Victor Hugo

I

In the sinuous folds of the old capitals,
Where all, even horror, becomes pleasant,
I watch, obedient to my fatal whims,
For singular creatures, decrepit and charming.
These disjointed monsters were women long ago,

Eponine or Lais ! Monsters, hunch-backed, broken
Or distorted, let us love them ! they still have souls.
Clothed in tattered petticoats and flimsy dresses
They creep, lashed by the iniquitous wind,
Trembling at the clatter of the omnibuses,
Each pressing to her side, as if it were a relic,
A small purse embroidered with rebuses or flowers ;
They trot exactly like marionettes ;
They drag themselves along like wounded animals,
Or dance, against their will, poor little bells
Pulled constantly by a heartless Demon ! Broken
Though they are, they have eyes as piercing as gimlets,
That shine like those holes in which water sleeps at night ;
They have the divine eyes of little girls
Who are amazed and laugh at everything that gleams.

– Have you observed how frequently coffins
For old women are almost as small as a child's ?
Clever Death brings to these similar biers
A symbol of a strange and captivating taste,
And when I catch a glimpse of a feeble specter
Crossing the swarming scene that is Paris,
It always seems to me that that fragile creature
Is going quietly toward a second cradle ;
Unless, pondering on geometry,
I try, at the sight of those discordant members,
To figure how many times the workman changes
The shape of the boxes where those bodies are laid.

– Those eyes are wells filled with a million tears,
Crucibles which a quenched metal spangled...
Those mysterious eyes have invincible charms
For one whom austere Misfortune has suckled !

II

Vestal in love with the late Frascati ;
High priestess of Thalia, whose name is known
To her buried prompter ; vanished celebrity
Whom Tivoli sheltered at the peak of her fame,
They all enrapture me ; among those frail beings
There are some who, making honey out of sorrow,
Have said to Devotion who had lent them his wings :

"Powerful hippocriff, carry me to the sky!"
One, inured to misfortune by her fatherland,
Another, overwhelmed with grief by her husband,
Another, a Madonna transfixed by her child,
Each could have made a river with her tears!

III

Ah! how many of these women I have followed!
One, among others, at the hour when the sunset
Makes the sky bloody with vermillion wounds,
Pensive, used to sit alone on a bench
To hear one of those concerts rich in brass,
With which the soldiers sometimes flood our public parks
On those golden evenings when one feels new life within
And which inspire heroism in the townsman's heart.
Proud, still erect, feeling she must sit thus,
She thirstily drank in that stirring, martial song;
Her eyes opened at times like the eyes of an old eagle;
Her marble brow seemed to be made for the laurel!

IV

Thus you trudge along, stoical, uncomplaining,
Amid the confusion of cities full of life,
Mothers with bleeding hearts, courtesans, saints,
Whose names in years gone by were on everyone's lips.
O you who were charming or who were glorious,
None recognizes you! A drunken ruffian
Passing by insults you with an obscene remark;
A dirty, nasty child frisks about at your heels.
Wizened shadows, ashamed of existing,
With bent backs, you timidly keep close to the walls
And no person greets you, strange destinies!
Human wreckage, ripe for eternity!
But I, I watch you tenderly from a distance;
My anxious eyes are fixed on your uncertain steps,
As if I were your own father; how wonderful!
I taste unknown to you clandestine pleasures:
I see your untried passions come into full bloom;
I live your vanished days, gloomy or filled with light;
My heart multiplied enjoys all of your vices!

My soul is resplendent with all of your virtues !
Ruins ! my family ! O kindred minds !
I bid you each evening a solemn farewell !
Octogenarian Eves, upon whom rests
God's terrible claw, where will you be tomorrow ?

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Little Old Women

To Victor Hugo

I

In sinuous folds of cities old and grim,
Where all things, even horror, turn to grace,
I follow, in obedience to my whim,
Strange, feeble, charming creatures round the place.
These crooked freaks were women in their pride,
Fair Eponine or Lais ! Humped and bent,
Love them ! Because they still have souls inside.
Under their draughty skirts in tatters rent,
They crawl : a vicious wind their carrion rides ;
From the deep roar of traffic see them cower,
Pressing like precious relies to their sides
Some satchel stitched with mottoes or a flower.
They trot like marionettes along the level,
Or drag themselves like wounded deer, poor crones !
Or dance, against their will, as if the devil
Were swinging in the belfry of their bones.
Cracked though they are, their eyes are sharp as drills
And shine, like pools of water in the night, –
The eyes of little girls whom wonder thrills
To laugh at all that sparkles and is bright.
The coffins of old women very often
Are near as small as those of children are.
Wise Death, who makes a symbol of a coffin
Displays a taste both charming and bizarre.
And when I track some feeble phantom fleeing
Through Paris's immense ant-swarming Babel,

I always think that such a fragile being
Is moving softly to another cradle.
Unless, sometimes, in geometric mood,
To see the strange deformities they offer,
I muse how often he who saws the wood
Must change the shape and outline of the coffer.
Those eyes are wells a million teardrops feed,
Crucibles spangled by a cooling ore,
Invincible in charm to all that breed
Austere Misfortune suckled with her lore.

II

Vestal whom old Frascati could enamour :
Thalia's nun, whose name was only known
To her dead prompter : madcap full of glamour
Whom Tivoli once sheltered as its own –
They all elate me. But of these a few,
Of sorrow having made a honeyed leaven,
Say to Devotion, "Lend me wings anew,
O powerful Hippogriff, and fly to heaven."
One for her fatherland a martyr : one
By her own husband wronged beyond belief :
And one a pierced Madonna through her son –
They all could make a river with their grief.

III

Yes, I have followed them, time and again !
One, I recall, when sunset, like a heart,
Bled through the sky from wounds of ruddy stain,
Pensively sat upon a seat apart,
To listen to the music, rich in metal
That's played by bands of soldiers in the parks
On golden, soul-reviving eves, to fettle,
From meek civilian hearts, heroic sparks.
This one was straight and stiff, in carriage regal,
She breathed the warrior-music through her teeth,
Opened her eye like that of an old eagle,
And bared a forehead moulded for a wreath.

IV

Thus, then, you journey, uncomplaining, stoic
Across the strife of modern cities flung,
Sad mothers, courtesans, or saints heroic,
Whose names of old were heard on every tongue,
You once were grace, and you were glory once.
None know you now. Derisory advances
Some drunkard makes you, mixed with worse affronts.
And on your heels a child-tormentor prances.
But I who watch you tenderly : and measure
With anxious eye, your weak unsteady gait
As would a father – get a secret pleasure
On your account, as on your steps I wait.
I see your passionate and virgin crazes ;
Sombre or bright, I see your vanished prime ;
My soul, resplendent with your virtue, blazes,
And revels in your vices and your crimes.
Poor wrecks ! My family ! Kindred in mind, you
Receive from me each day my last addresses.
Eighty-year Eves, will yet tomorrow find you
On whom the claw of God so fiercely presses ?

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Les Aveugles (1861)

Les Aveugles

Contemple-les, mon âme ; ils sont vraiment affreux !
Pareils aux mannequins ; vaguement ridicules ;
Terribles, singuliers comme les somnambules ;
Dardant on ne sait où leurs globes ténébreux.
Leurs yeux, d'où la divine étincelle est partie,
Comme s'ils regardaient au loin, restent levés
Au ciel ; on ne les voit jamais vers les pavés
Pencher rêveusement leur tête appesantie.
Ils traversent ainsi le noir illimité,
Ce frère du silence éternel. Ô cité !
Pendant qu'autour de nous tu chantes, ris et beugles,
Eprise du plaisir jusqu'à l'atrocité,
Vois ! je me traîne aussi ! mais, plus qu'eux hébété,
Je dis : Que cherchent-ils au Ciel, tous ces aveugles ?

– Charles Baudelaire

The Blind

Contemplate them, my soul ; they are truly frightful !
Like mannequins ; vaguely ridiculous ;
Strange and terrible, like somnambulists ;
Darting, one never knows where, their tenebrous orbs.
Their eyes, from which the divine spark has departed,
Remain raised to the sky, as if they were looking
Into space : one never sees them toward the pavement
Dreamily bend their heavy heads.
Thus they go across the boundless darkness,

That brother of eternal silence. O city !
While about us you sing, laugh, and bellow,
In love with pleasure to the point of cruelty,
See ! I drag along also ! but, more dazed than they,
I say : "What do they seek in Heaven, all those blind ?"

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Blind

My soul, survey them, dreadful as they seem.
Like marionettes, ridiculous they stare.
Strange as somnambulists that, in their dream,
Dart shadowy orbs around we know not where.
Their eyes, from which the heavenly spark has flown
Remain uplifted, as in distant quest,
Skyward : but never on the paving stone
Do they pore dreamingly or come to rest.
They traverse thus the illimitable Dark,
Twin of eternal Silence. While the City
May sing around us, bellow, laugh, or bark, –
By pleasure blinded even to horror, I,
Too, drag my way, but, more a thing of pity,
Ask what the Blind are seeking there on high.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

À une passante (1861)

À une passante

La rue assourdissante autour de moi hurlait.
Longue, mince, en grand deuil, douleur majestueuse,
Une femme passa, d'une main fastueuse
Soulevant, balançant le feston et l'ourlet ;
Agile et noble, avec sa jambe de statue.
Moi, je buvais, crispé comme un extravagant,
Dans son oeil, ciel livide où germe l'ouragan,
La douceur qui fascine et le plaisir qui tue.
Un éclair... puis la nuit ! – Fugitive beauté
Dont le regard m'a fait soudainement renaître,
Ne te verrai-je plus que dans l'éternité ?
Ailleurs, bien loin d'ici ! trop tard ! *jamais* peut-être !
Car j'ignore où tu fuis, tu ne sais où je vais,
Ô toi que j'eusse aimée, ô toi qui le savais !

– Charles Baudelaire

To a Passer-By

The street about me roared with a deafening sound.
Tall, slender, in heavy mourning, majestic grief,
A woman passed, with a glittering hand
Raising, swinging the hem and flounces of her skirt ;
Agile and graceful, her leg was like a statue's.
Tense as in a delirium, I drank
From her eyes, pale sky where tempests germinate,
The sweetness that entralls and the pleasure that kills.
A lightning flash... then night ! Fleeting beauty

By whose glance I was suddenly reborn,
Will I see you no more before eternity ?
Elsewhere, far, far from here ! too late ! *never* perhaps !
For I know not where you fled, you know not where I go,
O you whom I would have loved, O you who knew it !

– William Aggeler, 1954

A Passer-by

The deafening street roared on. Full, slim, and grand
In mourning and majestic grief, passed down
A woman, lifting with a stately hand
And swaying the black borders of her gown ;
Noble and swift, her leg with statues matching ;
I drank, convulsed, out of her pensive eye,
A livid sky where hurricanes were hatching,
Sweetness that charms, and joy that makes one die.
A lighting-flash – then darkness ! Fleeting chance
Whose look was my rebirth – a single glance !
Through endless time shall I not meet with you ?
Far off ! too late ! or never ! – I not knowing
Who you may be, nor you where I am going –
You, whom I might have loved, who know it too !

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Squelette laboureur (1861)

Le Squelette laboureur

I

Dans les planches d'anatomie
Qui traînent sur ces quais poudreux
Où maint livre cadavéreux
Dort comme une antique momie,
Dessins auxquels la gravité
Et le savoir d'un vieil artiste,
Bien que le sujet en soit triste,
Ont communiqué la Beauté,
On voit, ce qui rend plus complètes
Ces mystérieuses horreurs,
Bêchant comme des laboureurs,
Des Ecorthés et des Squelettes.

II

De ce terrain que vous fouillez,
Manants résignés et funèbres
De tout l'effort de vos vertèbres,
Ou de vos muscles dépouillés,
Dites, quelle moisson étrange,
Forçats arrachés au charnier,
Tirez-vous, et de quel fermier
Avez-vous à remplir la grange ?
Voulez-vous (d'un destin trop dur
Epouvantable et clair emblème !)
Montrer que dans la fosse même
Le sommeil promis n'est pas sûr ;
Qu'envers nous le Néant est traître ;

Que tout, même la Mort, nous ment,
Et que sempiternellement
Hélas ! il nous faudra peut-être
Dans quelque pays inconnu
Ecorcher la terre revêche
Et pousser une lourde bêche
Sous notre pied sanglant et nu ?

– Charles Baudelaire

Skeleton with a Spade

I

In the anatomical plates
That lie about on dusty quais
Where many cadaverous books
Sleep like an ancient mummy,
Engravings to which the staidness
And knowledge of some old artist
Have communicated beauty,
Although the subject is gloomy,
One sees, and it makes more complete
These mysteries full of horror,
Skinless bodies and skeletons, Spading as if they were farmhands.

II

From the soil that you excavate,
Resigned, macabre villagers,
From all the effort of your backs,
Or of your muscles stripped of skin,
Tell me, what singular harvest,
Convicts torn from cemeteries,
Do you reap, and of what farmer
Do you have to fill the barn ?
Do you wish (clear, frightful symbol
Of too cruel a destiny !)
To show that even in the grave
None is sure of the promised sleep ;
That Annihilation betrays us ;

That all, even Death, lies to us,
And that forever and ever,
Alas ! we shall be forced perhaps
In some unknown country
To scrape the hard and stony ground
And to push a heavy spade in
With our bare and bleeding feet ?

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Skeleton Navy

I

Quaint anatomic plates are sold
Along the quays in third-hand stalls
Where tomes cadaverous and old
Slumber like mummies in their palls.
In them the craftsman's skill combines
With expert knowledge in a way
That beautifies these chill designs
Although the subject's far from gay.
One notes that, consummating these
Mysterious horrors, God knows how,
Skeletons and anatomies
Peel off their skins to delve and plough.

II

Navvies, funereal and resigned,
From the tough ground with which you tussle
With all the effort that can find
Filletted spine or skinless muscle –
O grave-snatched convicts, say what strange
Harvest you hope from such a soil
And who the farmer is whose grange
You would replenish with this toil.
Mean you to show (O evil-starred
Exponents of too stark a doom)
The promised sleep may yet be barred,
Even from us, beyond the tomb ;

That even extinction may turn traitor,
And Death itself, can be a lie ;
And that perhaps, sooner or later,
Forever, when we come to die,
In some strange country, without wages,
On stubborn outcrops delving holes,
We'll push a shovel through the ages
Beneath our flayed and blinding soles ?

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Crémuscle du soir

Le Crémuscle du soir

Voici le soir charmant, ami du criminel ;
Il vient comme un complice, à pas de loup ; le ciel
Se ferme lentement comme une grande alcôve,
Et l'homme impatient se change en bête fauve.
Ô soir, aimable soir, désiré par celui
Dont les bras, sans mentir, peuvent dire : Aujourd'hui
Nous avons travaillé ! – C'est le soir qui soulage
Les esprits que dévore une douleur sauvage,
Le savant obstiné dont le front s'alourdit,
Et l'ouvrier courbé qui regagne son lit.
Cependant des démons malsains dans l'atmosphère
S'éveillent lourdement, comme des gens d'affaire,
Et cognent en volant les volets et l'auvent.
À travers les lueurs que tourmente le vent
La Prostitution s'allume dans les rues ;
Comme une fourmilière elle ouvre ses issues ;
Partout elle se fraye un occulte chemin,
Ainsi que l'ennemi qui tente un coup de main ;
Elle remue au sein de la cité de fange
Comme un ver qui dérobe à l'Homme ce qu'il mange.
On entend ça et là les cuisines siffler,
Les théâtres glapir, les orchestres ronfler ;
Les tables d'hôte, dont le jeu fait les délices,
S'emplissent de catins et d'escrocs, leurs complices,
Et les voleurs, qui n'ont ni trêve ni merci,
Vont bientôt commencer leur travail, eux aussi,
Et forcer doucement les portes et les caisses
Pour vivre quelques jours et vêtir leurs maîtresses.
Recueille-toi, mon âme, en ce grave moment,

Et ferme ton oreille à ce rugissement.
C'est l'heure où les douleurs des malades s'aigrissent !
La sombre Nuit les prend à la gorge ; ils finissent
Leur destinée et vont vers le gouffre commun ;
L'hôpital se remplit de leurs soupirs. – Plus d'un
Ne viendra plus chercher la soupe parfumée,
Au coin du feu, le soir, auprès d'une âme aimée.
Encore la plupart n'ont-ils jamais connu
La douceur du foyer et n'ont jamais vécu !

– Charles Baudelaire

Twilight

Behold the sweet evening, friend of the criminal ;
It comes like an accomplice, stealthily ; the sky
Closes slowly like an immense alcove,
And impatient man turns into a beast of prey.
O evening, kind evening, desired by him
Whose arms can say, without lying : "Today
We labored !" – It is the evening that comforts
Those minds that are consumed by a savage sorrow,
The obstinate scholar whose head bends with fatigue
And the bowed laborer who returns to his bed.
Meanwhile in the atmosphere malefic demons
Awaken sluggishly, like businessmen,
And take flight, bumping against porch roofs and shutters.
Among the gas flames worried by the wind
Prostitution catches alight in the streets ;
Like an ant-hill she lets her workers out ;
Everywhere she blazes a secret path,
Like an enemy who plans a surprise attack ;
She moves in the heart of the city of mire
Like a worm that steals from Man what he eats.
Here and there one hears food sizzle in the kitchens,
The theaters yell, the orchestras moan ;
The gambling dens, where games of chance delight,
Fill up with whores and cardsharps, their accomplices ;
The burglars, who know neither respite nor mercy,
Are soon going to begin their work, they also,

And quietly force open cash-boxes and doors
To enjoy life awhile and dress their mistresses.
Meditate, O my soul, in this solemn moment,
And close your ears to this uproar ;
It is now that the pains of the sick grow sharper !
Somber Night grabs them by the throat ; they reach the end
Of their destinies and go to the common pit ;
The hospitals are filled with their sighs. – More than one
Will come no more to get his fragrant soup
By the fireside, in the evening, with a loved one.
However, most of them have never known
The sweetness of a home, have never lived !

– William Aggeler, 1954

Evening Twilight

Delightful evening, partner of the crook,
Steals in, wolf-padded, like a complice : look :
Heaven, like a garret, closes to the day,
And Man, impatient, turns a beast of prey.
Sweet evening, loved by those whose arms can tell,
Without a lie, "Today we've laboured well ;"
Sweet evening, it is she who brings relief
To men with souls devoured by one fierce grief,
Obstinate thinkers drowsy in the head,
And toil-bent workmen groping to their bed.
But insalubrious demons of the airs,
Like business people, wake to their affairs
And, flying, knock, like bats, on walls and shutters.
Now Prostitution lights up in the gutters
Across the glimmering jets the wind torments.
Like a huge ant-hive it unseals its vents.
On every side it weaves its hidden tracks
Like enemies preparing night-attacks.
It squirms within the City's breast of mire,
A worm that steals the food that men desire.
One hears the kitchens hissing here and there,
Operas squealing, orchestras ablare.

Cheap tables d'hôte, where gaming lights the eyes,
Fill up with whores, and sharpers, their allies :
And thieves, whose office knows no truce nor rest,
Will shortly now start working, too, with zest,
Gently unhinging doors and forcing tills,
To live some days and buy their sweethearts frills.
Collect yourself, my soul, in this grave hour
And shut your ears against the din and stour.
It is the hour when sick men's pains increase.
Death grips them by the throat, and soon they cease
Their destined task, to find the common pit.
The ward is filled with sighings. Out of it
Not all return the scented soup to taste,
Warm at the hearthside, by some loved-one placed.
But then how few among them can recall
Joys of the hearth, or ever lived at all !

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Jeu

Le Jeu

Dans des fauteuils fanés des courtisanes vieilles,
Pâles, le sourcil peint, l'oeil câlin et fatal,
Minaudant, et faisant de leurs maigres oreilles
Tomber un cliquetis de pierre et de métal ;

Autour des verts tapis des visages sans lèvre,
Des lèvres sans couleur, des mâchoires sans dent,
Et des doigts convulsés d'une infernale fièvre,
Fouillant la poche vide ou le sein palpitant ;

Sous de sales plafonds un rang de pâles lustres
Et d'énormes quinquets projetant leurs lueurs
Sur des fronts ténébreux de poètes illustres
Qui viennent gaspiller leurs sanglantes sueurs ;

Voilà le noir tableau qu'en un rêve nocturne
Je vis se dérouler sous mon oeil clairvoyant.
Moi-même, dans un coin de l'antre taciturne,
Je me vis accoudé, froid, muet, enviant,

Enviant de ces gens la passion tenace,
De ces vieilles putains la funèbre gaieté,
Et tous gaillardement trafiquant à ma face,
L'un de son vieil honneur, l'autre de sa beauté !

Et mon coeur s'effraya d'envier maint pauvre homme
Courant avec ferveur à l'abîme béant,
Et qui, soûl de son sang, préférerait en somme
La douleur à la mort et l'enfer au néant !

– Charles Baudelaire

Gambling

In faded armchairs aged courtesans,
Pale, eyebrows penciled, with alluring fatal eyes,
Smirking and sending forth from wizened ears
A jingling sound of metal and of gems ;
Around the gaming tables faces without lips,
Lips without color and jaws without teeth,
Fingers convulsed with a hellborn fever
Searching empty pockets and fluttering bosoms ;
Under dirty ceilings a row of bright lusters
And enormous oil-lamps casting their rays
On the tenebrous brows of distinguished poets
Who come there to squander the blood they have sweated ;
That is the black picture that in a dream one night
I saw unfold before my penetrating eyes.
I saw myself at the back of that quiet den,
Leaning on my elbows, cold, silent, envying,
Envying the stubborn passion of those people,
The dismal merriment of those old prostitutes,
All blithely selling right before my eyes,
One his ancient honor, another her beauty !
My heart took fright at its envy of so many
Wretches running fiercely to the yawning chasm,
Who, drunk with their own blood, would prefer, in a word,
Suffering to death and hell to nothingness !

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Gamblers

In faded armchairs, harlots of past years
Pale, with false eyebrows, wheedling, fatal eyes,
And weird, affected airs, clink from thin ears
A feeble sound, where tin with crystal vies.
Round the green tables, faces without lips,
Lips without colour, jaws their teeth surviving,
And fingers which a hellish fever grips
Convulsively in breasts and pockets diving

Under the dirty ceiling, lustres flame
And chandeliers, that blaze without remittance
On shady brows of poets dear to fame,
Who come to waste their sorely-sweated pittance.
Such was the picture, in nocturnal dreaming,
I saw unfurled to my clairvoyant eye.
In that grim vault, one form on elbows leaning,
Unspeaking, cold, and envious – was I! –
Yes! envying, for their all-tenacious passion,
These raddled tarts in their funereal glee,
Who trafficked there, in such a merry fashion,
Dead virtue and lost beauty on the spree.
My heart was chilled with fear at envying
Wretches who, headlong, rush to be destroyed,
And, drunk with their own blood, seek anything –
Hell, death, or torture – rather than the Void !

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Danse macabre (1861)

Danse macabre

À Ernest Christophe

Fière, autant qu'un vivant, de sa noble stature
Avec son gros bouquet, son mouchoir et ses gants
Elle a la nonchalance et la désinvolture
D'une coquette maigre aux airs extravagants.
Vit-on jamais au bal une taille plus mince ?
Sa robe exagérée, en sa royale ampleur,
S'écroule abondamment sur un pied sec que pince
Un soulier pomponné, joli comme une fleur.
La ruche qui se joue au bord des clavicules,
Comme un ruisseau lascif qui se frotte au rocher,
Défend pudiquement des lazzi ridicules
Les funèbres appas qu'elle tient à cacher.
Ses yeux profonds sont faits de vide et de ténèbres,
Et son crâne, de fleurs artistement coiffé,
Oscille mollement sur ses frêles vertèbres.
Ô charme d'un néant follement attifé.
Aucuns t'appelleront une caricature,
Qui ne comprennent pas, amants ivres de chair,
L'élégance sans nom de l'humaine armature.
Tu réponds, grand squelette, à mon goût le plus cher !
Viens-tu troubler, avec ta puissante grimace,
La fête de la Vie ? ou quelque vieux désir,
Eperonnant encor ta vivante carcasse,
Te pousse-t-il, crédule, au sabbat du Plaisir ?
Au chant des violons, aux flammes des bougies,
Espères-tu chasser ton cauchemar moqueur,
Et viens-tu demander au torrent des orgies

De rafraîchir l'enfer allumé dans ton coeur ?

Inépuisable puits de sottise et de fautes !

De l'antique douleur éternel alambic !

À travers le treillis recourbé de tes côtes

Je vois, errant encor, l'insatiable aspic.

Pour dire vrai, je crains que ta coquetterie

Ne trouve pas un prix digne de ses efforts

Qui, de ces coeurs mortels, entend la raillerie ?

Les charmes de l'horreur n'enivrent que les forts !

Le gouffre de tes yeux, plein d'horribles pensées,

Exhale le vertige, et les danseurs prudents

Ne contempleront pas sans d'amères nausées

Le sourire éternel de tes trente-deux dents.

Pourtant, qui n'a serré dans ses bras un squelette,

Et qui ne s'est nourri des choses du tombeau ?

Qu'importe le parfum, l'habit ou la toilette ?

Qui fait le dégoûté montre qu'il se croit beau.

Bayadère sans nez, irrésistible gouge,

Dis donc à ces danseurs qui font les offusqués :

« Fiers mignons, malgré l'art des poudres et du rouge

Vous sentez tous la mort ! Ô squelettes musqués,

Antinoüs flétris, dandys à face glabre,

Cadavres vernissés, lovelaces chenus,

Le branle universel de la danse macabre

Vous entraîne en des lieux qui ne sont pas connus !

Des quais froids de la Seine aux bords brûlants du Gange,

Le troupeau mortel saute et se pâme, sans voir

Dans un trou du plafond la trompette de l'Ange

Sinistrement béante ainsi qu'un tromblon noir.

En tout climat, sous tout soleil, la Mort t'admire

En tes contorsions, risible Humanité

Et souvent, comme toi, se parfumant de myrrhe,

Mêle son ironie à ton insanité ! »

– Charles Baudelaire

The Dance of Death

To Ernest Christophe

Proud as a living person of her noble stature,
With her big bouquet, her handkerchief and gloves,
She has the nonchalance and easy manner
Of a slender coquette with bizarre ways.
Did one ever see a slimmer waist at a ball ?
Her ostentatious dress in its queenly fullness
Falls in ample folds over thin feet, tightly pressed
Into slippers with pompons pretty as flowers.
The swarm of bees that plays along her collar-bones
Like a lecherous brook that rubs against the rocks
Modestly protects from cat-calls and jeers
The funereal charms that she's anxious to hide.
Her deep eye-sockets are empty and dark,
And her skull, skillfully adorned with flowers,
Oscillates gently on her fragile vertebrae.
Charm of a non-existent thing, madly arrayed !
Some, lovers drunken with flesh, will call you
A caricature ; they don't understand
The marvelous elegance of the human frame.
You satisfy my fondest taste, tall skeleton !
Do you come to trouble with your potent grimace
The festival of Life ? Or does some old desire
Still goading your living carcass
Urge you on, credulous one, toward Pleasure's sabbath ?
With the flames of candles, with songs of violins,
Do you hope to chase away your mocking nightmare,
And do you come to ask of the flood of orgies
To cool the hell set ablaze in your heart ?
Inexhaustible well of folly and of sins !
Eternal alembic of ancient suffering !
Through the curved trellis of your ribs
I see, still wandering, the insatiable asp.
To tell the truth, I fear your coquetry
Will not find a reward worthy of its efforts ;
Which of these mortal hearts understands raillery ?
The charms of horror enrapture only the strong !

The abyss of your eyes, full of horrible thoughts,
Exhales vertigo, and discreet dancers
Cannot look without bitter nausea
At the eternal smile of your thirty-two teeth.
Yet who has not clasped a skeleton in his arms,
Who has not fed upon what belongs to the grave ?
What matters the perfume, the costume or the dress ?
He who shows disgust believes that he is handsome.
Noseless dancer, irresistible whore,
Tell those dancing couples who act so offended :
"Proud darlings, despite the art of make-up
You all smell of death ! Skeletons perfumed with musk,
Withered Antinoi, dandies with smooth faces,
Varnished corpses, hoary-haired Lovclaces,
The universal swing of the danse macabre
Sweeps you along into places unknown !
From the Seine's cold quays to the Ganges' burning shores,
The human troupe skips and swoons with delight, sees not
In a hole in the ceiling the Angel's trumpet
Gaping ominously like a black blunderbuss.
In all climes, under every sun, Death admires you
At your antics, ridiculous Humanity,
And frequently, like you, scenting herself with myrrh,
Mingles her irony with your insanity !"

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Dance of Death

To Ernest Christophe

Proud, as a living person, of her height,
Her scarf and gloves and huge bouquet of roses,
She shows such nonchalance and ease as might
A thin coquette excessive in her poses.
Who, at a ball, has seen a form so slim ?
Her sumptuous skirts extravagantly shower
To a dry foot that, exquisitely trim,
Her footwear pinches, dainty as a flower.
The frills that rub her collarbone, and feel,

Like a lascivious rill against a rock,
The charms she is so anxious to conceal,
Defend them, too, from ridicule and mock.
Her eyes are formed of emptiness and shade.
Her skull, with flowers so deftly decked about,
Upon her dainty vertebrae is swayed.
Oh what a charm when nullity tricks out !
"Caricature," some might opine, but wrongly,
Whose hearts, too drunk with flesh that runs to waste,
Ignore the grace of what upholds so strongly.
Tall skeleton, you match my dearest taste !
Come you to trouble with your strong grimace,
The feast of life ? Or has some old desire
Rowelled your living carcase from its place
And sent you, credulous, to feed its fire ?
With tunes of fiddles and the flames of candles,
Hope you to chase the nightmare far apart,
Or with a flood of orgies, feasts, and scandals
To quench the bell that's lighted in your heart ?
Exhaustless well of follies and of faults,
Of the old woe the alembic and the urn,
Around your trellised ribs, in new assaults,
I see the insatiable serpent turn.
I fear your coquetry's not worth the strain,
The prize not worth the effort you prolong.
Could mortal hearts your railleries explain ?
The joys of horror only charm the strong.
The pits of your dark eyes dread fancies breathe,
And vertigo. Among the dancers prudent,
Hope not your sixteen pairs of smiling teeth
Will ever find a contemplative student.
Yet who's not squeezed a skeleton with passion ?
Nor ravened with his kisses on the meat
Of charnels. What of costume, scent, or fashion ?
The man who feigns disgust, betrays conceit.
O noseless geisha, unresisted gouge !
Tell these fastidious feigners, from your husk –
"Proud fondling fools, in spite of talc and rouge,
You smell of death. Anatomies of musk,
Withered Antinouses, beaux of dunder,

Corpses in varnish, Lovelaces of bone,
The dance of death, with universal thunder,
Is whirling you to places yet unknown !
From Seine to Ganges frolicking about,
You see not, through a black hole in the ceiling,
Like a great blunderbus, with funnelled snout,
The Angel's trumpet, on the point of pealing.
in every clime, Death studies your devices
And vain contortions, laughable Humanity,
And oft, like you, perfumes herself with spices
Mixing her irony with your insanity !"

– Roy Campbell, 1952

L'Amour du mensonge (1861)

L'Amour du mensonge

Quand je te vois passer, ô ma chère indolente,
Au chant des instruments qui se brise au plafond
Suspendant ton allure harmonieuse et lente,
Et promenant l'ennui de ton regard profond ;

Quand je contemple, aux feux du gaz qui le colore,
Ton front pâle, embelli par un morbide attrait,
Où les torches du soir allument une aurore,
Et tes yeux attirants comme ceux d'un portrait,

Je me dis : Qu'elle est belle ! et bizarrement fraîche !
Le souvenir massif, royale et lourde tour,
La couronne, et son coeur, meurtri comme une pêche,
Est mûr, comme son corps, pour le savant amour.

Es-tu le fruit d'automne aux saveurs souveraines ?
Es-tu vase funèbre attendant quelques pleurs,
Parfum qui fait rêver aux oasis lointaines,
Oreiller caressant, ou corbeille de fleurs ?

Je sais qu'il est des yeux, des plus mélancoliques,
Qui ne recèlent point de secrets précieux ;
Beaux écrins sans joyaux, médaillons sans reliques,
Plus vides, plus profonds que vous-mêmes, ô Cieux !

Mais ne suffit-il pas que tu sois l'apparence,
Pour réjouir un coeur qui fuit la vérité ?
Qu'importe ta bêtise ou ton indifférence ?
Masque ou décor, salut ! J'adore ta beauté.

– Charles Baudelaire

The Love of Lies

When I see you pass by, my indolent darling,
To the sound of music that the ceiling deadens,
Pausing in your slow and harmonious movements,
Turning here and there the boredom of your gaze ;
When I study, in the gaslight which colors it,
Your pale forehead, embellished with a morbid charm,
Where the torches of evening kindle a dawn,
And your eyes alluring as a portrait's,
I say within : "How fair she is ! How strangely fresh !"
Huge, massive memory, royal, heavy tower,
Crowns her ; her heart bruised like a peach
Is ripe like her body for a skillful lover.
Are you the autumn fruit with sovereign taste ?
A funereal urn awaiting a few tears ?
Perfume that makes one dream of distant oases ?
A caressive pillow, a basket of flowers ?
I know that there are eyes, most melancholy ones,
In which no precious secrets lie hidden ;
Lovely cases without jewels, lockets without relics,
Emptier and deeper than you are, O Heavens !
But is it not enough that you are a semblance
To gladden a heart that flees from the truth ?
What matter your obtuseness or your indifference ?
Mask or ornament, hail ! I adore your beauty.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Love of Lies

Dear indolent, I love to watch you so,
While on the ceiling break the tunes of dances,
And hesitant, harmoniously slow,
You turn the wandering boredom of your glances.
I watch the gas-flares colouring your drawn,
Pale forehead, which a morbid charm enhances,
Where evening lamps illuminate a dawn
In eyes as of a painting that entrances :

And then I say, "She's fair and strangely fresh,
Whom memory crowns with lofty towers above.
Her heart is like a peach's murdered flesh,
Or like her own, most ripe for learned love."
Are you an autumn fruit of sovereign flavour ?
A funeral urn awaiting tearful showers ?
Of far oases the faint, wafted savour ?
A dreamy pillow ? or a sheaf of flowers ?
I have known deep, sad eyes that yet concealed
No secrets : caskets void of any gem :
Medallions where no sacred charm lay sealed,
Deep as the Skies, but vacuous like them !
It is enough that your appearance flatters,
Rejoicing one who flies from truth or duty.
Your listless, cold stupidity – what matters ?
Hail, mask or curtain, I adore your beauty !

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Je n'ai pas oublié, voisine de la ville

Je n'ai pas oublié, voisine de la ville

Je n'ai pas oublié, voisine de la ville,
Notre blanche maison, petite mais tranquille ;
Sa Pomone de plâtre et sa vieille Vénus
Dans un bosquet chétif cachant leurs membres nus,
Et le soleil, le soir, ruisselant et superbe,
Qui, derrière la vitre où se brisait sa gerbe
Semblait, grand oeil ouvert dans le ciel curieux,
Contempler nos dîners longs et silencieux,
Répandant largement ses beaux reflets de cierge
Sur la nappe frugale et les rideaux de serge.

– Charles Baudelaire

I Have Not Forgotten Our White Cottage

I have not forgotten our white cottage,
Small but peaceful, near the city,
Its plaster Pomona, its old Venus,
Hiding their bare limbs in a stunted grove.
In the evening streamed down the radiant sun,
That great eye which stares from the inquisitive sky.
From behind the window that scattered its bright rays
It seemed to gaze upon our long, quiet dinners,
Spreading wide its candle-like reflections
On the frugal table-cloth and the serge curtains.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Neighbouring on the City, I Recall

Neighbouring on the city, I recall
Our snow-white house, so full of peace and small :
The casts of Venus and Pomona too
Whose limbs a tiny thicket hid from view.
The sun at eve, cascading fire and gold,
Behind the glass, his sheaf of rays unrolled,
Then, like an eye, inquisitively seemed
To watch our long, hushed dinners as we dreamed ;
Like candle-flames his glories, as they poured,
Lit our serge curtains and our simple board.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

La servante au grand cœur dont vous étiez jalouse

La servante au grand cœur dont vous étiez jalouse

La servante au grand cœur dont vous étiez jalouse,
Et qui dort son sommeil sous une humble pelouse,
Nous devrions pourtant lui porter quelques fleurs.
Les morts, les pauvres morts, ont de grandes douleurs,
Et quand Octobre souffle, émondeur des vieux arbres,
Son vent mélancolique à l'entour de leurs marbres,
Certe, ils doivent trouver les vivants bien ingrats,
À dormir, comme ils font, chaudement dans leurs draps,
Tandis que, dévorés de noires songeries,
Sans compagnon de lit, sans bonnes causeries,
Vieux squelettes gelés travaillés par le ver,
Ils sentent s'égoutter les neiges de l'hiver
Et le siècle couler, sans qu'amis ni famille
Remplacent les lambeaux qui pendent à leur grille.
Lorsque la bûche siffle et chante, si le soir
Calme, dans le fauteuil je la voyais s'asseoir,
Si, par une nuit bleue et froide de décembre,
Je la trouvais tapie en un coin de ma chambre,
Grave, et venant du fond de son lit éternel
Couver l'enfant grandi de son oeil maternel,
Que pourrais-je répondre à cette âme pieuse,
Voyant tomber des pleurs de sa paupière creuse ?

– Charles Baudelaire

The Kind-Hearted Servant of Whom You Were Jealous

The kind-hearted servant of whom you were jealous,
Who sleeps her sleep beneath a humble plot of grass,
We must by all means take her some flowers.
The dead, ah ! the poor dead suffer great pains,
And when October, the pruner of old trees, blows
His melancholy breath about their marble tombs,
Surely they must think the living most ungrateful,
To sleep, as they do, between warm, white sheets,
While, devoured by gloomy reveries,
Without bedfellows, without pleasant causeries,
Old, frozen skeletons, belabored by the worm,
They feel the drip of winter's snow,
The passing of the years ; nor friends, nor family
Replace the dead flowers that hang on their tombs.
If, some evening, when the fire-log whistles and sings
I saw her sit down calmly in the great armchair,
If, on a cold, blue night in December,
I found her ensconced in a corner of my room,
Grave, having come from her eternal bed
Maternally to watch over her grown-up child,
What could I reply to that pious soul,
Seeing tears fall from her hollow eyelids ?

– William Aggeler, 1954

Now the Great-Hearted Servant, Who Aroused

Now the great-hearted servant, who aroused
Your jealousy, in humble earth is housed,
Let's take, at least, some flowers for her relief.
The dead, the piteous dead, know piercing grief,
And when October blows, to prune old trees,
And whistles round the marble where they freeze,
How thankless then we living must appear
Between warm sheets to sleep in comfort here,
While, eaten by black dreams, they lie in woe
Warm bedmates and their gossip to forego,

Frostbitten skeletons, tunneled by vermin,
To bear the moulting drip of Winter's ermine,
For ages, with no friends nor kindred there
The tatters on their railings to repair.
On evenings when the hearthlogs hiss and flare
Were I to see her calmly take her chair :
Or, in the calm and blue December gloom,
Huddle within the corner of my room,
Gravely returning from her bed eternal
To tend this grown-up child with the maternal
Care of old times – how could I then reply
To see the tears roll from each hollow eye ?

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Brumes et pluies

Brumes et pluies

Ô fins d'automne, hivers, printemps trempés de boue,
Endormeuses saisons ! je vous aime et vous loue
D'envelopper ainsi mon cœur et mon cerveau
D'un linceul vaporeux et d'un vague tombeau.
Dans cette grande plaine où l'autan froid se joue,
Où par les longues nuits la girouette s'enroue,
Mon âme mieux qu'au temps du tiède renouveau
Ouvrira largement ses ailes de corbeau.
Rien n'est plus doux au cœur plein de choses funèbres,
Et sur qui dès longtemps descendant les frimas,
Ô blafardes saisons, reines de nos climats,
Que l'aspect permanent de vos pâles ténèbres,
– Si ce n'est, par un soir sans lune, deux à deux,
D'endormir la douleur sur un lit hasardeux.

– Charles Baudelaire

Mist and Rain

O ends of autumn, winters, springtimes drenched with mud,
Seasons that lull to sleep ! I love you, I praise you
For enfolding my heart and mind thus
In a misty shroud and a filmy tomb.
On that vast plain where the cold south wind plays,
Where in the long, dark nights the weather-cock grows hoarse,
My soul spreads wide its raven wings
More easily than in the warm springtide.
Nothing is sweeter to a gloomy heart

On which the hoar-frost has long been falling,
Than the permanent aspect of your pale shadows,
O wan seasons, queens of our clime
– Unless it be to deaden suffering, side by side
In a casual bed, on a moonless night.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Mist and Rain

O Autumns, Winters, Springs ! Seasons of mire !
Soul-drowsing times ! I love you. Take my praise
For shrouding thus my heart and brain entire
In a vague tomb and winding-sheet of haze.
Through the long nights when the south-wester swings
The rusty vanes that shriek upon the towers,
My soul can fully stretch its raven wings
More easily than in the warmer hours.
Nothing is sweeter to funereal hearts
On whom the frost of ages has been laid –
Wan seasons, when you queen it round these parts, –
Than the eternal sight of your pale shade :
Unless on moonless midnights, pair by pair,
To lull, upon chance beds, our hearts' despair.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Rêve parisien (1861)

Rêve parisien

À Constantin Guys

I

De ce terrible paysage,
Tel que jamais mortel n'en vit,
Ce matin encore l'image,
Vague et lointaine, me ravit.
Le sommeil est plein de miracles !
Par un caprice singulier
J'avais banni de ces spectacles
Le végétal irrégulier,
Et, peintre fier de mon génie,
Je savourais dans mon tableau
L'enivrante monotonie
Du métal, du marbre et de l'eau.
Babel d'escaliers et d'arcades,
C'était un palais infini
Plein de bassins et de cascades
Tombant dans l'or mat ou bruni ;
Et des cataractes pesantes,
Comme des rideaux de cristal
Se suspendaient, éblouissantes,
À des murailles de métal.
Non d'arbres, mais de colonnades
Les étangs dormants s'entouraient
Où de gigantesques naïades,
Comme des femmes, se miraient.
Des nappes d'eau s'épanchaient, bleues,

Entre des quais roses et verts,
Pendant des millions de lieues,
Vers les confins de l'univers :
C'étaient des pierres inouïes
Et des flots magiques, c'étaient
D'immenses glaces éblouies
Par tout ce qu'elles reflétaient !
Insouciants et taciturnes,
Des Ganges, dans le firmament,
Versaient le trésor de leurs urnes
Dans des gouffres de diamant.
Architecte de mes féeries,
Je faisais, à ma volonté,
Sous un tunnel de pierreries
Passer un océan dompté ;
Et tout, même la couleur noire,
Semblait fourbi, clair, irisé ;
Le liquide enchâssait sa gloire
Dans le rayon cristallisé.
Nul astre d'ailleurs, nuls vestiges
De soleil, même au bas du ciel,
Pour illuminer ces prodiges,
Qui brillaient d'un feu personnel !
Et sur ces mouvantes merveilles
Planait (terrible nouveauté !
Tout pour l'oeil, rien pour les oreilles !)
Un silence d'éternité.

II

En rouvrant mes yeux pleins de flamme
J'ai vu l'horreur de mon taudis,
Et senti, rentrant dans mon âme,
La pointe des soucis maudits ;
La pendule aux accents funèbres
Sonnait brutalement midi,
Et le ciel versait des ténèbres
Sur le triste monde engourdi.

– Charles Baudelaire

Parisian Dream

To Constantin Guys

I

This morning I am still entranced
By the image, distant and dim,
Of that awe-inspiring landscape
Such as no mortal ever saw.

Sleep is full of miracles !
Obeying a curious whim,
I had banned from that spectacle
Irregular vegetation,
And, painter proud of his genius,
I savored in my picture
The delightful monotony
Of water, marble, and metal.

Babel of arcades and stairways,
It was a palace infinite,
Full of basins and of cascades
Falling on dull or burnished gold,
And heavy waterfalls,
Like curtains of crystal,
Were hanging, bright and resplendent,
From ramparts of metal.

Not with trees but with colonnades
The sleeping ponds were encircled ;
In these mirrors huge naiads
Admired themselves like women.

Streams of blue water flowed along
Between rose and green embankments,
Stretching away millions of leagues
Toward the end of the universe ;
There were indescribable stones
And magic waves ; there were
Enormous glaciers bedazzled
By everything they reflected !
Insouciant and taciturn,
Ganges, in the firmament,

Poured out the treasure of their urns
Into chasms made of diamonds.
Architect of my fairyland,
Whenever it pleased me I made
A vanquished ocean flow
Into a tunnel of jewels ;
And all, even the color black,
Seemed polished, bright, iridescent,
Liquid enchased its own glory
In the crystallized rays of light.
Moreover, no star, no glimmer
Of sun, even at the sky's rim,
Illuminated these marvels
That burned with a personal fire !
And over these shifting wonders
Hovered (terrible novelty !
All for the eye, naught for the ear !)
The silence of eternity.

II

Opening my eyes full of flames
I saw my miserable room
And felt the cursed blade of care
Sink deep into my heart again ;
The clock with its death-like accent
Was brutally striking noon ;
The sky was pouring down its gloom
Upon the dismal, torpid world.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Parisian Dream

To Constantin Guys

I

Of the dread landscape that I saw,
Where human eyes were never set,
I still am ravished by the awe

That, vague and distant, haunts me yet.
Sleep is of miracles so faint
That I (O singular caprice !)
As being formless, could obtain
That vegetable life should cease.

A painter, in my genius free,
I there exulted in the fettle
Derived from a monotony
Composed of marble, lymph, and metal.
Babels of stairways and arcades,
Endless and topless to behold,
With ponds, and jets, and steep cascades
Filling receptacles of gold :

Ponderous cataracts there swung
Like crystal curtains, foaming shawls –
Dazzling and glittering they hung
Suspended from the metal walls.

Not trees, but colonnades, enclosed
Motionless lakes, besides whose shelves
Gigantic naiades reposed,
Like women, gazing at themselves.

Blue sheets of water interlay
Unnumbered quays of green and rose,
That stretched a million leagues away
To where the bounds of space impose.

'Twas formed of unknown stones that blazed
And magic waves that intersect,
Where icebergs floated, seeming dazed
With all they mirror and reflect.

Impassive, cold, and taciturn,
Great Ganges, through the sky's vast prism,
Each poured the treasures of its urn
Into a diamond abysm.

Architect of my fairy scene,
I willed, by wondrous stratagems,
An ocean, tamed, to pass between
A tunnel that was made of gems.

There all things, even the colour black,
Seemed iridescently to play,

And liquid crystallised its lack
Of outline in a frozen ray.
No star, no sun could be discerned,
Even low down, in that vast sky :
The fire was personal that burned
To show these marvels to the eye.
Above these moving wonders sheer
There soared (that such a thing should be !
All for the eye, none for the ear !)
A silence of eternity.

II

My opening eyes, as red as coal,
The horror of my lodging met.
I felt re-entering my soul
The knife of cares and vain regret.
The clock with brutal accent played
Funereal chimes. The time was noon
And heaven covered, with its shade,
The world, this fatuous balloon !

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Crépuscule du matin

Le Crépuscule du matin

La diane chantait dans les cours des casernes,
Et le vent du matin soufflait sur les lanternes.
C'était l'heure où l'essaim des rêves malfaisants
Tord sur leurs oreillers les bruns adolescents ;
Où, comme un oeil sanglant qui palpite et qui bouge,
La lampe sur le jour fait une tache rouge ;
Où l'âme, sous le poids du corps revêche et lourd,
Imite les combats de la lampe et du jour.
Comme un visage en pleurs que les brises essuient,
L'air est plein du frisson des choses qui s'enfuient,
Et l'homme est las d'écrire et la femme d'aimer.
Les maisons ça et là commençaient à fumer.
Les femmes de plaisir, la paupière livide,
Bouche ouverte, dormaient de leur sommeil stupide ;
Les pauvresses, traînant leurs seins maigres et froids,
Soufflaient sur leurs tisons et soufflaient sur leurs doigts.
C'était l'heure où parmi le froid et la lésine
S'aggravent les douleurs des femmes en gésine ;
Comme un sanglot coupé par un sang écumeux
Le chant du coq au loin déchirait l'air brumeux
Une mer de brouillards baignait les édifices,
Et les agonisants dans le fond des hospices
Poussaient leur dernier râle en hoquets inégaux.
Les débauchés rentraient, brisés par leurs travaux.
L'aurore grelottante en robe rose et verte
S'avancait lentement sur la Seine déserte,
Et le sombre Paris, en se frottant les yeux
Empoignait ses outils, vieillard laborieux.

– Charles Baudelaire

Dawn

They were sounding reveille in the barracks' yards,
And the morning wind was blowing on the lanterns.
It was the hour when swarms of harmful dreams
Make the sun-tanned adolescents toss in their beds ;
When, like a bloody eye that twitches and rolls,
The lamp makes a red splash against the light of day ;
When the soul within the heavy, fretful body
Imitates the struggle of the lamp and the sun.
Like a tear-stained face being dried by the breeze,
The air is full of the shudders of things that flee,
And man is tired of writing and woman of making love.
Here and there the houses were beginning to smoke.
The ladies of pleasure, with eyelids yellow-green
And mouths open, were sleeping their stupefied sleep ;
The beggar-women, their breasts hanging thin and cold,
Were blowing on their fires, blowing on their fingers.
It was the hour when amid poverty and cold
The pains of women in labor grow more cruel ;
The cock's crow in the distance tore the foggy air
Like a sob stifled by a bloody froth ;
The buildings were enveloped in a sea of mist,
And in the charity-wards, the dying
Hiccupped their death-sobs at uneven intervals.
The rakes were going home, exhausted by their work.
The dawn, shivering in her green and rose garment,
Was moving slowly along the deserted Seine,
And somber Paris, the industrious old man,
Was rubbing his eyes and gathering up his tools.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Morning Twilight

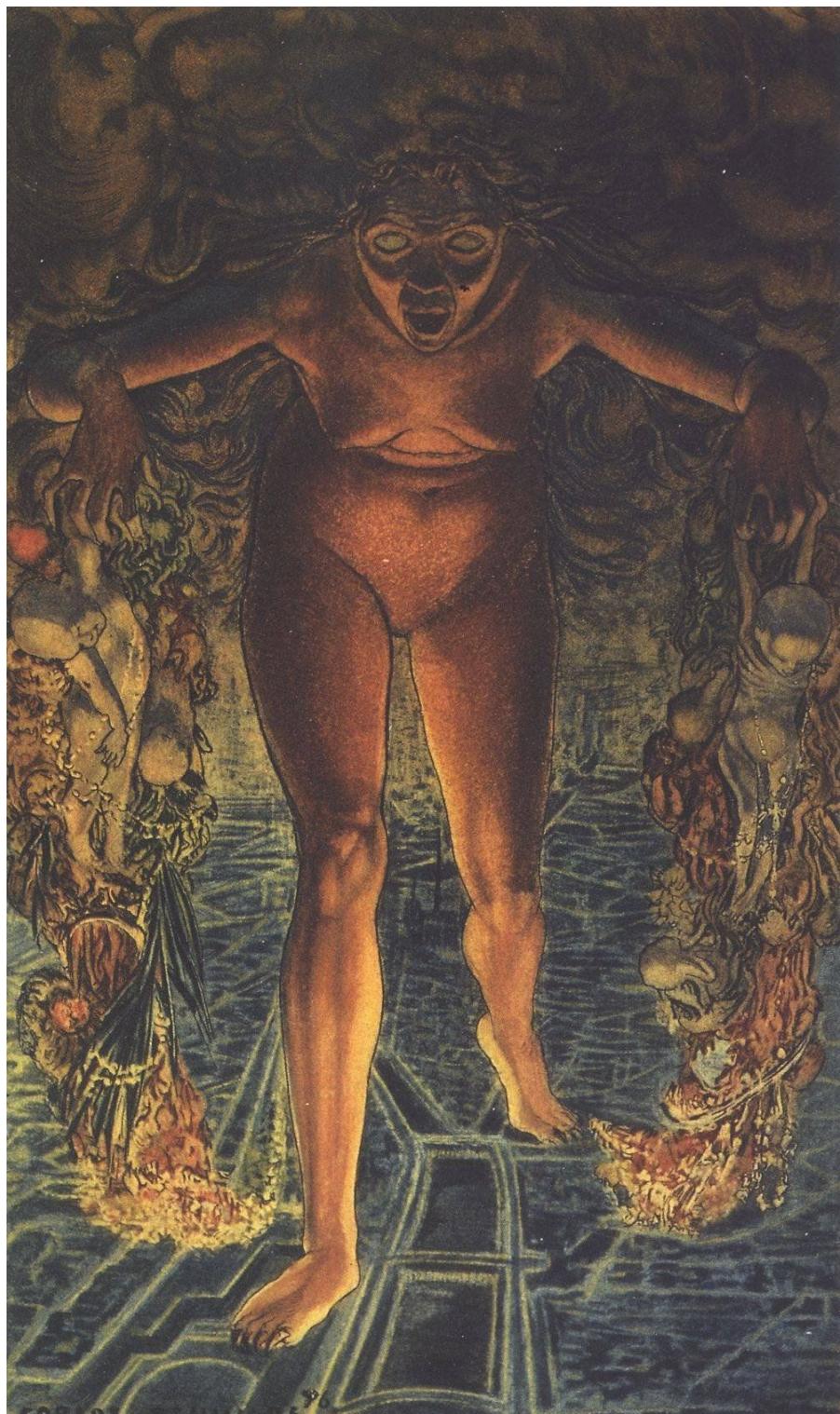
Reveille in the barracks and the camps.
The wind of morning blew upon the lamps.
It was the hour when evil dreams in swarms
On pillows twist brown, adolescent forms :
When like a bleeding eye that's twitched with pain

Each lantern smudged the day with crimson stain :
The soul, against its body's weight of brawn,
Lay struggling, like the lanterns with the dawn :
Like a sad face whose tears the breezes dry
The air grew tremulous with things that fly,
And women tired of love, and men of writing.

The chimneys, here and there, showed fires were lighting.
Women of pleasure, slumber to be-slut,
Lay open-mouthed with livid eyelids shut.
Dangling thin dugs, cold pauper-women blew
Upon the embers and their fingers too.
It was the hour when, what with cold and squalor,
Women in labour aggravate their dolour,
And like a sob, choked short with bloody froth,
The cock-crow tore the foggy air as cloth.

Like seas the mists round every building poured
While agonising patients in the ward,
In broken hiccoughs, rattled out their lives :
And worn-out rakes reeled homeward to their wives.
Aurora, in a shift of rose and green,
Came shivering down the Seine's deserted scene
And Paris, as he rubbed his eyes, began
To sort his tools, laborious old man.

– Roy Campbell, 1952



LE VIN
WINE

L'Ame du Vin

L'Ame du Vin

Un soir, l'âme du vin chantait dans les bouteilles :
« Homme, vers toi je pousse, ô cher déshérité,
Sous ma prison de verre et mes cires vermeilles,
Un chant plein de lumière et de fraternité !

Je sais combien il faut, sur la colline en flamme,
De peine, de sueur et de soleil cuisant
Pour engendrer ma vie et pour me donner l'âme ;
Mais je ne serai point ingrat ni malfaisant,

Car j'éprouve une joie immense quand je tombe
Dans le gosier d'un homme usé par ses travaux,
Et sa chaude poitrine est une douce tombe
Où je me plais bien mieux que dans mes froids caveaux.

Entends-tu retentir les refrains des dimanches
Et l'espoir qui gazouille en mon sein palpitant ?
Les coudes sur la table et retroussant tes manches,
Tu me glorifieras et tu seras content ;

J'allumerai les yeux de ta femme ravie ;
À ton fils je rendrai sa force et ses couleurs
Et serai pour ce frêle athlète de la vie
L'huile qui raffermit les muscles des lutteurs.

En toi je tomberai, végétale ambroisie,
Grain précieux jeté par l'éternel Semeur,
Pour que de notre amour naisse la poésie
Qui jaillira vers Dieu comme une rare fleur ! »

– Charles Baudelaire

The Soul of Wine

One night, the soul of wine was singing in the flask :
"O man, dear disinherited ! to you I sing
This song full of light and of brotherhood
From my prison of glass with its scarlet wax seals.
I know the cost in pain, in sweat,
And in burning sunlight on the blazing hillside,
Of creating my life, of giving me a soul :
I shall not be ungrateful or malevolent,
For I feel a boundless joy when I flow
Down the throat of a man worn out by his labor ;
His warm breast is a pleasant tomb
Where I'm much happier than in my cold cellar.
Do you hear the choruses resounding on Sunday
And the hopes that warble in my fluttering breast ?
With sleeves rolled up, elbows on the table,
You will glorify me and be content ;
I shall light up the eyes of your enraptured wife,
And give back to your son his strength and his color ;
I shall be for that frail athlete of life
The oil that hardens a wrestler's muscles.
Vegetal ambrosia, precious grain scattered
By the eternal Sower, I shall descend in you
So that from our love there will be born poetry,
Which will spring up toward God like a rare flower !"

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Soul of Wine

One night the wine was singing in the bottles :
"Mankind, dear waif, I send to you, in spite
Of prisoning glass and rosy wax that throttles,
A song that's full of brotherhood and light.
I know what toil, and pain, and sweat you thole,
Under the roasting sun on slopes of fire,
To give me life and to beget my soul –
So I will not be thankless to my sire,

Because I feel a wondrous joy to dive
Down, clown the throat of some work-wearied slave.
His warm chest is a tomb wherein I thrive
Better than in my subterranean cave.
Say, can you hear that rousing catch resound
Which hope within my beating heart sings high ?
(With elbows on the table, sprawl around,
Contented hearts ! my name to glorify.)
I'll light the eyes of your delighted wife.
Your son I'll give both rosy health and muscle
And be to that frail athlete of this life
Like oil that primes the wrestler for the tussle,
In you I fall, ambrosia from above,
Sown by the hand of the eternal Power,
That poetry may blossom from our love
And rear to God its rare and deathless flower !"

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Vin de chiffonniers

Le Vin de chiffonniers

Souvent à la clarté rouge d'un réverbère
Dont le vent bat la flamme et tourmente le verre,
Au cœur d'un vieux faubourg, labyrinthe fangeux
Où l'humanité grouille en fermentes orageux,
On voit un chiffonnier qui vient, hochant la tête,
Butant, et se cognant aux murs comme un poète,
Et, sans prendre souci des mouchards, ses sujets,
Epanche tout son cœur en glorieux projets.
Il prête des serments, dicte des lois sublimes,
Terrasse les méchants, relève les victimes,
Et sous le firmament comme un dais suspendu
S'enivre des splendeurs de sa propre vertu.
Oui, ces gens harcelés de chagrins de ménage
Moulus par le travail et tourmentés par l'âge
Ereintés et pliant sous un tas de débris,
Vomissement confus de l'énorme Paris,
Reviennent, parfumés d'une odeur de futailles,
Suivis de compagnons, blanchis dans les batailles,
Dont la moustache pend comme les vieux drapeaux.
Les bannières, les fleurs et les arcs triomphaux
Se dressent devant eux, solennelle magie !
Et dans l'étourdissante et lumineuse orgie
Des clairons, du soleil, des cris et du tambour,
Ils apportent la gloire au peuple ivre d'amour !
C'est ainsi qu'à travers l'Humanité frivole
Le vin roule de l'or, éblouissant Pactole ;
Par le gosier de l'homme il chante ses exploits
Et règne par ses dons ainsi que les vrais rois.

Pour noyer la rancœur et bercer l'indolence
De tous ces vieux maudits qui meurent en silence,
Dieu, touché de remords, avait fait le sommeil ;
L'Homme ajouta le Vin, fils sacré du Soleil !

– Charles Baudelaire

The Rag-Picker's Wine

Often, in the red light of a street-lamp
Of which the wind whips the flame and worries the glass,
In the heart of some old suburb, muddy labyrinth,
Where humanity crawls in a seething ferment,
One sees a rag-picker go by, shaking his head,
Stumbling, bumping against the walls like a poet,
And, with no thought of the stool-pigeons, his subjects,
He pours out his whole heart in grandiose projects.
He takes oaths, dictates sublime laws,
Lays low the wicked and succors victims ;
Beneath the firmament spread like a canopy
He gets drunk with the splendor of his own virtues.
Yes, these people harassed by domestic worries,
Ground down by their work, distorted by age,
Worn-out, and bending beneath a load of debris,
The commingled vomit of enormous Paris,
Come back, smelling of the wine-cask,
Followed by companions whitened by their battles,
And whose moustaches bang down like old flags ;
Banners, flowers, and triumphal arches
Rise up before them, a solemn magic !
And in the deafening, brilliant orgy
Of clarions and drums, of sunlight and of shouts,
They bring glory to the crowd drunk with love !
It is thus that throughout frivolous Humanity
Wine, the dazzling Pactolus, carries flakes of gold ;
By the throats of men he sings his exploits
And reigns by his gifts like a veritable king.
To drown the bitterness and lull the indolence
Of all these accurst old men who die in silence,

God, touched with remorse, had created sleep ;
Man added Wine, divine child of the Sun !

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Wine of the Rag Pickers

Often, in some red street-lamp's glare, whose flame
The wind flaps, rattling at its glassy frame,
In the mired labyrinth of some old slum
Where crawling multitudes ferment their scum –
With judge-like nods, a rag-picker comes reeling,
Bumping on walls, like poets, without feeling,
And scorning cops, now vassals of his state,
Begins on glorious subjects to dilate,
Takes royal oaths, dictates his laws sublime,
Exalts the injured, and chastises crime,
And, spreading his own dais on the sky,
Is dazzled by his virtues, starred on high.
Yes, these folk, badgered by domestic care,
Ground down by toil, decrepitude, despair,
Buckled beneath the foul load that each carries,
The motley vomit of enormous Paris –
Come home, vat-scented, trailing clouds of glory,
Followed by veteran comrades, battle-hoary,
Whose whiskers stream like banners as each marches.
– Flags, torches, flowers, and steep triumphal arches
Rise up for them in magic hues and burn,
Since through this dazzling orgy they return,
While drums and clarions daze the sun above,
With glory to a nation drunk with love !
Thus Wine, through giddy human life, is rolled,
Like Pactolus, a stream of burning gold ;
Through man's own throat his exploits it will sing
And reign by gifts, as best befits a king.
To lull their laziness and drown their rancour,
For storm-tossed wrecks a temporary anchor,
God, in remorse, made sleep. Man added Wine,
Child of the Sun, immortal and divine !

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Vin de l'assassin

Le Vin de l'assassin

Ma femme est morte, je suis libre !
Je puis donc boire tout mon soûl.
Lorsque je rentrais sans un sou,
Ses cris me déchiraient la fibre.
Autant qu'un roi je suis heureux ;
L'air est pur, le ciel admirable...
Nous avions un été semblable
Lorsque j'en devins amoureux !
L'horrible soif qui me déchire
Aurait besoin pour s'assouvir
D'autant de vin qu'en peut tenir
Son tombeau ; – ce n'est pas peu dire :
Je l'ai jetée au fond d'un puits,
Et j'ai même poussé sur elle
Tous les pavés de la margelle.
– Je l'oublierai si je le puis !
Au nom des serments de tendresse,
Dont rien ne peut nous délier,
Et pour nous réconcilier
Comme au beau temps de notre ivresse,
J'implorai d'elle un rendez-vous,
Le soir, sur une route obscure.
Elle y vint – folle créature !
Nous sommes tous plus ou moins fous !
Elle était encore jolie,
Quoique bien fatiguée ! et moi,
Je l'aimais trop ! voilà pourquoi
Je lui dis : Sors de cette vie !

Nul ne peut me comprendre. Un seul
Parmi ces ivrognes stupides
Songea-t-il dans ses nuits morbides
À faire du vin un linceul ?
Cette crapule invulnérable
Comme les machines de fer
Jamais, ni l'été ni l'hiver,
N'a connu l'amour véritable,
Avec ses noirs enchantements,
Son cortège infernal d'alarmes,
Ses fioles de poison, ses larmes,
Ses bruits de chaîne et d'ossements !
– Me voilà libre et solitaire !
Je serai ce soir ivre mort ;
Alors, sans peur et sans remords,
Je me coucherai sur la terre,
Et je dormirai comme un chien !
Le chariot aux lourdes roues
Chargé de pierres et de boues,
Le wagon enragé peut bien
Ecraser ma tête coupable
Ou me couper par le milieu,
Je m'en moque comme de Dieu,
Du Diable ou de la Sainte Table !

– Charles Baudelaire

The Murderer's Wine

My wife is dead and I am free !
Now I can drink my fill ;
When I'd come home without a sou,
Her screaming would drive me crazy.
I am as happy as a king ;
The air is pure, the sky superb...
We had a summer like this
When I fell in love with her !
To satisfy the awful thirst
That tortures me, I'd have to drink

All the wine it would take to fill
Her grave – that is not a little :
I threw her down a well,
And what is more, I dropped on her
All the stones of the well's rim.
I will forget her if I can !
In the name of love's vows,
From which nothing can release us,
And to become the friends we were
When we first knew passion's rapture,
I begged of her a rendezvous
At night, on a deserted road.
She came there ! – mad creature !
We're all more or less mad !
She was still attractive,
Although very tired ! and I,
I loved her too much ! that is why
I said to her : Depart this life !
None can understand me. Did one
Among all those stupid drunkards
Ever dream in his morbid nights
Of making a shroud of wine ?
That dissolute crowd, unfeeling
As an iron machine,
Never, nor summer, nor winter,
Has known what true love is,
With its black enchantments,
Its hellish cortège of alarms,
Its phials of poison, and its tears,
Its noise of chains and dead men's bones !
– Here I am free and all alone !
I'll get blind drunk tonight ;
Then without fear, without remorse,
I'll lie down on the ground
And I'll sleep like a dog !
The dump-cart with its heavy wheels
Loaded with mud and rocks,
The careening wagon may well
Crush in my guilty head

Or cut my body in two ;
I laugh at God, at the Devil,
And at the Holy Table as well !

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Wine of the Murderer

My wife is dead. I'm free. From hence
I'll drink my fill, and that's the truth !
Each time I came back with no pence,
Her screechings drilled me like a tooth.

Now I'm as happy as a king...
Air pure, a cloudless sky above.
I can remember such a thing
The summer that we fell in love.

To quench the thirst that tears my throat
It would require the vats to flow
Enough to set her tomb afloat –
And that's no thimbleful, oh no !

I threw her in a well to drown,
With the walled rocks that round it stood,
To keep her there, and hold her down –
I would forget her if I could !

Pleading our early tender vows,
Which naught could break for evermore,
To reconcile us, spouse to spouse,
In the same raptures as before –

I begged of her a rendezvous
One evening in a gloomy lane.
She came – a crazy thing to do !
We all are more-or-less insane !

She still was quite attractive, though
A little tired and ill : and I
Still loved her more than ever : so
I said, "Get out of life, and die !"

None understand me. Could a single
"Drunk" of the stupid sort design,
On morbid nights, by his own ingle,

To make a winding sheet of wine ?
Of dense invulnerable stuff,
Like engines built to shunt or shove,
They've never known, through smooth or rough,
The veritable power of love,
its black enchantments, fiery trials,
Processions of infernal pains,
Its burning tears, its poison phials,
Its rattling bones, and jingling chains.
Now I am free and all alone.
Tonight I'll get dead-drunk, of course.
My head I'll pillow on a stone
Without repentance or remorse.
And there I'll sleep like any dog.
The lumbering cart with massive wheels
Piled up with stones, or peat, or bog,
Or hurtling wagon, as it reels
May crush my skull in, like a clod,
Or halve me at the crossing-level.
I'd care as little as for God,
The Ten Commandments, or the Devil.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Vin du solitaire

Le Vin du solitaire

Le regard singulier d'une femme galante
Qui se glisse vers nous comme le rayon blanc
Que la lune onduleuse envoie au lac tremblant,
Quand elle y veut baigner sa beauté nonchalante ;
Le dernier sac d'écus dans les doigts d'un joueur ;
Un baiser libertin de la maigre Adeline ;
Les sons d'une musique énervante et câline,
Semblable au cri lointain de l'humaine douleur,
Tout cela ne vaut pas, ô bouteille profonde,
Les baumes pénétrants que ta panse féconde
Garde au cœur altéré du poète pieux ;
Tu lui verses l'espoir, la jeunesse et la vie,
– Et l'orgueil, ce trésor de toute gueuserie,
Qui nous rend triomphants et semblables aux Dieux !

– Charles Baudelaire

The Wine of the Solitary

The strange look of a lady of pleasure
Turned slyly toward us like the white beam
Which the undulous moon casts on the trembling lake
When she wishes to bathe her nonchalant beauty ;
The last bag of crowns between a gambler's fingers ;
A lustful kiss from slender Adeline ;
The sound of music, tormenting and caressing,
Resembling the distant cry of a man in pain,
All that is not worth, O deep, deep bottle,

The penetrating balm that your fruitful belly
Holds for the thirsty heart of the pious poet ;
You pour out for him hope, and youth, and life
– And pride, the treasure of all beggary,
Which makes us triumphant and equal to the gods !

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Wine of the Solitary Man

The love-glance of a courtesan that swims
With undulating ray like that the moon
Sends to the waiting, tremulous lagoon
Where she's about to lave her languid limbs :
The last few florins in a gambler's fingers :
The lustful kiss of slender Adeline :
A haunting tune that wheedles and malingers,
Wherein all human anguish seems to pine :
All these aren't worth, O bottle kind and deep,
The penetrating balms that swell your paunch
The pious poet's wounded heart to staunch.
You pour him hope, youth, life, and healing sleep –
And pride, all Beggary's diadem and treasure,
By which our triumphs with the Gods' we measure.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Vin des amants

Le Vin des amants

Aujourd’hui l’espace est splendide !
Sans mors, sans éperons, sans bride,
Partons à cheval sur le vin
Pour un ciel féerique et divin !
Comme deux anges que torture
Une implacable calenture
Dans le bleu cristal du matin
Suivons le mirage lointain !
Mollement balancés sur l’aile
Du tourbillon intelligent,
Dans un délire parallèle,
Ma soeur, côté à côté nageant,
Nous fuirons sans repos ni trêves
Vers le paradis de mes rêves !

– Charles Baudelaire

The Wine of Lovers

Today space is magnificent !
Without bridle or bit or spurs
Let us ride away on wine
To a divine, fairy-like heaven !
Like two angels who are tortured
By a relentless delirium,
Let us follow the far mirage
Through the crystal blue of the morning !
Gently balanced upon the wings

Of the intelligent whirlwind,
In a similar ecstasy,
My sister, floating side by side,
We'll flee without ever stopping
To the paradise of my dreams !

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Wine of Lovers

Oh, what a splendour fills all space !
Without bit, spur, or rein to race,
Let's gallop on the steeds of wine
To heavens magic and divine !

Now like two angels off the track,
Whom wild relentless fevers rack,
On through the morning's crystal blue
The swift mirages we'll pursue.

Now softly poised upon the wings
That a sagacious cyclone brings,
In parallel delirium twinned,
While side by side we surf the wind,
We'll never cease from such extremes,
To seek the Eden of our dreams !

– Roy Campbell, 1952



FLEURS DU MAL

FLOWERS OF EVIL

Épigraphie pour un livre condamné (1868)

Épigraphie pour un livre condamné

Lecteur paisible et bucolique,
Sobre et naïf homme de bien,
Jette ce livre saturnien,
Orgiaque et mélancolique.
Si tu n'as fait ta rhétorique
Chez Satan, le rusé doyen,
Jette ! tu n'y comprendrais rien,
Ou tu me croirais hystérique.
Mais si, sans se laisser charmer,
Ton oeil sait plonger dans les gouffres,
Lis-moi, pour apprendre à m'aimer ;
Âme curieuse qui souffres
Et vas cherchant ton paradis,
Plains-moi !... Sinon, je te maudis !

– Charles Baudelaire

Epigraph for a Condemned Book

Quiet and bucolic reader,
Upright man, sober and naive,
Throw away this book, saturnine,
Orgiac and melancholy.
If you did not do your rhetoric
With Satan, that artful dean,
Throw it away, you'd grasp nothing,

Or else think me hysterical.
But if, without being entranced,
Your eye can plunge in the abyss,
Read me, to learn to love me ;
Inquisitive soul that suffers
And keeps on seeking paradise,
Pity me !... or else, I curse you !

– William Aggeler, 1954

Epigraph for a Condemned Book

Dear reader, peaceful and bucolic,
Ingenuous, sober, hierophantic,
Lay by this book so corybantic,
So Saturnine, and melancholic.
If elsewhere than in Satan's school
You learned your syntax and your grammar,
Lay by ! You'll think I rave and stammer
And am a stark, hysterical fool.
But if, not yielding to their charm,
Your eye can plumb the gulfs of harm –
Then learn to love me, read my verses.
Inquiring sufferer, who seek
Your Paradise, to you I speak :
Pity me !... else, receive my curses !

– Roy Campbell, 1952

La Destruction

La Destruction

Sans cesse à mes côtés s'agit le Démon ;
Il nage autour de moi comme un air impalpable ;
Je l'avale et le sens qui brûle mon poumon
Et l'emplit d'un désir éternel et coupable.
Parfois il prend, sachant mon grand amour de l'Art,
La forme de la plus séduisante des femmes,
Et, sous de spécieux prétextes de cafard,
Accoutume ma lèvre à des philtres infâmes.
Il me conduit ainsi, loin du regard de Dieu,
Haletant et brisé de fatigue, au milieu
Des plaines de l'Ennui, profondes et désertes,
Et jette dans mes yeux pleins de confusion
Des vêtements souillés, des blessures ouvertes,
Et l'appareil sanglant de la Destruction !

– Charles Baudelaire

Destruction

The Demon is always moving about at my side ;
He floats about me like an impalpable air ;
I swallow him, I feel him burn my lungs
And fill them with an eternal, sinful desire.
Sometimes, knowing my deep love for Art, he assumes
The form of a most seductive woman,
And, with pretexts specious and hypocritical,
Accustoms my lips to infamous philtres.
He leads me thus, far from the sight of God,

Panting and broken with fatigue, into the midst
Of the plains of Ennui, endless and deserted,
And thrusts before my eyes full of bewilderment,
Dirty filthy garments and open, gaping wounds,
And all the bloody instruments of Destruction !

– William Aggeler, 1954

Destruction

Always the Demon fidgets here beside me
And swims around, impalpable as air :
I drink him, feel him burn the lungs inside me
With endless evil longings and despair.
Sometimes, knowing my love of Art, he uses
Seductive forms of women : and has thus,
With specious, hypocritical excuses,
Accustomed me to philtres infamous.
Leading me wayworn into wastes untrod
Of boundless Boredom, out of sight of God,
Using all baits to compass my abduction,
Into my eyes, confused and full of woe,
Soiled clothes and bleeding gashes he will throw
And all the grim regalia of Destruction.

– Roy Campbell, 1952



Une Martyre

Une Martyre

Dessin d'un Maître inconnu

Au milieu des flacons, des étoffes lamées
Et des meubles voluptueux,
Des marbres, des tableaux, des robes parfumées
Qui traînent à plis somptueux,
Dans une chambre tiède où, comme en une serre,
L'air est dangereux et fatal,
Où des bouquets mourants dans leurs cercueils de verre
Exhalent leur soupir final,
Un cadavre sans tête épanche, comme un fleuve,
Sur l'oreiller désaltéré
Un sang rouge et vivant, dont la toile s'abreuve
Avec l'avidité d'un pré.
Semblable aux visions pâles qu'enfante l'ombre
Et qui nous enchaînent les yeux,
La tête, avec l'amas de sa crinière sombre
Et de ses bijoux précieux,
Sur la table de nuit, comme une renoncule,
Repose ; et, vide de pensers,
Un regard vague et blanc comme le crépuscule
S'échappe des yeux révulsés.
Sur le lit, le tronc nu sans scrupules étale
Dans le plus complet abandon
La secrète splendeur et la beauté fatale
Dont la nature lui fit don ;
Un bas rosâtre, orné de coins d'or, à la jambe,
Comme un souvenir est resté ;
La jarretière, ainsi qu'un oeil secret qui flambe,

Darde un regard diamanté.
Le singulier aspect de cette solitude
Et d'un grand portrait langoureux,
Aux yeux provocateurs comme son attitude,
Révèle un amour ténébreux,
Une coupable joie et des fêtes étranges
Pleines de baisers infernaux,
Dont se réjouissait l'essaim des mauvais anges
Nageant dans les plis des rideaux ;
Et cependant, à voir la maigre élégante
De l'épaule au contour heurté,
La hanche un peu pointue et la taille fringante
Ainsi qu'un reptile irrité,
Elle est bien jeune encor ! – Son âme exaspérée
Et ses sens par l'ennui mordus
S'étaient-ils entr'ouverts à la meute altérée
Des désirs errants et perdus ?
L'homme vindicatif que tu n'as pu, vivante,
Malgré tant d'amour, assouvir,
Combla-t-il sur ta chair inerte et complaisante
L'immensité de son désir ?
Réponds, cadavre impur ! et par tes tresses roides
Te soulevant d'un bras fiévreux,
Dis-moi, tête effrayante, a-t-il sur tes dents froides
Collé les suprêmes adieux ?
– Loin du monde railleur, loin de la foule impure,
Loin des magistrats curieux,
Dors en paix, dors en paix, étrange créature,
Dans ton tombeau mystérieux ;
Ton époux court le monde, et ta forme immortelle
Veille près de lui quand il dort ;
Autant que toi sans doute il te sera fidèle,
Et constant jusques à la mort.

– Charles Baudelaire

A Martyr

Drawing by an unknown master

In the midst of perfume flasks, of sequined fabrics
And voluptuous furniture,
Of marble statues, pictures, and perfumed dresses
That trail in sumptuous folds,
In a warm room where, as in a hothouse,
The air is dangerous, fatal,
Where bouquets dying in their glass coffins
Exhale their final breath,
A headless cadaver pours out, like a river,
On the saturated pillow
Red, living blood, that the linen drinks up
As greedily as a meadow.
Like the pale visions engendered by shadows
And which hold our eyes riveted,
The head, its mane of hair piled up in a dark mass
And wearing precious jewels,
On the bedside table, like a ranunculus,
Reposes ; and, empty of thoughts,
A stare, blank and pallid as the dawn,
Escapes from the upturned eyeballs.
On the bed, the nude torso shamelessly displays
With the most complete abandon
The secret splendor and fatal beauty
That nature had bestowed on her ;
A rose stocking embroidered with gold clocks remains
On her leg like a souvenir ;
The garter, like a hidden flashing eye,
Darts its glance of diamond brilliance.
The bizarre aspect of that solitude
And of a large, languid portrait
With eyes as provocative as the pose,
Reveals an unwholesome love,
Guilty joys and exotic revelries,
With infernal kisses
That delighted the swarm of bad angels
Hovering in the curtains' folds ;

And yet one sees from the graceful slimness
Of the angular shoulders.
The haunches slightly sharp, and the waist sinuous
As a snake poised to strike,
That she's still quite young ! – Had her exasperated soul
And her senses gnawed by ennui
Thrown open their gates to the thirsty pack
Of lost and wandering desires ?
The vengeful man whom you could not with all your love
Satisfy when you were alive,
Did he use your inert, complacent flesh to fill
The immensity of his lust ?
Reply, impure cadaver ! and by your stiffened tresses
Raising you with a fevered arm,
Tell me, ghastly head, did he glue on your cold teeth
The kisses of the last farewell ?
– Far from the sneering world, far from the impure crowd,
Far from curious magistrates,
Sleep in peace, sleep in peace, bizarre creature,
In your mysterious tomb ;
Your mate roams o'er the world, and your immortal form
Watches over him when he sleeps ;
Even as you, he will doubtless be faithful
And constant until death.

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Martyr

(Drawing by an Unknown Master)

Amongst gilt fabrics, flasks of scent and wine,
Rich furniture, white marble, precious moulds.
Fine paintings, and rich, perfumed robes that shine
Swirled into sumptuous folds,
In a warm room, that like a hot-house stifles
With dangerous and fatal breath, where lie
Pale flowers in crystal tombs, exquisite trifles,
Exhaling their last sigh –
A headless corpse, cascading in a flood

Hot, living blood, that soaks, with crimson stain
A pillow slaked and sated with blood
As any field with rain.

Like those pale visions which the gloom aborts
Which fix us in a still, hypnotic stare,
The bead, tricked out with gems of sorts,
In its huge mass of hair,

Like a ranunculous beside the bed,
Rests on the table, empty of all thought.

From eyes revulsed, like twilight, seems to spread
A gaze that looks at naught.

Upon the bed the carcase, unabashed,
Shows, in complete abandon, without shift,
The secret splendour that, in life, it flashed
Superbly, Nature's gift.

A rosy stocking, freaked with clocks of gold,
Clings to one leg : a souvenir, it seems :
The garter, from twin diamonds, with the cold
Stare of a viper gleams.

The singular effect of solitude
And of a languorous portrait, with its eyes
Provocative as is its attitude,
Dark loves would advertise –

And guilty joys, with feasts of strange delight,
Full of infernal kisses, omens certain
To please the gloating angels of the Night
Who swim behind each curtain.

And yet to see her nimble strength, the risky
Swerve of the rounded shoulder, and its rake,
The tented haunch, the figure lithe and frisky,
Flexed like an angry snake,

You'd know that she was young.

Her soul affronted, Her senses stung with boredom – were they
 bayed

By packs of wandering, lost desires, and hunted,
And finally betrayed ?

The vengeful man, whose lust you could not sate,
(In spite of much love) nor quench his fire –
Did he on your dead flesh then consummate
His monstrous, last desire ?

Answer me, corpse impure ! With fevered fist,
Grim visage, did he raise you up on high,
And, as your silver frosty teeth he kissed,
Bid you his last goodbye ?
Far from inquiring magistrates that sneer,
Far from this world of raillery and riot,
Sleep peacefully, strange creature, on your bier,
Of mystery and quiet.
Your lover roams the world. Your deathless shape
Watches his sleep and hears each indrawn breath.
No more than you can he ever escape
From constancy till death !

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Lesbos (1857)

Lesbos

Mère des jeux latins et des voluptés grecques,
Lesbos, où les baisers, languissants ou joyeux,
Chauds comme les soleils, frais comme les pastèques,
Font l'ornement des nuits et des jours glorieux,
Mère des jeux latins et des voluptés grecques,
Lesbos, où les baisers sont comme les cascades
Qui se jettent sans peur dans les gouffres sans fonds,
Et courent, sanglotant et gloussant par saccades,
Orageux et secrets, fourmillants et profonds ;
Lesbos, où les baisers sont comme les cascades !

Lesbos, où les Phrynés l'une l'autre s'attirent,
Où jamais un soupir ne resta sans écho,
À l'égal de Paphos les étoiles t'admirent,
Et Vénus à bon droit peut jalouser Sapho !

Lesbos où les Phrynés l'une l'autre s'attirent,
Lesbos, terre des nuits chaudes et langoureuses,
Qui font qu'à leurs miroirs, stérile volupté !

Les filles aux yeux creux, de leur corps amoureuseuses,
Caressent les fruits mûrs de leur nubilité ;
Lesbos, terre des nuits chaudes et langoureuses,
Laisse du vieux Platon se froncer l'oeil austère ;
Tu tires ton pardon de l'excès des baisers,
Reine du doux empire, aimable et noble terre,
Et des raffinements toujours inépuisés.

Laisse du vieux Platon se froncer l'oeil austère.
Tu tires ton pardon de l'éternel martyre,
Infligé sans relâche aux coeurs ambitieux,
Qu'attire loin de nous le radieux sourire

Entrevu vaguement au bord des autres cieux !
Tu tires ton pardon de l'éternel martyre !
Qui des Dieux osera, Lesbos, être ton juge
Et condamner ton front pâli dans les travaux,
Si ses balances d'or n'ont pesé le déluge
De larmes qu'à la mer ont versé tes ruisseaux ?
Qui des Dieux osera, Lesbos, être ton juge ?
Que nous veulent les lois du juste et de l'injuste ?
Vierges au coeur sublime, honneur de l'archipel,
Votre religion comme une autre est auguste,
Et l'amour se rira de l'Enfer et du Ciel !
Que nous veulent les lois du juste et de l'injuste ?
Car Lesbos entre tous m'a choisi sur la terre
Pour chanter le secret de ses vierges en fleurs,
Et je fus dès l'enfance admis au noir mystère
Des rires effrénés mêlés aux sombres pleurs ;
Car Lesbos entre tous m'a choisi sur la terre.
Et depuis lors je veille au sommet de Leucate,
Comme une sentinelle à l'oeil perçant et sûr,
Qui guette nuit et jour brick, tartane ou frégate,
Dont les formes au loin frissonnent dans l'azur ;
Et depuis lors je veille au sommet de Leucate,
Pour savoir si la mer est indulgente et bonne,
Et parmi les sanglots dont le roc retentit
Un soir ramènera vers Lesbos, qui pardonne,
Le cadavre adoré de Sapho, qui partit
Pour savoir si la mer est indulgente et bonne !
De la mâle Sapho, l'amante et le poète,
Plus belle que Vénus par ses mornes pâleur !
– L'oeil d'azur est vaincu par l'oeil noir que tachète
Le cercle ténébreux tracé par les douleurs
De la mâle Sapho, l'amante et le poète !
– Plus belle que Vénus se dressant sur le monde
Et versant les trésors de sa sérénité
Et le rayonnement de sa jeunesse blonde
Sur le vieil Océan de sa fille enchanté ;
Plus belle que Vénus se dressant sur le monde !
– De Sapho qui mourut le jour de son blasphème,
Quand, insultant le rite et le culte inventé,
Elle fit son beau corps la pâture suprême

D'un brutal dont l'orgueil punit l'impiété
De celle qui mourut le jour de son blasphème.
Et c'est depuis ce temps que Lesbos se lamente,
Et, malgré les honneurs que lui rend l'univers,
S'enivre chaque nuit du cri de la tourmente
Que poussent vers les cieux ses rivages déserts.
Et c'est depuis ce temps que Lesbos se lamente !

– Charles Baudelaire

Lesbos

Mother of Latin games and Greek delights,
Lesbos, where kisses, languishing or joyous,
Burning as the sun's light, cool as melons,
Adorn the nights and the glorious days ;
Mother of Latin games and Greek delights,
Lesbos, where the kisses are like cascades
That throw themselves boldly into bottomless chasms
And flow, sobbing and gurgling intermittently,
Stormy and secret, teeming and profound ;
Lesbos, where the kisses are like cascades !
Lesbos, where courtesans feel drawn toward each other,
Where for every sigh there is an answering sigh,
The stars admire you as much as Paphos,
And Venus may rightly be jealous of Sappho !
Lesbos, where courtesans feel drawn toward each other,
Lesbos, land of hot and languorous nights,
That make the hollow-eyed girls, amorous
Of their own bodies, caress before their mirrors
The ripe fruits of their nubility, O sterile pleasure !
Lesbos, land of hot and languorous nights,
Let old Plato look on you with an austere eye ;
You earn pardon by the excess of your kisses
And the inexhaustible refinements of your love,
Queen of the sweet empire, pleasant and noble land.
Let old Plato look on you with an austere eye.
You earn pardon by the eternal martyrdom
Inflicted ceaselessly upon aspiring hearts

Who are lured far from us by radiant smiles
Vaguely glimpsed at the edge of other skies !
You earn pardon by that eternal martyrdom !
Which of the gods will dare to be your judge, Lesbos,
And condemn your brow, grown pallid from your labors,
If his golden scales have not weighed the flood
Of tears your streams have poured into the sea ?
Which of the gods will dare to be your judge, Lesbos ?
What are to us the laws of the just and unjust
Virgins with sublime hearts, honor of these islands ;
Your religion, like any other, is august,
And love will laugh at Heaven and at Hell !
What are to us the laws of the just and unjust ?
For Lesbos chose me among all other poets
To sing the secret of her virgins in their bloom,
And from childhood I witnessed the dark mystery
Of unbridled laughter mingled with tears of gloom ;
For Lesbos chose me among all other poets.
And since then I watch from Leucadia's summit,
Like a sentry with sure and piercing eyes
Who looks night and day for tartane, brig or frigate,
Whose forms in the distance flutter against the blue ;
And since then I watch from Leucadia's summit,
To find out if the sea is indulgent and kind,
If to the sobs with which the rocks resound
It will bring back some night to Lesbos, who forgives,
The worshipped body of Sappho, who departed
To find out if the sea is indulgent and kind !
Of the virile Sappho, paramour and poet,
With her wan pallor, more beautiful than Venus !
– The blue eyes were conquered by the black eyes, ringed
With dark circles, traced by the sufferings
Of the virile Sappho, paramour and poet !
– Lovelier than Venus dominating the world,
Pouring out the treasures of her serenity
And the radiance of her golden-haired youth
Upon old Ocean, delighted with his daughter ;
Lovelier than Venus dominating the world !
– Of Sappho who died the day of her blasphemy,
When, insulting the rite and the established cult,

She made of her body the supreme pabulum
Of a cruel brute whose pride punished the sacrilege
Of her who died on the day of her blasphemy.
And it is since that time that Lesbos mourns,
And in spite of the homage the world renders her,
Gets drunk every night with the tempest's howls
Which are hurled at the skies by her deserted shores.
And it is since that time that Lesbos mourns.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Lesbos

Mother of Grecian joys and Latin games,
Lesbos, where kisses, languishing or gay,
As melons cool, or warm as solar flames,
Adorn alike the glorious night and day :
Mother of Grecian joys and Latin games,
Lesbos of kisses reckless as cascades
That hurl themselves to bottomless abysses,
Stormy and secret, myriad-swarming kisses,
That cluck and sob and gurgle in the shades.
Lesbos of kisses reckless as cascades !
Lesbos where Phrynes each to each are plighted,
Where never yet unanswered went a sigh,
Where Paphos with a rival is requited,
And Venus with a Sappho has to vie !
Lesbos where Phrynes each to each are plighted,
Lesbos, the land of warm and languid night,
Where gazing in their mirrors as they dress
The cave-eyed girls, in barren, vain delight,
The fruits of their nubility caress.
Lesbos, the land of warm and languid night,
Let Plato frown austere all the while.
Your pardon's from excess of kisses won,
Queen of sweet empire, rare and noble isle –
And from refinements which are never done.
Let Plato frown austere all the while.
From martyrdom your pardon you beguile,

Inflicted without stint on hearts that soar
Far, far away, drawn by some radiant smile
Seen vaguely on a strange celestial shore.
From martyrdom your pardon you beguile.
Lesbos, what God to judge you would make bold,
Or damn your brows so pale and sadly grave,
Not having weighed upon the scales of gold
The floods of tears you've poured into the wave.
Lesbos which God to judge you would make bold ?
For us, what mean the statutes of the just ?
Pride of the isles, whose hearts sublimely swell,
Your faith as any other is august
And Love can laugh alike at Heaven and Hell.
For us, what mean the statutes of the just ?
For Lesbos chose me of all men on earth
To sing the secrets of her virgin flowers,
Taught as a child the sacred rites of mirth
And mysteries of sorrow which are ours.
So Lesbos chose me of all men on earth.
Since then I watch on the Leucadian height.
Like a lone sentry with a piercing view
Who sees the vessels ere they heave in sight
With forms that faintly tremble in the blue.
Since then I watch on the Leucadian height
To find out if the sea's heart still is hardened
And from the sobs that drench the rock with spray
If it will bring back Sappho, who has pardoned,
The corpse of the adored, who went away
To find out that the sea its heart has hardened ;
Of the male Sappho, lover, queen of singers,
More beautiful than Venus by her woes.
The blue eye cannot match the black, where lingers
The shady circle that her grief bestows
On the male Sappho, lover, queen of singers –
Fairer than Venus towering on the world
And pouring down serenity like water
In the blond radiance of her tresses curled
To daze the very Ocean with her daughter,
Fairer than Venus towering on the world –
Of Sappho, whom her blasphemy requited

The day she quit the rite and scorned the cult,
And gave her lovely body to be slighted
By a rough brute, whose scorn was the result
For Sappho, whom the blasphemy requited.
And since that time has Lesbos lived lamenting
In spite of all the honours of mankind,
And lives upon the storm-howl unrelenting
Of its bleak shores, the sport of wave and wind :
For since that time has Lesbos lived lamenting.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Femmes Damnés (Delphine et Hippolyte) (1857)

Femmes Damnés (Delphine et Hippolyte)

À la pâle clarté des lampes languissantes,
Sur de profonds coussins tout imprégnés d'odeur
Hippolyte rêvait aux caresses puissantes
Qui levaient le rideau de sa jeune candeur.
Elle cherchait, d'un œil troublé par la tempête,
De sa naïveté le ciel déjà lointain,
Ainsi qu'un voyageur qui retourne la tête
Vers les horizons bleus dépassés le matin.
De ses yeux amortis les paresseuses larmes,
L'air brisé, la stupeur, la morne volupté,
Ses bras vaincus, jetés comme de vaines armes,
Tout servait, tout paraît sa fragile beauté.
Étendue à ses pieds, calme et pleine de joie,
Delphine la couvait avec des yeux ardents,
Comme un animal fort qui surveille une proie,
Après l'avoir d'abord marquée avec les dents.
Beauté forte à genoux devant la beauté frêle,
Superbe, elle humait voluptueusement
Le vin de son triomphe, et s'allongeait vers elle,
Comme pour recueillir un doux remerciement.
Elle cherchait dans l'œil de sa pâle victime
Le cantique muet que chante le plaisir,
Et cette gratitude infinie et sublime
Qui sort de la paupière ainsi qu'un long soupir.
– « Hippolyte, cher cœur, que dis-tu de ces choses ?
Comprends-tu maintenant qu'il ne faut pas offrir

L'holocauste sacré de tes premières roses
Aux souffles violents qui pourraient les flétrir ?
Mes baisers sont légers comme ces éphémères
Qui caressent le soir les grands lacs transparents,
Et ceux de ton amant creuseront leurs ornières
Comme des chariots ou des socs déchirants ;
Ils passeront sur toi comme un lourd attelage
De chevaux et de boeufs aux sabots sans pitié...
Hippolyte, ô ma soeur ! tourne donc ton visage,
Toi, mon âme et mon tout, mon tout et ma moitié,
Tourne vers moi tes yeux pleins d'azur et d'étoiles !
Pour un de ces regards charmants, baume divin,
Des plaisirs plus obscurs je lèverai les voiles,
Et je t'endormirai dans un rêve sans fin ! »
Mais Hippolyte alors, levant sa jeune tête :
– « Je ne suis point ingrate et ne me repens pas,
Ma Delphine, je souffre et je suis inquiète,
Comme après un nocturne et terrible repas.
Je sens fondre sur moi de lourdes épouvantes
Et de noirs bataillons de fantômes épars,
Qui veulent me conduire en des routes mouvantes
Qu'un horizon sanglant ferme de toutes parts.
Avons-nous donc commis une action étrange ?
Explique, si tu peux, mon trouble et mon effroi :
Je frissonne de peur quand tu me dis : 'Mon ange !'
Et cependant je sens ma bouche aller vers toi.
Ne me regarde pas ainsi, toi, ma pensée !
Toi que j'aime à jamais, ma soeur d'élection,
Quand même tu serais une embûche dressée
Et le commencement de ma perdition ! »
Delphine secouant sa crinière tragique,
Et comme trépignant sur le trépied de fer,
L'oeil fatal, répondit d'une voix despotique :
– « Qui donc devant l'amour ose parler d'enfer ?
Maudit soit à jamais le rêveur inutile
Qui voulut le premier, dans sa stupidité,
S'éprenant d'un problème insoluble et stérile,
Aux choses de l'amour mêler l'honnêteté !
Celui qui veut unir dans un accord mystique

L'ombre avec la chaleur, la nuit avec le jour,
Ne chauffera jamais son corps paralytique
À ce rouge soleil que l'on nomme l'amour !
Va, si tu veux, chercher un fiancé stupide ;
Cours offrir un cœur vierge à ses cruels baisers ;
Et, pleine de remords et d'horreur, et livide,
Tu me rapporteras tes seins stigmatisés...
On ne peut ici-bas contenter qu'un seul maître ! »
Mais l'enfant, épanchant une immense douleur,
Cria soudain : – « Je sens s'élargir dans mon être
Un abîme béant ; cet abîme est mon cœur !
Brûlant comme un volcan, profond comme le vide !
Rien ne rassasiera ce monstre gémissant
Et ne rafraîchira la soif de l'Euménide
Qui, la torche à la main, le brûle jusqu'au sang.
Que nos rideaux fermés nous séparent du monde,
Et que la lassitude amène le repos !
Je veux m'anéantir dans ta gorge profonde,
Et trouver sur ton sein la fraîcheur des tombeaux ! »
– Descendez, descendez, lamentables victimes,
Descendez le chemin de l'enfer éternel !
Plongez au plus profond du gouffre, où tous les crimes
Flagellés par un vent qui ne vient pas du ciel,
Bouillonnent pêle-mêle avec un bruit d'orage.
Ombres folles, courez au but de vos désirs ;
Jamais vous ne pourrez assouvir votre rage,
Et votre châtiment naîtra de vos plaisirs.
Jamais un rayon frais n'éclaira vos cavernes ;
Par les fentes des murs des miasmes fiévreux
Filtrent en s'enflammant ainsi que des lanternes
Et pénètrent vos corps de leurs parfums affreux.
L'âpre stérilité de votre jouissance
Altère votre soif et roidit votre peau,
Et le vent furibond de la concupiscence
Fait claquer votre chair ainsi qu'un vieux drapeau.
Loin des peuples vivants, errantes, condamnées,
À travers les déserts courez comme les loups ;
Faites votre destin, âmes désordonnées,
Et fuyez l'infini que vous portez en vous !

– Charles Baudelaire

Damned Women (Delphine and Hippolyta)

In the pallid light of languishing lamps,
In deep cushions redolent of perfume,
Hippolyta dreamed of the potent caresses
That drew aside the veil of her young innocence.
She was seeking, with an eye disturbed by the storm,
The already distant skies of her naiveté,
Like a voyager who turns to look back
Toward the blue horizons passed early in the day.
The listless tears from her lackluster eyes,
The beaten, bewildered look, the dulled delight,
Her defeated arms thrown wide like futile weapons,
All served, all adorned her fragile beauty.
Lying at her feet, calm and filled with joy,
Delphine gazed at her hungrily, with burning eyes,
Like a strong animal watching a prey
Which it has already marked with its teeth.
The strong beauty kneeling before the frail beauty,
Superb, she savored voluptuously
The wine of her triumph and stretched out toward the girl
As if to reap her reward of sweet thankfulness.
She was seeking in the eyes of her pale victim
The silent canticle that pleasure sings
And that gratitude, sublime and infinite,
Which the eyes give forth like a long drawn sigh.
"Hippolyta, sweet, what do you think of our love ?
Do you understand now that you need not offer
The sacred burnt-offering of your first roses
To a violent breath which could make them wither ?
My kisses are as light as the touch of May flies
That caress in the evening the great limpid lakes,
But those of your lover will dig furrows
As a wagon does, or a tearing ploughshare ;
They will pass over you like heavy teams
Of horses or oxen, with cruel iron-shod hooves...
Hippolyta, sister ! please turn your face to me,
You, my heart and soul, my all, half of my own self,
Turn toward me your eyes brimming with azure and stars !
For one of those bewitching looks, O divine balm,

I will lift the veil of the more subtle pleasures
And lull you to sleep in an endless dream!"
Hippolyta then raised her youthful head :
"I am not ungrateful and I do not repent,
Delphine darling ; I feel restless and ill,
As I do after a rich midnight feast.
I feel heavy terrors pouncing on me
And black battalions of scattered phantoms
Who wish to lead me onto shifting roads
That a bloody horizon shuts in on all sides.
Is there something strange in what we have done ?
Explain if you can my confusion and my fright :
I shudder with fear when you say : 'My angel !'
And yet I feel my mouth moving toward you.
Do not look at me that way, you, my dearest thought :
The sister of my choice whom I'd love forever
Even if you were an ambush prepared for me
And the beginning of my perdition."
Delphine, shaking her tragic mane and stamping her foot
As if she were stamping on the iron Tripod,
Her eyes fatal, replied in a despotic voice :
"Who dares to speak of hell in the presence of love ?
May he be cursed forever, that idle dreamer,
The first one who in his stupidity
Entranced by a sterile, insoluble problem,
Wished to mix honesty with what belongs to love !
He who would unite in a mystic harmony
Coolness with warmth and the night with the day
Will never warm his palsied flesh
With that red sun whose name is love !
Go if you wish and find a stupid sweetheart, run
To offer your virgin heart to his cruel kisses ;
Full of remorse and horror, and livid,
You will bring back to me your stigmatized breasts...
Woman here below can serve only one master!"
But the girl pouring out the vast grief in her heart,
Suddenly cried : "I feel opening within me
A yawning abyss ; that abyss is my heart !
Burning like a volcano and deep as the void !

Nothing will satiate that wailing monster
Nor cool the thirst of the Eumenides
Who with torch in hand burn his very blood.
Let our drawn curtains separate us from the world
And let lassitude bring to us repose !
I want to bury my head in your deep bosom
And find in your breast the cool of the tomb !"
– Go down, go down, lamentable victims,
Go down the pathway to eternal hell !
Plunge to the bottom of the abyss where all crime
Whipped by a wind that comes not from heaven,
Boil pell-mell with the sound of a tempest.
Mad shades, run to the goal of your desires ;
You will never be able to sate your passion
And your punishment will be born of your pleasures.
Never will a cool ray light your caverns ;
Through the chinks in the walls feverish miasmas
Filter through, burst into flame like lanterns
And permeate your bodies with frightful odors.
The bleak sterility of your pleasures
Increases your thirst and makes your skin taut
And the raging wind of carnal desire
Makes your flesh snap like an old flag.
Damned, wandering, far from living people,
Roam like the wolves across the desert waste ;
Fulfill your destinies, dissolute souls,
And flee the infinite you carry in your hearts !

– William Aggeler, 1954

Damned Women (Delphine and Hippolyta)

Over deep cushions, drenched with drowsy scents
Where fading lamplight shed its dying glow,
Hippolyta recalls and half-repents
The kisses that first thawed her youthful snow.
She sought, with tempest-troubled gaze, the skies
Of her first innocence, now far away,
As travellers who backward turn their eyes

To blue horizons passed at break of day.
Within her haggard eyes the tears were bright.
Her broken look, her dazed, voluptuous air,
Her vanquished arms like weapons shed in Right,
Enhanced her fragile beauty with despair.

Stretched at her feet Delphine contented lay
And watched with burning eyeballs from beneath
Like a fierce tigress who, to guard her prey,
Has set a mark upon it with her teeth.

Strong beauty there to fragile beauty kneeling,
Superb, she seemed to sniff the heady wine
Of triumph : and stretched out to her, appealing
For the reward of raptures half-divine.

She sought within her victim's pallid eye
Dumb hymns that pleasure sings without a choir,
And gratitude that, like a long-drawn sigh,
Swells from the eyelid, swooning with fire.

"Hippolyta, dear heart, have you no trust ?
Do you not know the folly that exposes
To the fierce pillage of the brawling gust
The sacred holocaust of early roses ?

My kisses are as light as fairy midges
That on calm evenings skim the crystal lake.
Those of your man would plough such ruts and ridge
As lumbering carts or tearing coulters make.

They'll tramp across you, like a ruthless team
Of buffaloes or horses, yoked in lust.
Dear sister, turn your face to me, my dream,
My soul, my all, my twin, to whom I trust !

Turn me your eyes of deepest, starry blue.
For one of those deep glances that you send,
I'd lift the veil of darkest joys for you
And rock you in a dream that has no end."

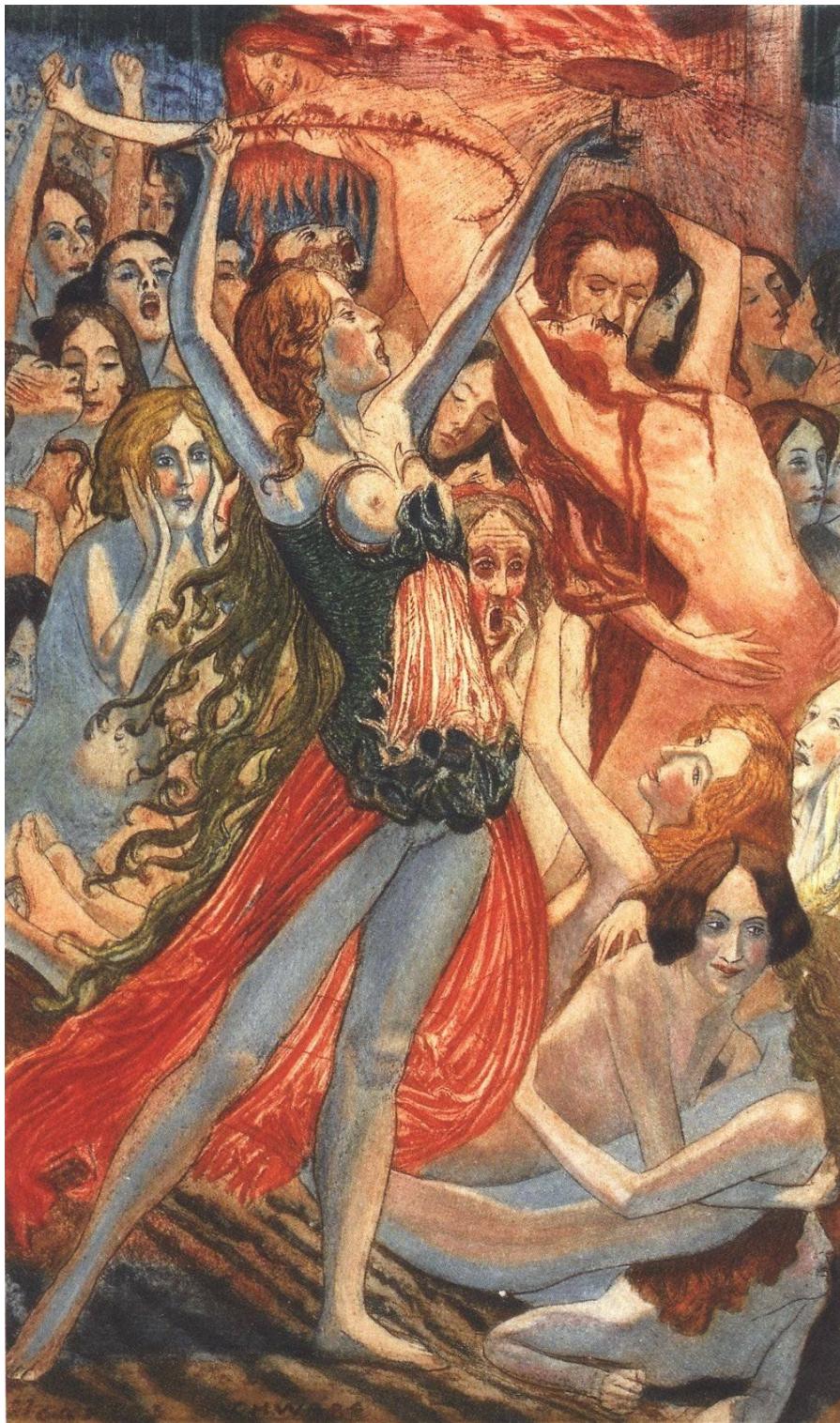
But then Hippolyta raised up her head,
"No blame nor base ingratitude I feel,
But, as it were, a kind of nauseous dread
After some terrible, nocturnal meal.

I feel a swooping terror that explodes
In legions of black ghosts towards me speeding

Who crowd me on to swiftly moving roads,
That, sliced by sheer horizons, end up bleeding.
Have we done something monstrous that I tremble ?
Explain, then, if you can ; for when you say,
'Angel', I cower. Yet I cannot dissemble
That, when you speak, my lips are drawn your way.
Oh, do not fix me with a stare so steady
You whom I love till death in still submission,
Yes, even though you, like an ambush ready,
Are the beginning of my own perdition."
Then Delphine stamped and shook her tragic mane,
And, like a priestess, foaming and fierce, and fell,
Spoke in a lordly and prophetic strain
– "Who dares, in front of Love, to mention Hell ?
Curbed forever be that useless dreamer
Who first imagined, in his brutish mind,
Of sheer futility the fatuous schemer,
Honour with Love could ever be combined.
He who in mystic union would enmesh
Shadow with warmth, and daytime with the night,
Will never warm his paralytic flesh
At the red sun of amorous delight.
Go, if you wish, and seek some boorish lover :
Offer your virgin heart to his crude hold,
Full of remorse and horror you'll recover,
And bring me your scarred breast to be consoled...
Down here, a soul can only serve one master."
But the girl, venting her tremendous woe,
Cried out "I feel a huge pit of disaster
Yawning within : it is my heart, I know !
Like a volcano burning, deep as death,
There's naught that groaning monster can assuage
Nor quench of thirst the Fury's burning breath
Who brands it with a torch to make it rage.
Let our closed curtains isolate the rest,
Until exhaustion bring us sleep, while I
Annihilate myself upon your breast
And find in you a tomb on which to die."
Go down, go down, poor victims, it is time ;

The road to endless hell awaits your lusts.
Plunge to the bottom of the gulf, where crime
Is flagellated by infernal gusts.
Swirling pell-mell, and with a tempest's roar,
Mad shades, pursue your craving without measure :
Your rages will be sated nevermore,
Your torture is begotten of your pleasure.
No sunbeam through your dungeon will come leaking :
Only miasmic fevers, through each chink,
Will filter, like sick lanterns, redly streaking,
And penetrate your bodies with their stink.
The harsh sterility of all you relish
Will swell your thirst, and turn you both to hags.
The wind of your desire, with fury hellish
Will flog your flapping carrion like wet flags.
Far from live folk, like werewolves howling high,
Gallop the boundless deserts you unroll.
Fulfill your doom, disordered minds, and fly
The infinite you carry in your soul.

– Roy Campbell, 1952



Femmes damnées

Femmes damnées

Comme un bétail pensif sur le sable couchées,
Elles tournent leurs yeux vers l'horizon des mers,
Et leurs pieds se cherchent et leurs mains rapprochées
Ont de douces langueurs et des frissons amers.
Les unes, coeurs épris des longues confidences,
Dans le fond des bosquets où jasent les ruisseaux,
Vont épelant l'amour des craintives enfances
Et creusent le bois vert des jeunes arbresseaux ;
D'autres, comme des soeurs, marchent lentes et graves
À travers les rochers pleins d'apparitions,
Où saint Antoine a vu surgir comme des laves
Les seins nus et pourprés de ses tentations ;
Il en est, aux lueurs des résines croulantes,
Qui dans le creux muet des vieux antres païens
T'appellent au secours de leurs fièvres hurlantes,
Ô Bacchus, endormeur des remords anciens !
Et d'autres, dont la gorge aime les scapulaires,
Qui, recélant un fouet sous leurs longs vêtements,
Mêlent, dans le bois sombre et les nuits solitaires,
L'écume du plaisir aux larmes des tourments.
Ô vierges, ô démons, ô monstres, ô martyres,
De la réalité grands esprits contempteurs,
Chercheuses d'infini dévotes et satyres,
Tantôt pleines de cris, tantôt pleines de pleurs,
Vous que dans votre enfer mon âme a poursuivies,
Pauvres soeurs, je vous aime autant que je vous plains,
Pour vos mornes douleurs, vos soifs inassouvies,
Et les urnes d'amour dont vos grands coeurs sont pleins !

– Charles Baudelaire

Damned Women

Lying on the sand like ruminating cattle,
They turn their eyes toward the horizon of the sea,
And their clasped hands and their feet which seek the other's
Know both sweet languor and shudders of pain.

Some, whose hearts grew amorous from long confessions,
In the depth of the woods, among the babbling brooks,
Spell out the love of their timid adolescence
By carving the green wood of young saplings ;

Others, like sisters, walk gravely and with slow steps
Among the high rocks peopled with apparitions,
Where Saint Anthony saw the naked, purple breasts
Of his temptations rise up like lava ;

There are some who by the light of crumbling resin
In the silent void of the old pagan caverns
Call out for help from their screaming fevers to you
O Bacchus, who lull to sleep the ancient remorse !

And others, whose breasts love the feel of scapulars,
Who, concealing a whip under their long habits,
Mingle, in the dark woods and solitary nights,
The froth of pleasure with tears of torment.

O virgins, O demons, O monsters, O martyrs,
Great spirits, contemptuous of reality,
Seekers of the infinite, pious and satyric,
Sometimes full of cries, sometimes full of tears,

You whom my spirit has followed into your hell,
Poor sisters, I love you as much as I pity you,
For your gloomy sorrows, your unsatisfied thirsts,
And the urns of love with which your great hearts are filled !

– William Aggeler, 1954

Damned Women

Like pensive cattle lying on the sand
They scan the far horizon of the ocean,
Foot seeking foot, hand magnetising hand,
With sweet or bitter tremors of emotion.

Some with their hearts absorbed in confidences,
Deep in the woods, where streamlets chatter free,
Spell the loved names of childish, timid fancies,
And carve the green wood of the fresh, young tree.

Others, like sisters wander, slow and grave,
Through craggy haunts of ghostly emanations,
Where once Saint Anthony was wont to brave
The purple-breasted pride of his temptations.

Some by the light of resin-scented torches
In the dumb hush of caverns seek their shrine,
Invoking Bacchus, killer of remorses,
To liven their delirium with wine.

Others who deal with scapulars and hoods
Hiding the whiplash under their long train,
Mingle, on lonely nights in sombre woods,
The foam of pleasure with the tears of pain.

O demons, monsters, virgins, martyrs, you
Who trample base reality in scorn,
Whether as nuns or satyrs you pursue
The infinite, with cries or tears forlorn,
You, whom my soul has tracked to lairs infernal,
Poor sisterhood, I pity and adore,
For your despairing griefs, your thirst eternal,
And love that floods your hearts for evermore !

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Les Deux Bonnes Soeurs

Les Deux Bonnes Soeurs

La Débauche et la Mort sont deux aimables filles,
Prodigues de baisers et riches de santé,
Dont le flanc toujours vierge et drapé de guenilles
Sous l'éternel labeur n'a jamais enfanté.
Au poète sinistre, ennemi des familles,
Favori de l'enfer, courtisan mal renté,
Tombeaux et lupanars montrent sous leurs charmilles
Un lit que le remords n'a jamais fréquenté.
Et la bière et l'alcôve en blasphèmes fécondes
Nous offrent tour à tour, comme deux bonnes soeurs,
De terribles plaisirs et d'affreuses douceurs.
Quand veux-tu m'enterrer, Débauche aux bras immondes ?
Ô Mort, quand viendras-tu, sa rivale en attrait,
Sur ses myrtes infects enter tes noirs cyprès ?

– Charles Baudelaire

The Two Good Sisters

Debauchery and Death are two lovable girls,
Lavish with their kisses and rich with health,
Whose ever-virgin loins, draped with tattered clothes and
Burdened with constant work, have never given birth.
To the sinister poet, foe of families,
Poorly paid courtier, favorite of hell,
Graves and brothels show beneath their bowers
A bed in which remorse has never slept.
The bier and the alcove, fertile in blasphemies

Like two good sisters, offer to us in turn
Terrible pleasures and frightful sweetness.
When will you bury me, Debauch with the filthy arms ?
Death, her rival in charms, when will you come
To graft black cypress on her infected myrtle ?

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Two Good Sisters

Debauchery and Death are pleasant twins,
And lavish with their charms, a buxom pair !
Under the rags that clothe their virgin skins,
Their wombs, though still in labour, never bear.
For the curst poet, foe to married rest,
The friend of hell, and courtier on half-pay –
Brothels and tombs reserve for such a guest
A bed on which repentance never lay.
Both tomb and bed, in blasphemy so fecund
Each other's hospitality to second,
Prepare grim treats, and hatch atrocious things.
Debauch, when will you bury me ? When, Death,
Mingle your Cypress in the selfsame wreath
With the infected Myrtles that she brings ?

– Roy Campbell, 1952

La Fontaine de Sang

La Fontaine de Sang

Il me semble parfois que mon sang coule à flots,
Ainsi qu'une fontaine aux rythmiques sanglots.
Je l'entends bien qui coule avec un long murmure,
Mais je me tâte en vain pour trouver la blessure.
À travers la cité, comme dans un champ clos,
Il s'en va, transformant les pavés en îlots,
Désaltérant la soif de chaque créature,
Et partout colorant en rouge la nature.
J'ai demandé souvent à des vins captieux
D'endormir pour un jour la terreur qui me mine ;
Le vin rend l'oeil plus clair et l'oreille plus fine !
J'ai cherché dans l'amour un sommeil oublieux ;
Mais l'amour n'est pour moi qu'un matelas d'aiguilles
Fait pour donner à boire à ces cruelles filles !

– Charles Baudelaire

The Fountain of Blood

It seems to me at times my blood flows out in waves
Like a fountain that gushes in rhythmical sobs.
I hear it clearly, escaping with long murmurs,
But I feel my body in vain to find the wound.
Across the city, as in a tournament field,
It courses, making islands of the paving stones,
Satisfying the thirst of every creature
And turning the color of all nature to red.
I have often asked insidious wines

To lull to sleep for a day my wasting terror ;
Wine makes the eye sharper, the ear more sensitive !
I have sought in love a forgetful sleep ;
But love is to me only a bed of needles
Made to slake the thirst of those cruel prostitutes !

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Fountain of Blood

My blood in waves seems sometimes to be spouting
As though in rhythmic sobs a fountain swooned.
I hear its long, low, rushing sound till, doubting,
I feel myself all over for the wound.
Across the town, as in the lists of battle,
It flows, transforming paving stones to isles,
Slaking the thirst of creatures, men, and cattle,
And colouring all nature red for miles.
Sometimes I've sought relief in precious wines
To lull in me the fear that undermines,
But found they sharpened every sense the more.
I've also sought forgetfulness in lust,
But love's a bed of needles, and they thrust
To give more drink to each rapacious whore.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Allégorie

Allégorie

C'est une femme belle et de riche encolure,
Qui laisse dans son vin traîner sa chevelure.
Les griffes de l'amour, les poisons du tripot,
Tout glisse et tout s'émousse au granit de sa peau.
Elle rit à la Mort et nargue la Débauche,
Ces monstres dont la main, qui toujours gratte et fauche,
Dans ses jeux destructeurs a pourtant respecté
De ce corps ferme et droit la rude majesté.
Elle marche en déesse et repose en sultane ;
Elle a dans le plaisir la foi mahométane,
Et dans ses bras ouverts, que remplissent ses seins,
Elle appelle des yeux la race des humains.
Elle croit, elle sait, cette vierge inféconde
Et pourtant nécessaire à la marche du monde,
Que la beauté du corps est un sublime don
Qui de toute infamie arrache le pardon.
Elle ignore l'Enfer comme le Purgatoire,
Et quand l'heure viendra d'entrer dans la Nuit noire
Elle regardera la face de la Mort,
Ainsi qu'un nouveau-né, – sans haine et sans remords.

– Charles Baudelaire

Allegory

She's a beautiful woman with opulent shoulders
Who lets her long hair trail in her goblet of wine.
The claws of love, the poisons of brothels,

All slips and all is blunted on her granite skin.
She laughs at Death and snaps her fingers at Debauch.
The hands of those monsters, ever cutting and scraping,
Have respected nonetheless the pristine majesty
Of her firm, straight body at its destructive games.
She walks like a goddess, rests like a sultana ;
She has a Mohammedan's faith in pleasure
And to her open arms which are filled by her breasts,
She lures all mortals with her eyes.
She believes, she knows, this virgin, sterile
And yet essential to the march of the world,
That a beautiful body is a sublime gift
That wrings a pardon for any foul crime.
She is unaware of Hell and Purgatory
And when the time comes for her to enter
The black Night, she will look into the face of Death
As a new-born child, – without hatred or remorse.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Allegory

She is a woman of appearance fine
Who lets her tresses trail into her wine.
Love's claws and poisons, brewed in sinks of sin,
Fall blunted from the granite of her skin.
She mocks Debauchery, Death leaves her blithe,
Two monsters always handy with the scythe.
In their grim games, where so much beauty's wrecked,
They treat her majesty with due respect.
Half goddess, half sultana, without scathe,
In pleasure she's a Moslem's steady faith.
Between her open arms, filled by her breasts,
For all mankind with burning eyes she quests,
And she believes, this fruitless virgin-wife,
Who's yet so necessary to this life,
That beauty of the body is a gift
Sublime enough all infamy to shift,
And win forgiveness. She knows naught of Hell.
When the Night comes, in which she is to dwell,

Straight in the face she'll look her deadly Fate,
Like one new-born – without remorse or hate.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

La Béatrice

La Béatrice

Dans des terrains cendreux, calcinés, sans verdure,
Comme je me plaignais un jour à la nature,
Et que de ma pensée, en vaguant au hasard,
J'aiguisais lentement sur mon coeur le poignard,
Je vis en plein midi descendre sur ma tête
Un nuage funèbre et gros d'une tempête,
Qui portait un troupeau de démons vicieux,
Semblables à des nains cruels et curieux.
À me considérer froidement ils se mirent,
Et, comme des passants sur un fou qu'ils admirent,
Je les entendis rire et chuchoter entre eux,
En échangeant maint signe et maint clignement d'yeux :

– « Contemplons à loisir cette caricature
Et cette ombre d'Hamlet imitant sa posture,
Le regard indécis et les cheveux au vent.
N'est-ce pas grand' pitié de voir ce bon vivant,
Ce gueux, cet histrion en vacances, ce drôle,
Parce qu'il sait jouer artistement son rôle,
Vouloir intéresser au chant de ses douleurs
Les aigles, les grillons, les ruisseaux et les fleurs,
Et même à nous, auteurs de ces vieilles rubriques,
Réciter en hurlant ses tirades publiques ? »

J'aurais pu (mon orgueil aussi haut que les monts
Domine la nuée et le cri des démons)
Détourner simplement ma tête souveraine,
Si je n'eusse pas vu parmi leur troupe obscène,
Crime qui n'a pas fait chanceler le soleil !

La reine de mon coeur au regard nonpareil
Qui riait avec eux de ma sombre détresse
Et leur versait parfois quelque sale caresse.

– Charles Baudelaire

Beatrice

One day as I was making complaint to nature
In a burnt, ash-gray land without vegetation,
And as I wandered aimlessly, slowly whetting
Upon my heart the dagger of my thought,
I saw in broad daylight descending on my head
A leaden cloud, pregnant with a tempest,
That carried a herd of vicious demons
Who resembled curious, cruel dwarfs.
They began to look at me coldly,
And I heard them laugh and whisper to each other,
Exchanging many a sign and many a wink
Like passers-by who discuss a fool they admire :
– “Let us look leisurely at this caricature,
This shade of Hamlet who imitates his posture
With indecisive look, hair streaming in the wind.
Is it not a pity to see this bon vivant,
This tramp, this queer fish, this actor without a job,
Because he knows how to play skillfully his role,
Wish to interest in the song of his woes
The eagles, the crickets, the brooks, and the flowers,
And even to us, authors of that hackneyed drivel,
Bellow the recital of his public tirades ?”
I could have (my pride as high as mountains
Dominates the clouds and the cries of the demons)
Simply turned away my sovereign head
If I had not seen in that obscene troop
A crime which did not make the sun reel in its course !
The queen of my heart with the peerless gaze
Laughing with them at my somber distress
And giving them at times a lewd caress.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Beatrice

In charred and ashen fields without a leaf,
While I alone to Nature told my grief,
I sharpened, as I went, like any dart,
My thought upon the grindstone of my heart –
When by a troop of vicious demons led,
A great black cloud rushed down towards my head.
As loafers at a lunatic they leered
And in my face inquisitively peered.
With nods and signs, like dwarfed and apish elves,
They laughed, and winked, and spoke among themselves.
“This parody of Hamlet, take his measure,
And contemplate the travesty at leisure.
Is it not sad to see the puzzled stare,
The halting gait, and the dishevelled hair
With which this clownish actor, on half-pay,
Because he is an artist in his way,
Attempts to interest, in the griefs he sings,
Eagles, and crickets, flowers, and running springs,
And even us, the authors of his woe,
Howling his sorrows as a public show ?”
I could have dominated with my pride
That horde of demons and the taunts they cried,
Just by the mere aversion of my face –
Had I not seen, amongst that evil race,
(A crime that did not even daze the sun !)
Queen of my heart, the peerless, only one,
Laughing with them to see my dark distress,
And giving them, at times, some lewd caress.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Les Métamorphoses du vampire (1857)

Les Métamorphoses du vampire

La femme cependant, de sa bouche de fraise,
En se tordant ainsi qu'un serpent sur la braise,
Et pétrissant ses seins sur le fer de son busc,
Laissait couler ces mots tout imprégnés de musc :
– « Moi, j'ai la lèvre humide, et je sais la science
De perdre au fond d'un lit l'antique conscience.
Je sèche tous les pleurs sur mes seins triomphants,
Et fais rire les vieux du rire des enfants.
Je remplace, pour qui me voit nue et sans voiles,
La lune, le soleil, le ciel et les étoiles !
Je suis, mon cher savant, si docte aux voluptés,
Lorsque j'étouffe un homme en mes bras redoutés,
Ou lorsque j'abandonne aux morsures mon buste,
Timide et libertine, et fragile et robuste,
Que sur ces matelas qui se pâment d'émoi,
Les anges impuissants se damneraient pour moi ! »

Quand elle eut de mes os sucé toute la moelle,
Et que languissamment je me tournai vers elle
Pour lui rendre un baiser d'amour, je ne vis plus
Qu'une outre aux flancs gluants, toute pleine de pus !
Je fermai les deux yeux, dans ma froide épouvante,
Et quand je les rouvris à la clarté vivante,
À mes côtés, au lieu du mannequin puissant
Qui semblait avoir fait provision de sang,
Tremblaient confusément des débris de squelette,

Qui d'eux-mêmes rendaient le cri d'une girouette
Ou d'une enseigne, au bout d'une tringle de fer,
Que balance le vent pendant les nuits d'hiver.

– Charles Baudelaire

The Vampire's Metamorphoses

The woman meanwhile, twisting like a snake
On hot coals and kneading her breasts against the steel
Of her corset, from her mouth red as strawberries
Let flow these words impregnated with musk :
– "I, I have moist lips, and I know the art
Of losing old Conscience in the depths of a bed.
I dry all tears on my triumphant breasts
And make old men laugh with the laughter of children.
I replace, for him who sees me nude, without veils,
The moon, the sun, the stars and the heavens !
I am, my dear scholar, so learned in pleasure
That when I smother a man in my fearful arms,
Or when, timid and licentious, frail and robust,
I yield my bosom to biting kisses
On those two soft cushions which swoon with emotion,
The powerless angels would damn themselves for me !"
When she had sucked out all the marrow from my bones
And I languidly turned toward her
To give back an amorous kiss, I saw no more
Than a wine-skin with gluey sides, all full of pus !
Frozen with terror, I closed both my eyes,
And when I opened them to the bright light,
At my side, instead of the robust manikin
Who seemed to have laid in a store of blood,
There quivered confusedly a heap of old bones,
Which of themselves gave forth the cry of a weather-cock
Or of a sign on the end of an iron rod
That the wind swings to and fro on a winter night.

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Metamorphoses of the Vampire

The crimson-fruited mouth that I desired –
While, like a snake on coals, she twinged and twired,
Kneading her breasts against her creaking busk –
Let fall those words impregnated with musk,
– “My lips are humid : by my learned science,
All conscience, in my bed, becomes compliance.
My breasts, triumphant, staunch all tears ; for me
Old men, like little children, laugh with glee.
For those who see me naked, I replace
Sun, moon, the sky, and all the stars in space.
I am so skilled, dear sage, in arts of pleasure,
That, when with man my deadly arms I measure,
Or to his teeth and kisses yield my bust,
Timid yet lustful, fragile, yet robust,
On sheets that swoon with passion – you might see
Impotent angels damn themselves for me.”
When of my marrow she had sucked each bone
And, languishing, I turned with loving moan
To kiss her in return, with overplus,
She seemed a swollen wineskin, full of pus.
I shut my eyes with horror at the sight,
But when I opened them, in the clear light,
I saw, instead of the great swollen doll
That, bloated with my lifeblood, used to loll,
The debris of a skeleton, assembling
With shrill squawks of a weathercock, lie trembling,
Or sounds, with which the howling winds commingle,
Of an old Inn-sign on a rusty tringle.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Un Voyage à Cythère

Un Voyage à Cythère

Mon cœur, comme un oiseau, voltigeait tout joyeux
Et planait librement à l'entour des cordages ;
Le navire roulait sous un ciel sans nuages ;
Comme un ange enivré d'un soleil radieux.

Quelle est cette île triste et noire ? – C'est Cythère,
Nous dit-on, un pays fameux dans les chansons
Eldorado banal de tous les vieux garçons.
Regardez, après tout, c'est une pauvre terre.

– Île des doux secrets et des fêtes du cœur !
De l'antique Vénus le superbe fantôme
Au-dessus de tes mers plane comme un arôme
Et charge les esprits d'amour et de langueur.

Belle île aux myrtes verts, pleine de fleurs écloses,
Vénérée à jamais par toute nation,
Où les soupirs des coeurs en adoration
Roulent comme l'encens sur un jardin de roses

Ou le roucoulement éternel d'un ramier !
– Cythère n'était plus qu'un terrain des plus maigres,
Un désert rocailleux troublé par des cris aigres.
J'entrevois pourtant un objet singulier !

Ce n'était pas un temple aux ombres bocagères,
Où la jeune prêtresse, amoureuse des fleurs,
Allait, le corps brûlé de secrètes chaleurs,
Entrebâillant sa robe aux brises passagères ;
Mais voilà qu'en rasant la côte d'assez près
Pour troubler les oiseaux avec nos voiles blanches,
Nous vîmes que c'était un gibet à trois branches,
Du ciel se détachant en noir, comme un cyprès.

De féroces oiseaux perchés sur leur pâture
Détruisaient avec rage un pendu déjà mûr,
Chacun plantant, comme un outil, son bec impur
Dans tous les coins saignants de cette pourriture ;

Les yeux étaient deux trous, et du ventre effondré
Les intestins pesants lui coulaient sur les cuisses,
Et ses bourreaux, gorgés de hideuses délices,
L'avaient à coups de bec absolument châtré.

Sous les pieds, un troupeau de jaloux quadrupèdes,
Le museau relevé, tournoyait et rôdait ;
Une plus grande bête au milieu s'agitait
Comme un exécuteur entouré de ses aides.

Habitant de Cythère, enfant d'un ciel si beau,
Silencieusement tu souffrais ces insultes
En expiation de tes infâmes cultes
Et des péchés qui t'ont interdit le tombeau.

Ridicule pendu, tes douleurs sont les miennes !
Je sentis, à l'aspect de tes membres flottants,
Comme un vomissement, remonter vers mes dents
Le long fleuve de fiel des douleurs anciennes ;

Devant toi, pauvre diable au souvenir si cher,
J'ai senti tous les becs et toutes les mâchoires
Des corbeaux lacinants et des panthères noires
Qui jadis aimairent tant à triturer ma chair.

– Le ciel était charmant, la mer était unie ;
Pour moi tout était noir et sanglant désormais,
Hélas ! et j'avais, comme en un suaire épais,
Le coeur enseveli dans cette allégorie.

Dans ton île, ô Vénus ! je n'ai trouvé debout
Qu'un gibet symbolique où pendait mon image...
– Ah ! Seigneur ! donnez-moi la force et le courage
De contempler mon coeur et mon corps sans dégoût !

– Charles Baudelaire

A Voyage to Cythera

My heart like a bird was fluttering joyously
And soaring freely around the rigging ;
Beneath a cloudless sky the ship was rolling
Like an angel drunken with the radiant sun.

What is this black, gloomy island ? – It's Cythera,
They tell us, a country celebrated in song,
The banal Eldorado of old bachelors.
Look at it ; after all, it is a wretched land.

– Island of sweet secrets, of the heart's festivals !
The beautiful shade of ancient Venus
Hovers above your seas like a perfume
And fills all minds with love and languidness.

Fair isle of green myrtle filled with full-blown flowers
Ever venerated by all nations,
Where the sighs of hearts in adoration
Roll like incense over a garden of roses

Or like the eternal cooing of wood-pigeons !

– Cythera was now no more than the barrenest land,
A rocky desert disturbed by shrill cries.
But I caught a glimpse of a singular object !

It was not a temple in the shade of a grove
Where the youthful priestess, amorous of flowers,
Was walking, her body hot with hidden passion,
Half-opening her robe to the passing breezes ;

But behold ! as we passed, hugging the shore
So that we disturbed the saa-birds with our white sails,
We saw it was a gallows with three arms
Outlined in black like a cypress against the sky.

Ferocious birds perched on their feast were savagely
Destroying the ripe corpse of a hanged man ;
Each plunged his filthy beak as though it were a tool
Into every corner of that bloody putrescence ;

The eyes were two holes and from the gutted belly
The heavy intestines hung down along his thighs
And his torturers, gorged with hideous delights,
Had completely castrated him with their sharp beaks.

Below his feet a pack of jealous quadrupeds
Prowled with upraised muzzles and circled round and round ;

One beast, larger than the others, moved in their midst
Like a hangman surrounded by his aides.
Cytherean, child of a sky so beautiful,
You endured those insults in silence
To expiate your infamous adorations
And the sins which denied to you a grave.
Ridiculous hanged man, your sufferings are mine !
I felt at the sight of your dangling limbs
The long, bitter river of my ancient sorrows
Rise up once more like vomit to my teeth ;
Before you, poor devil of such dear memory
I felt all the stabbing beaks of the crows
And the jaws of the black panthers who loved so much
In other days to tear my flesh to shreds.
– The sky was charming and the sea was smooth ;
For me thenceforth all was black and bloody,
Alas ! and I had in that allegory
Wrapped up my heart as in a heavy shroud.
On your isle, O Venus ! I found upright only
A symbolic gallows from which hung my image...
O ! Lord ! give me the strength and the courage
To contemplate my body and soul without loathing !

– William Aggeler, 1954

Voyage to Cythera

My heart, a bird, seemed joyfully to fly
And round the rigging cruised with nimble gyre.
The vessel rolled beneath the cloudless sky
Like a white angel, drunk with solar fire.
What is that sad, black island like a pall ?
Why, Cytherea, famed in many a book,
The Eldorado of old-stagers. Look :
It's but a damned poor country after all !
Isle of sweet secrets and heart-feasting fire !
Of antique Venus the majestic ghost
Rolls like a storm of fragrance from your coast
Filling our souls with languor and desire !

Isle of green myrtles, where each flower uncloses,
Adored by nations till the end of time :
Sighs of adoring hearts, like incense, climb.
And pour their perfume over sheaves of roses,
Or groves of turtles in an endless coo !
But no ! it was a waste where nothing grows,
Torn only by the raucous cries of crows :
Yet there a curious object rose in view.
This was no temple hid in bosky trees,
Where the young priestess, amorous of flowers,
Whom secretly a loving flame devours,
Walks with her robe half-open to the breeze.
For as we moved inshore to coast the shallows
And our white canvas scared the crows to fly,
Like a tall cypress, blackened on the sky,
We saw it was a gaunt three-forking gallows.
Fierce birds, perched on their meal, began to slash
And rip with rage a rotten corpse that swung.
Each screwed and chiselled with its beak among
The crisp and bleeding crannies of the hash.
His eyes were holes : from open stomach direly
His heavy tripes cascaded to his thighs.
Gorged with such ghastly dainties to the eyes,
His torturers had gelded him entirely.
Beneath, some jealous prowling quadrupeds,
With lifted muzzles, for the leavings scrambled.
The largest seemed, as in the midst he gambolled,
An executioner among his aides.
Native of Cytherea's cloudless clime
In silent suffering you paid the price,
And expiated ancient cults of vice
With generations of forbidden crime.
Ridiculous hanged man ! Your griefs I know.
I felt, to see you swing above the heath,
Like nausea slowly rising to my teeth,
The bilious stream of ancient human woe.
Poor devil, dear to memory ! before me
I seemed to feel each talon, fang, and beak
Of all the stinking crows and panthers sleek
That in my lifetime ever chewed and tore me.

The sky was charming and the sea unclouded,
But all was black and bloody to my mind.
As in a dismal winding-sheet entwined,
My heart was in this allegory shrouded.
A gallows where my image hung apart
Was all I found on Venus' isle of sighs.
O God, give me the strength to scrutinise,
Without disgust, my body and my heart!

– Roy Campbell, 1952

L'Amour et le Crâne

L'Amour et le Crâne

Vieux cul-de-lampe

L'Amour est assis sur le crâne
De l'Humanité,
Et sur ce trône le profane,
Au rire effronté,
Souffle gaiement des bulles rondes
Qui montent dans l'air,
Comme pour rejoindre les mondes
Au fond de l'éther.
Le globe lumineux et frêle
Prend un grand essor,
Crève et crache son âme grêle
Comme un songe d'or.
J'entends le crâne à chaque bulle
Prier et gémir :
– « Ce jeu féroce et ridicule,
Quand doit-il finir ?
Car ce que ta bouche cruelle
Epargne en l'air,
Monstre assassin, c'est ma cervelle,
Mon sang et ma chair ! »

– Charles Baudelaire

Cupid and the Skull

An Old Lamp Base

Cupid is seated on the skull
Of Humanity ;
On this throne the impious one
With the shameless laugh
Is gaily blowing round bubbles
That rise in the air
As if they would rejoin the globes
At the ether's end.

The sphere, fragile and luminous,
Takes flight rapidly,
Bursts and spits out its flimsy soul
Like a golden dream.

I hear the skull groan and entreat
At every bubble :
"When is this fierce, ludicrous game
To come to an end ?

Because what your pitiless mouth
Scatters in the air,
Monstrous murderer – is my brain,
My flesh and my blood !"

– William Aggeler, 1954

Love and the Skull

(Old Tail-piece)

With bold and insolent grimace,
Love laughingly bestrides
The bare skull of the Human Race,
And, as enthroned he rides,
Blows bubbles from his rosy cheek
Which soar into the sky
As if, beyond the blue, to seek
The other worlds on high.
They ride with wondrous verve at first,

Reflect the sunny beams,
Then spit their flimsy souls, to burst
And fade like golden dreams.
I hear the skull at each renewal
Expostulate aghast –
“This game, ridiculous and cruel –
When will it end at last ?
For what your cruel mouthpiece drains
And scatters, sud by sud,
Monstrous Assassin ! is my brains,
My substance, and my blood.”

– Roy Campbell, 1952

RÉVOLTE
REVOLT

Le Reniement de Saint Pierre

Le Reniement de Saint Pierre

Qu'est-ce que Dieu fait donc de ce flot d'anathèmes
Qui monte tous les jours vers ses chers Séraphins ?
Comme un tyran gorgé de viande et de vins,
Il s'endort au doux bruit de nos affreux blasphèmes.

Les sanglots des martyrs et des suppliciés
Sont une symphonie enivrante sans doute,
Puisque, malgré le sang que leur volupté coûte,
Les cieux ne s'en sont point encore rassasiés !

– Ah ! Jésus, souviens-toi du Jardin des Olives !
Dans ta simplicité tu priais à genoux
Celui qui dans son ciel riait au bruit des clous
Que d'ignobles bourreaux plantaient dans tes chairs vives,
Lorsque tu vis cracher sur ta divinité
La crapule du corps de garde et des cuisines,
Et lorsque tu sentis s'enfoncer les épines
Dans ton crâne où vivait l'immense Humanité ;
Quand de ton corps brisé la pesanteur horrible
Allongeait tes deux bras distendus, que ton sang
Et ta sueur coulaient de ton front pâlissant,
Quand tu fus devant tous posé comme une cible,
Rêvais-tu de ces jours si brillants et si beaux
Où tu vins pour remplir l'éternelle promesse,
Où tu foulais, monté sur une douce ânesse,
Des chemins tout jonchés de fleurs et de rameaux,
Où, le cœur tout gonflé d'espoir et de vaillance,
Tu fouettais tous ces vils marchands à tour de bras,
Où tu fus maître enfin ? Le remords n'a-t-il pas
Pénétré dans ton flanc plus avant que la lance ?

– Certes, je sortirai, quant à moi, satisfait
D'un monde où l'action n'est pas la soeur du rêve ;
Puissé-je user du glaive et périr par le glaive !
Saint Pierre a renié Jésus... il a bien fait !

– Charles Baudelaire

The Denial of Saint Peter

What does God do with the wave of curses
That rises every day toward his dear Seraphim ?
Like a tyrant gorged with food and wine, he falls asleep
To the sweet sound of our horrible blasphemies.
The sobs of martyrs and of tortured criminals
Are doubtless an enchanting symphony,
Since, despite the blood that this pleasure costs,
The heavens have not yet been surfeited with it !
– Ah Jesus, remember the Garden of Olives !
In your naïveté you prayed on your knees to
Him Who in His heaven laughed at the sound of the nails
Being driven into your living flesh ;
When you saw them spitting on your divinity,
That vile mob of body-guards and scullions,
And when you felt the thorns go deep
Into your skull where lived immense Humanity,
When the horrible weight of your broken body
Lengthened your two outstretched arms, when your blood
And sweat flowed from your paling brow,
When you were placed before them all like a target,
Did you dream of those days so brilliant and so fair
When you came to fulfill the eternal promise,
When the gentle donkey you were riding trampled
The branches and flowers strewn in your path,
When, your heart swollen with courage and hope,
You lashed those vile money-changers with all your might,
In a word, when you were master ? Did not remorse
Penetrate your side deeper than the spear ?
– For my part, I shall indeed be content to leave
A world where action is not the sister of dreams ;

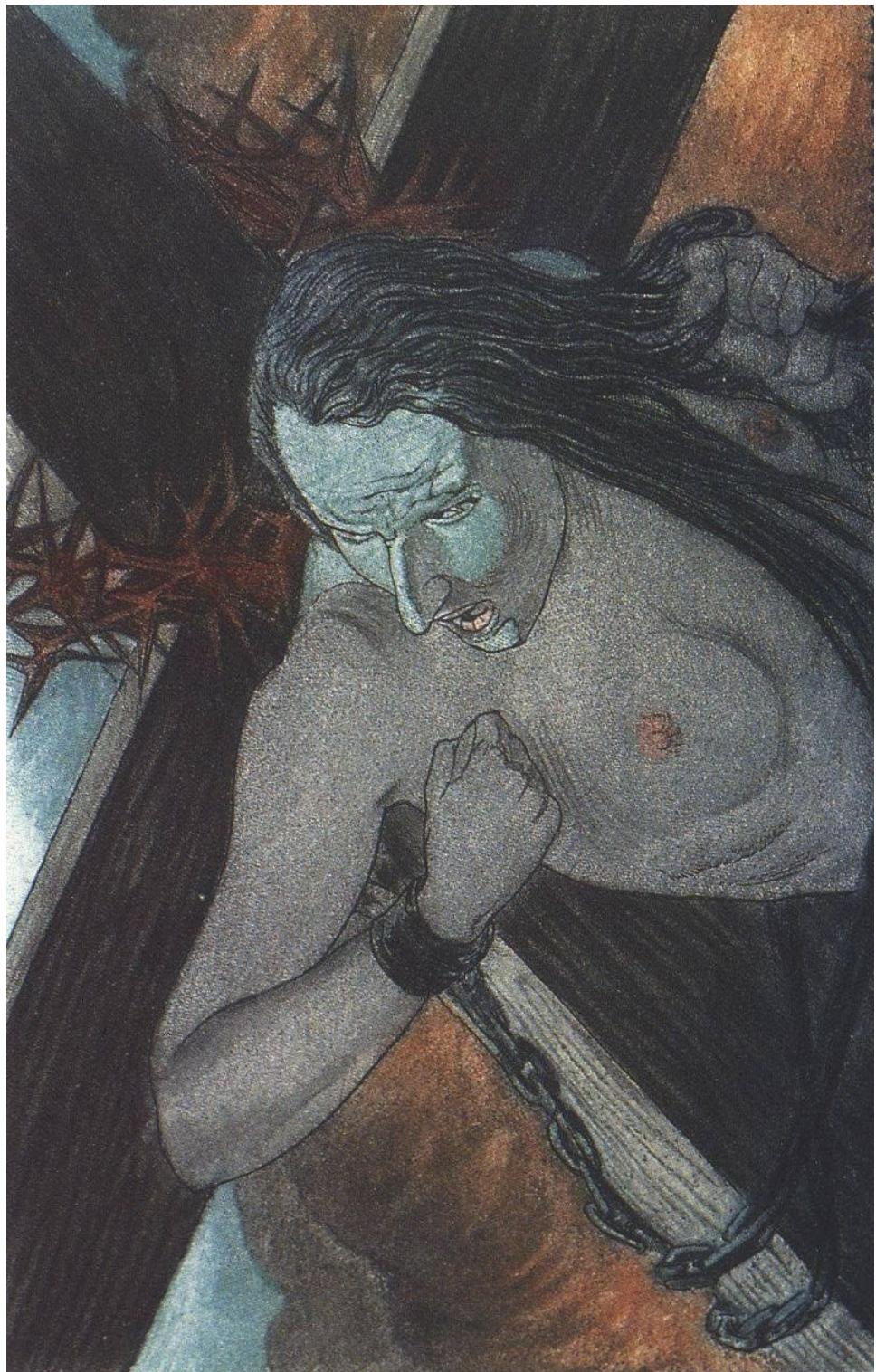
Would that I could take up the sword and perish by the sword !
Saint Peter denied Jesus – he did well !

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Denial of Saint Peter

What does God do with that huge storm of curses
That rises daily to the seraphim ?
Like some gorged tyrant, while his guts he nurses,
Our blasphemies are lullabies to him.
Martyrs and tortured victims with their cries
Compose delicious symphonies, no doubt,
Because, despite the blood they cost, the skies
Can always do with more when they give out.
Jesus, remember, in the olive trees –
In all simplicity you prayed afresh
To One whom your own butchers seemed to please
In hammering the nails into your flesh.
To see your godhead spat on by the like
Of scullions, and of troopers, and such scum,
And feel the thorns into your temples strike
Which held, of all Humanity, the sum :
To feel your body's horrifying weight
Lengthen your arms, to feel the blood and sweat
Itching your noble forehead pale with fate,
And as a target to the world be set,
Then did you dream of brilliant days of song,
When, the eternal promise to fulfill,
You mounted on an ass and rode along,
Trampling the flowers and palms beneath your feet,
When whirling whips, and full of valiant force,
The money-lenders quailed at your advance :
When you, in short, were master ? Did remorse
Not pierce your body further than the lance ?
I am quite satisfied to leave so bored
A world, where dream and action disunite.
I'd use the sword, to perish by the sword.
Peter denied his Master ?... He did right !

– Roy Campbell, 1952



Abel et Caïn

Abel et Caïn

I

Race d'Abel, dors, bois et mange ;
Dieu te sourit complaisamment.

Race de Caïn, dans la fange
Rampe et meurs misérablement.

Race d'Abel, ton sacrifice
Flatte le nez du Séraphin !

Race de Caïn, ton supplice
Aura-t-il jamais une fin ?

Race d'Abel, vois tes semailles
Et ton bétail venir à bien ;

Race de Caïn, tes entrailles
Hurlent la faim comme un vieux chien.

Race d'Abel, chauffe ton ventre
À ton foyer patriarchal ;

Race de Caïn, dans ton antre
Tremble de froid, pauvre chacal !

Race d'Abel, aime et pullule !
Ton or fait aussi des petits.

Race de Caïn, coeur qui brûle,
Prends garde à ces grands appétits.

Race d'Abel, tu crois et broutes
Comme les punaises des bois !

Race de Caïn, sur les routes
Traîne ta famille aux abois.

II

Ah ! race d'Abel, ta charogne
Engraissera le sol fumant !
Race de Caïn, ta besogne
N'est pas faite suffisamment ;
Race d'Abel, voici ta honte :
Le fer est vaincu par l'épieu !
Race de Caïn, au ciel monte,
Et sur la terre jette Dieu !

– Charles Baudelaire

Cain and Abel

I

Race of Abel, sleep, eat and drink ;
God smiles on you complacently.
Race of Cain, crawl on your belly,
Die in the mire wretchedly.
Race of Abel, your sacrifice
Delights the nose of the Seraphim !
Race of Cain, will there ever be
An ending to your punishment ?
Race of Abel, see your sowing
And your cattle thrive and flourish ;
Race of Cain, your bowels
Howl with hunger like an old dog.
Race of Abel, warm your belly
At your patriarchal hearth ;
Race of Cain, shiver with the cold
In your cavern, wretched jackal !
Race of Abel, love, pullulate !
Even your gold has progeny.
Race of Cain, with the burning heart,
Beware of those intense desires.
Race of Abel, you browse and grow
Like the insects of the forest !

Race of Cain, along the highways
Drag your destitute family.

II

Ah ! race of Abel, your carcass
Will fertilize the steaming soil !
Race of Cain, your appointed task
Has not been adequately done ;
Race of Abel, your disgrace is :
The sword is conquered by the pike !
Race of Cain, ascend to heaven,
And cast God down upon the earth !

– William Aggeler, 1954

Abel and Cain

I

Race of Abel ! eat, sleep, drink.
God smiles on those that he prefers.
Race of Cain ! in swamps that stink,
Crawl, and die the death of curs.
Race of Abel ! your crops sprout,
And your flocks are safe and sound.
Race of Cain ! your guts howl out
In hunger, like an ancient hound.
Race of Abel ! warm your guts
At the patriarchal fire.
Race of Cain ! in caves and huts
Shiver like jackals in the mire.
Race of Abel ! Pullulate :
Your gold too procreates its kind.
Race of Cain ! Hearts hot with hate,
Leave all such appetites behind.
Race of Abel ! grow and graze,
Like woodlice that on timbers prey.
Race of Cain ! along rough ways
Lead forth your family at bay.

II

Ah ! Race of Abel ! your fat carrion
Will well manure the soil it presses.
Race of Cain ! One task to carry on
Remains for you, a task that presses.
Race of Abel ! Shame is nigh.
The coulter's beaten by the sword.
Race of Cain, climb up the sky,
And to the earth hurl down the Lord.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Les Litanies de Satan

Les Litanies de Satan

Ô toi, le plus savant et le plus beau des Anges,
Dieu trahi par le sort et privé de louanges,
Ô Satan, prends pitié de ma longue misère !
Ô Prince de l'exil, à qui l'on a fait tort
Et qui, vaincu, toujours te redresses plus fort,
Ô Satan, prends pitié de ma longue misère !
Toi qui sais tout, grand roi des choses souterraines,
Guérisseur familier des angoisses humaines,
Ô Satan, prends pitié de ma longue misère !
Toi qui, même aux lépreux, aux parias maudits,
Enseignes par l'amour le goût du Paradis,
Ô Satan, prends pitié de ma longue misère !
Ô toi qui de la Mort, ta vieille et forte amante,
Engendras l'Espérance, – une folle charmante !
Ô Satan, prends pitié de ma longue misère !
Toi qui fais au proscrit ce regard calme et haut
Qui damne tout un peuple autour d'un échafaud.
Ô Satan, prends pitié de ma longue misère !
Toi qui sais en quels coins des terres envieuses
Le Dieu jaloux cacha les pierres précieuses,
Ô Satan, prends pitié de ma longue misère !
Toi dont l'oeil clair connaît les profonds arsenaux
Où dort enseveli le peuple des métaux,
Ô Satan, prends pitié de ma longue misère !
Toi dont la large main cache les précipices
Au somnambule errant au bord des édifices,
Ô Satan, prends pitié de ma longue misère !

Toi qui, magiquement, assouplis les vieux os
De l'ivrogne attardé foulé par les chevaux,
Ô Satan, prends pitié de ma longue misère !
Toi qui, pour consoler l'homme frêle qui souffre,
Nous appris à mêler le salpêtre et le soufre,
Ô Satan, prends pitié de ma longue misère !
Toi qui poses ta marque, ô complice subtil,
Sur le front du Crésus impitoyable et vil,
Ô Satan, prends pitié de ma longue misère !
Toi qui mets dans les yeux et dans le coeur des filles
Le culte de la plaie et l'amour des guenilles,
Ô Satan, prends pitié de ma longue misère !
Bâton des exilés, lampe des inventeurs,
Confesseur des pendus et des conspirateurs,
Ô Satan, prends pitié de ma longue misère !
Père adoptif de ceux qu'en sa noire colère
Du paradis terrestre a chassés Dieu le Père,
Ô Satan, prends pitié de ma longue misère !

Prière

Gloire et louange à toi, Satan, dans les hauteurs
Du Ciel, où tu régnas, et dans les profondeurs
De l'Enfer, où, vaincu, tu rêves en silence !
Fais que mon âme un jour, sous l'Arbre de Science,
Près de toi se repose, à l'heure où sur ton front
Comme un Temple nouveau ses rameaux s'épandront !

– Charles Baudelaire

The Litany of Satan

O you, the wisest and fairest of the Angels,
God betrayed by destiny and deprived of praise,
O Satan, take pity on my long misery !
O Prince of Exile, you who have been wronged
And who vanquished always rise up again more strong,
O Satan, take pity on my long misery !
You who know all, great king of hidden things,

The familiar healer of human sufferings,
O Satan, take pity on my long misery !
You who teach through love the taste for Heaven
To the cursed pariah, even to the leper,
O Satan, take pity on my long misery !
You who of Death, your mistress old and strong,
Have begotten Hope, – a charming madcap !
O Satan, take pity on my long misery !
You who give the outlaw that calm and haughty look
That damns the whole multitude around his scaffold.
O Satan, take pity on my long misery !
You who know in what nooks of the miserly earth
A jealous God has hidden precious stones,
O Satan, take pity on my long misery !
You whose clear eye sees the deep arsenals
Where the tribe of metals sleeps in its tomb,
O Satan, take pity on my long misery !
You whose broad hand conceals the precipice
From the sleep-walker wandering on the building's ledge,
O Satan, take pity on my long misery !
You who soften magically the old bones
Of belated drunkards trampled by the horses,
O Satan, take pity on my long misery !
You who to console frail mankind in its sufferings
Taught us to mix sulphur and saltpeter,
O Satan, take pity on my long misery !
You who put your mark, O subtle accomplice,
Upon the brow of Croesus, base and pitiless,
O Satan, take pity on my long misery !
You who put in the eyes and hearts of prostitutes
The cult of sores and the love of rags and tatters,
O Satan, take pity on my long misery !
Staff of those in exile, lamp of the inventor,
Confessor of the hanged and of conspirators,
O Satan, take pity on my long misery !
Adopted father of those whom in black rage
– God the Father drove from the earthly paradise,
O Satan, take pity on my long misery !

Prayer

Glory and praise to you, O Satan, in the heights
Of Heaven where you reigned and in the depths
Of Hell where vanquished you dream in silence !
Grant that my soul may someday repose near to you
Under the Tree of Knowledge, when, over your brow,
Its branches will spread like a new Temple !

– William Aggeler, 1954

Litanies of Satan

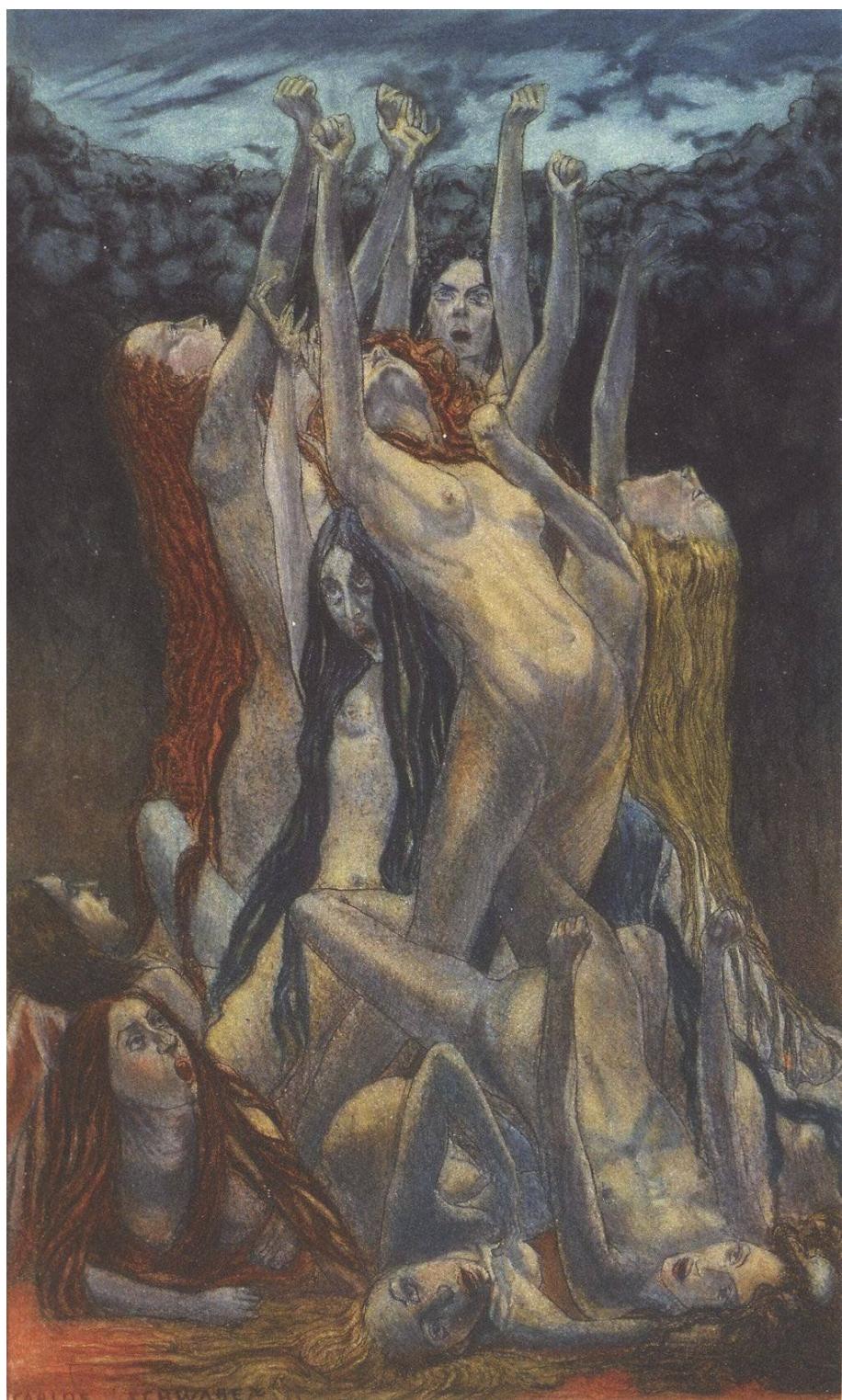
Wisest of Angels, whom your fate betrays,
And, fairest of them all, deprives of praise,
Satan have pity on my long despair !
O Prince of exiles, who have suffered wrong,
Yet, vanquished, rise from every fall more strong,
Satan have pity on my long despair !
All-knowing lord of subterranean things,
Who remedy our human sufferings,
Satan have pity on my long despair !
To lepers and lost beggars full of lice,
You teach, through love, the taste of Paradise.
Satan have pity on my long despair !
You who on Death, your old and sturdy wife,
Engendered Hope – sweet folly of this life –
Satan have pity on my long despair !
You give to the doomed man that calm, unbaffled
Gaze that rebukes the mob around the scaffold,
Satan have pity on my long despair !
You know in what closed corners of the earth
A jealous God has hidden gems of worth.
Satan have pity on my long despair !
You know the deepest arsenals, where slumber
The breeds of buried metals without number.
Satan have pity on my long despair !
You whose huge hand has hidden the abyss

From sleepwalkers that skirt the precipice,
Satan have pity on my long despair!
You who give suppleness to drunkards' bones
When trampled down by horses on the stones,
Satan have pity on my long despair!
You who, to make his sufferings the lighter,
Taught man to mix the sulphur with the nitre,
Satan have pity on my long despair!
You fix your mask, accomplice full of guile,
On rich men's foreheads, pitiless and vile.
Satan have pity on my long despair!
You who fill the hearts and eyes of whores
With love of trifles and the cult of sores,
Satan have pity on my long despair!
The exile's staff, inventor's lamp, caresser
Of hanged men, and of plotters the confessor,
Satan have pity on my long despair!
Step-father of all those who, robbed of pardon,
God drove in anger out of Eden's garden
Satan have pity on my long despair!

Prayer

Praise to you, Satan! in the heights you lit,
And also in the deeps where now you sit,
Vanquished, in Hell, and dream in hushed defiance
O that my soul, beneath the Tree of Science
Might rest near you, while shadowing your brows,
It spreads a second Temple with its boughs.

– Roy Campbell, 1952



LA MORT
DEATH

La Mort des Amants

La Mort des Amants

Nous aurons des lits pleins d'odeurs légères,
Des divans profonds comme des tombeaux,
Et d'étranges fleurs sur des étagères,
Ecloses pour nous sous des cieux plus beaux.
Usant à l'envi leurs chaleurs dernières,
Nos deux coeurs seront deux vastes flambeaux,
Qui réfléchiront leurs doubles lumières
Dans nos deux esprits, ces miroirs jumeaux.
Un soir fait de rose et de bleu mystique,
Nous échangerons un éclair unique,
Comme un long sanglot, tout chargé d'adieux ;
Et plus tard un Ange, entr'ouvrant les portes,
Viendra ranimer, fidèle et joyeux,
Les miroirs ternis et les flammes mortes.

– Charles Baudelaire

The Death of Lovers

We shall have beds full of subtle perfumes,
Divans as deep as graves, and on the shelves
Will be strange flowers that blossomed for us
Under more beautiful heavens.
Using their dying flames emulously,
Our two hearts will be two immense torches
Which will reflect their double light
In our two souls, those twin mirrors.
Some evening made of rose and of mystical blue

A single flash will pass between us
Like a long sob, charged with farewells ;
And later an Angel, setting the doors ajar,
Faithful and joyous, will come to revive
The tarnished mirrors, the extinguished flames.

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Death of Lovers

We shall have beds round which light scents are wafted,
Divans which are as deep and wide as tombs ;
Strange flowers that under brighter skies were grafted
Will scent our shelves with rare exotic blooms.

When, burning to the last their mortal ardour,
Our torch-like hearts their bannered flames unroll,
Their double light will kindle all the harder
Within the deep, twinned mirror of our soul.

One evening made of mystic rose and blue,
I will exchange a lightning-flash with you,
Like a long sob that bids a last adieu.

Later, the Angel, opening the door
Faithful and happy, will at last renew
Dulled mirrors, and the flames that leap no more.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

La Mort des pauvres

La Mort des pauvres

C'est la Mort qui console, hélas ! et qui fait vivre ;
C'est le but de la vie, et c'est le seul espoir
Qui, comme un élixir, nous monte et nous enivre,
Et nous donne le coeur de marcher jusqu'au soir ;
À travers la tempête, et la neige, et le givre,
C'est la clarté vibrante à notre horizon noir
C'est l'auberge fameuse inscrite sur le livre,
Où l'on pourra manger, et dormir, et s'asseoir ;
C'est un Ange qui tient dans ses doigts magnétiques
Le sommeil et le don des rêves extatiques,
Et qui refait le lit des gens pauvres et nus ;
C'est la gloire des Dieux, c'est le grenier mystique,
C'est la bourse du pauvre et sa patrie antique,
C'est le portique ouvert sur les Cieux inconnus !

– Charles Baudelaire

The Death of the Poor

It's Death that comforts us, alas ! and makes us live ;
It is the goal of life ; it is the only hope
Which, like an elixir, makes us inebriate
And gives us the courage to march until evening ;
Through the storm and the snow and the hoar-frost
It is the vibrant light on our black horizon ;
It is the famous inn inscribed upon the book,
Where one can eat, and sleep, and take his rest ;
It's an Angel who holds in his magnetic hands

Sleep and the gift of ecstatic dreams
And who makes the beds for the poor, naked people ;
It's the glory of the gods, the mystic granary,
It is the poor man's purse, his ancient fatherland,
It is the portal opening on unknown Skies !

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Death of Paupers

It's Death comforts us, alas ! and makes us live.
It is the goal of life, it brings us hope,
And, like a rich elixir, seems to give
Courage to march along the darkening slope.
Across the tempest, hail, and hoarfrost, look !
Along the black horizon, a faint gleam !
It is the inn that's written in the book
Where one can sleep, and eat, and sit and dream.
An Angel, in magnetic hands it holds
Sleep and the gift of sweet ecstatic dreams,
And makes a bed for poor and naked souls.
It is God's glory and the mystic grange :
The poor man's purse and fatherland it seems,
And door that opens Heavens vast and strange.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

La Mort des artistes

La Mort des artistes

Combien faut-il de fois secouer mes grelots
Et baiser ton front bas, morne caricature ?
Pour piquer dans le but, de mystique nature,
Combien, ô mon carquois, perdre de javelots ?
Nous userons notre âme en de subtils complots,
Et nous démolirons mainte lourde armature,
Avant de contempler la grande Créature
Dont l'infenal désir nous remplit de sanglots !
Il en est qui jamais n'ont connu leur Idole,
Et ces sculpteurs damnés et marqués d'un affront,
Qui vont se martelant la poitrine et le front,
N'ont qu'un espoir, étrange et sombre Capitole !
C'est que la Mort, planant comme un soleil nouveau,
Fera s'épanouir les fleurs de leur cerveau !

– Charles Baudelaire

The Death of Artists

How many times must I shake my bauble and bells
And kiss your low forehead, dismal caricature ?
To strike the target of mystic nature,
How many javelins must I waste, O my quiver ?
We shall wear out our souls in subtle schemes
And we shall demolish many an armature
Before contemplating the glorious Creature
For whom a tormenting desire makes our hearts grieve !
There are some who have never known their Idol

And those sculptors, damned and branded with shame,
Who are always hammering their brows and their breasts,
Have but one hope, bizarre and somber Capitol !
It is that Death, soaring like a new sun,
Will bring to bloom the flowers of their brains !

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Death of Artists

How often must I shake my bells, and kiss
Your brow, sad Travesty ? How many a dart,
My quiver, shoot at Nature's mystic heart
Before I hit the target that I miss ?
We'll still consume our souls in subtle schemes,
Demolishing tough harness, long before
We see the giant Creature of our dreams
Whom all the world is weeping to adore.
Some never knew their Idol, though they prayed :
And these doomed sculptors, with an insult branded,
Hammer your brows and bosom, heavy-handed,
In the one hope, O Capitol of shade !
That Death like some new sun should rise and give
Warmth to their wasted flowers, and make them live.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

La Fin de la Journée (1861)

La Fin de la Journée

Sous une lumière blafarde
Court, danse et se tord sans raison
La Vie, impudente et criarde.
Aussi, sitôt qu'à l'horizon
La nuit voluptueuse monte,
Apaisant tout, même la faim,
Effaçant tout, même la honte,
Le Poète se dit : « Enfin !
Mon esprit, comme mes vertèbres,
Invoque ardemment le repos ;
Le coeur plein de songes funèbres,
Je vais me coucher sur le dos
Et me rouler dans vos rideaux,
Ô rafraîchissantes ténèbres ! »

– Charles Baudelaire

The End of the Day

Under a pallid light, noisy,
Impudent Life runs and dances,
Twists and turns, for no good reason
So, as soon as voluptuous
Night rises from the horizon,
Assuaging all, even hunger,
Effacing all, even shame,
The Poet says to himself : "At last !
My spirit, like my vertebrae,

Passionately invokes repose ;
With a heart full of gloomy dreams,
I shall lie down flat on my back
And wrap myself in your curtains,
O refreshing shadows !"

– William Aggeler, 1954

The End of the Day

Under the wan, dejected skies,
Impudent, raucous, full of treason,
This life runs dancing without reason.
Voluptuous night begins to rise,
Appeasing even those who fast,
Ravenous hunger making tame,
And hiding all things, even shame,
Until the Poet says, "At last
My spirit, like my weary spine,
Can do with slumber, that is certain,
Sad dreams invade this heart of mine.
I'm off to lie down on my back,
And roll myself into your curtain,
Refreshing shadows, dense and black !"

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Rêve d'un Curieux (1861)

Le Rêve d'un Curieux

À Félix Nadar

Connais-tu, comme moi, la douleur savoureuse
Et de toi fais-tu dire : « Oh ! l'homme singulier ! »
– J'allais mourir. C'était dans mon âme amoureuse
Désir mêlé d'horreur, un mal particulier ;
Angoisse et vif espoir, sans humeur factieuse.
Plus allait se vidant le fatal sablier,
Plus ma torture était âpre et délicieuse ;
Tout mon cœur s'arrachait au monde familier.
J'étais comme l'enfant avide du spectacle,
Haïssant le rideau comme on hait un obstacle...
Enfin la vérité froide se révéla :
J'étais mort sans surprise, et la terrible aurore
M'enveloppait. – Eh quoi ! n'est-ce donc que cela ?
La toile était levée et j'attendais encore.

– Charles Baudelaire

The Dream of a Curious Man

To F.N.

Do you know as I do, delectable suffering ?
And do you have them say of you : "O ! the strange man !"
– I was going to die. In my soul, full of love,
A peculiar illness ; desire mixed with horror,
Anguish and bright hopes ; without internal strife.
The more the fatal hour-glass continued to flow,

The fiercer and more delightful grew my torture ;
My heart was being torn from this familiar world.
I was like a child eager for the play,
Hating the curtain as one hates an obstacle...
Finally the cold truth revealed itself :
I had died and was not surprised ; the awful dawn
Enveloped me. – What ! is that all there is to it ?
The curtain had risen and I was still waiting.

– William Aggeler, 1954

Dream of a Curious Person

To F.N.

Have you known such a savoury grief as I ?
Do people say "Strange fellow !," whom you meet ?
– My amorous soul, when I was due to die,
Felt longing mixed with horror ; pain seemed sweet.
Anguish and ardent hope (no factious whim)
Were mixed : and as the sands of life ran low
My torture grew delicious yet more grim,
And of this dear old world would not let go.
I seemed a child, so keen to see the Show
He feels a deadly hatred of the Curtain...
And then I saw the hard, cold truth for certain.
I felt that dreadful dawn around me grow
With no surprise or vestige of a thrill.
The curtain rose – and I stayed waiting still.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Le Voyage (1861)

Le Voyage

À Maxime du Camp

I

Pour l'enfant, amoureux de cartes et d'estampes,
L'univers est égal à son vaste appétit.
Ah ! que le monde est grand à la clarté des lampes !
Aux yeux du souvenir que le monde est petit !
Un matin nous partons, le cerveau plein de flamme,
Le cœur gros de rancune et de désirs amers,
Et nous allons, suivant le rythme de la lame,
Berçant notre infini sur le fini des mers :
Les uns, joyeux de fuir une patrie infâme ;
D'autres, l'horreur de leurs berceaux, et quelques-uns,
Astrologues noyés dans les yeux d'une femme,
La Circé tyrannique aux dangereux parfums.
Pour n'être pas changés en bêtes, ils s'enivrent
D'espace et de lumière et de ciels embrasés ;
La glace qui les mord, les soleils qui les cuivent,
Effacent lentement la marque des baisers.
Mais les vrais voyageurs sont ceux-là seuls qui partent
Pour partir ; coeurs légers, semblables aux ballons,
De leur fatalité jamais ils ne s'écartent,
Et, sans savoir pourquoi, disent toujours : Allons !
Ceux-là dont les désirs ont la forme des nues,
Et qui rêvent, ainsi qu'un conscrit le canon,
De vastes voluptés, changeantes, inconnues,
Et dont l'esprit humain n'a jamais su le nom !

II

Nous imitons, horreur ! la toupie et la boule
Dans leur valse et leurs bonds ; même dans nos sommeils
La Curiosité nous tourmente et nous roule
Comme un Ange cruel qui fouette des soleils.
Singulière fortune où le but se déplace,
Et, n'étant nulle part, peut être n'importe où !
Où l'Homme, dont jamais l'espérance n'est lasse,
Pour trouver le repos court toujours comme un fou !
Notre âme est un trois-mâts cherchant son Icarie ;
Une voix retentit sur le pont : « Ouvre l'oeil ! »
Une voix de la hune, ardente et folle, crie :
« Amour... gloire... bonheur ! » Enfer ! c'est un écueil !
Chaque îlot signalé par l'homme de vigie
Est un Eldorado promis par le Destin ;
L'Imagination qui dresse son orgie
Ne trouve qu'un récif aux clartés du matin.
Ô le pauvre amoureux des pays chimériques !
Faut-il le mettre aux fers, le jeter à la mer,
Ce matelot ivrogne, inventeur d'Amériques
Dont le mirage rend le gouffre plus amer ?
Tel le vieux vagabond, piétinant dans la boue,
Rêve, le nez en l'air, de brillants paradis ;
Son oeil ensorcelé découvre une Capoue
Partout où la chandelle illumine un taudis.

III

Etonnantes voyageurs ! quelles nobles histoires
Nous lisons dans vos yeux profonds comme les mers !
Montrez-nous les écrins de vos riches mémoires,
Ces bijoux merveilleux, faits d'astres et d'éthers.
Nous voulons voyager sans vapeur et sans voile !
Faites, pour égayer l'ennui de nos prisons,
Passer sur nos esprits, tendus comme une toile,
Vos souvenirs avec leurs cadres d'horizons.
Dites, qu'avez-vous vu ?

IV

« Nous avons vu des astres
Et des flots, nous avons vu des sables aussi ;

Et, malgré bien des chocs et d'imprévus désastres,
Nous nous sommes souvent ennuyés, comme ici.
La gloire du soleil sur la mer violette,
La gloire des cités dans le soleil couchant,
Allumaient dans nos coeurs une ardeur inquiète
De plonger dans un ciel au reflet alléchant.
Les plus riches cités, les plus grands paysages,
Jamais ne contenaient l'attrait mystérieux
De ceux que le hasard fait avec les nuages.
Et toujours le désir nous rendait soucieux !
– La jouissance ajoute au désir de la force.
Désir, vieil arbre à qui le plaisir sert d'engrais,
Cependant que grossit et durcit ton écorce,
Tes branches veulent voir le soleil de plus près !
Grandiras-tu toujours, grand arbre plus vivace
Que le cyprès ? – Pourtant nous avons, avec soin,
Cueilli quelques croquis pour votre album vorace
Frères qui trouvez beau tout ce qui vient de loin !
Nous avons salué des idoles à trompe ;
Des trônes constellés de joyaux lumineux ;
Des palais ouvragés dont la féerique pompe
Serait pour vos banquiers un rêve ruineux ;
Des costumes qui sont pour les yeux une ivresse ;
Des femmes dont les dents et les ongles sont teints,
Et des jongleurs savants que le serpent caresse. »

V

Et puis, et puis encore ?

VI

« Ô cerveaux enfantins !
Pour ne pas oublier la chose capitale,
Nous avons vu partout, et sans l'avoir cherché,
Du haut jusques en bas de l'échelle fatale,
Le spectacle ennuyeux de l'immortel péché :
La femme, esclave vile, orgueilleuse et stupide,
Sans rire s'adorant et s'aimant sans dégoût ;
L'homme, tyran goulu, paillard, dur et cupide,
Esclave de l'esclave et ruisseau dans l'égout ;
Le bourreau qui jouit, le martyr qui sanglote ;

La fête qu'assaisonne et parfume le sang ;
Le poison du pouvoir énervant le despote,
Et le peuple amoureux du fouet abrutissant ;
Plusieurs religions semblables à la nôtre,
Toutes escaladant le ciel ; la Sainteté,
Comme en un lit de plume un délicat se vautre,
Dans les clous et le crin cherchant la volupté ;
L'Humanité bavarde, ivre de son génie,
Et, folle maintenant comme elle était jadis,
Criant à Dieu, dans sa furibonde agonie :
“Ô mon semblable, mon maître, je te maudis !”
Et les moins sots, hardis amants de la Démence,
Fuyant le grand troupeau parqué par le Destin,
Et se réfugiant dans l'opium immense !
– Tel est du globe entier l'éternel bulletin. »

VII

Amer savoir, celui qu'on tire du voyage !
Le monde, monotone et petit, aujourd'hui,
Hier, demain, toujours, nous fait voir notre image :
Une oasis d'horreur dans un désert d'ennui !
Faut-il partir ? rester ? Si tu peux rester, reste ;
Pars, s'il le faut. L'un court, et l'autre se tapit
Pour tromper l'ennemi vigilant et funeste,
Le Temps ! Il est, hélas ! des coureurs sans répit,
Comme le Juif errant et comme les apôtres,
À qui rien ne suffit, ni wagon ni vaisseau,
Pour fuir ce rétiaire infâme ; il en est d'autres
Qui savent le tuer sans quitter leur berceau.
Lorsque enfin il mettra le pied sur notre échine,
Nous pourrons espérer et crier : En avant !
De même qu'autrefois nous partions pour la Chine,
Les yeux fixés au large et les cheveux au vent,
Nous nous embarquerons sur la mer des Ténèbres
Avec le coeur joyeux d'un jeune passager.
Entendez-vous ces voix charmantes et funèbres,
Qui chantent : « Par ici vous qui voulez manger
Le Lotus parfumé ! c'est ici qu'on vendange
Les fruits miraculeux dont votre coeur a faim ;
Venez vous enivrer de la douceur étrange

De cette après-midi qui n'a jamais de fin ! »
À l'accent familier nous devinons le spectre ;
Nos Pylades l'agréve-bas tendent leurs bras vers nous.
« Pour rafraîchir ton cœur nage vers ton Electre ! »
Dit celle dont jadis nous bâisions les genoux.

VIII

Ô Mort, vieux capitaine, il est temps ! levons l'ancre !
Ce pays nous ennuie, ô Mort ! Appareillons !
Si le ciel et la mer sont noirs comme de l'encre,
Nos coeurs que tu connais sont remplis de rayons !
Verse-nous ton poison pour qu'il nous réconforte !
Nous voulons, tant ce feu nous brûle le cerveau,
Plonger au fond du gouffre, Enfer ou Ciel, qu'importe ?
Au fond de l'Inconnu pour trouver du *nouveau* !

– Charles Baudelaire

The Voyage

To Maxime du Camp

I

To a child who is fond of maps and engravings
The universe is the size of his immense hunger.
Ah ! how vast is the world in the light of a lamp !
In memory's eyes how small the world is !
One morning we set out, our brains aflame,
Our hearts full of resentment and bitter desires,
And we go, following the rhythm of the wave,
Lulling our infinite on the finite of the seas :
Some, joyful at fleeing a wretched fatherland ;
Others, the horror of their birthplace ; a few,
Astrologers drowned in the eyes of some woman,
Some tyrannic Circe with dangerous perfumes.
Not to be changed into beasts, they get drunk
With space, with light, and with fiery skies ;
The ice that bites them, the suns that bronze them,
Slowly efface the bruise of the kisses.

But the true voyagers are only those who leave
Just to be leaving ; hearts light, like balloons,
They never turn aside from their fatality
And without knowing why they always say : "Let's go!"
Those whose desires have the form of the clouds,
And who, as a raw recruit dreams of the cannon,
Dream of vast voluptuousness, changing and strange,
Whose name the human mind has never known !

II

Horror ! We imitate the top and bowling ball,
Their bounding and their waltz ; even in our slumber
Curiosity torments us, rolls us about,
Like a cruel Angel who lashes suns.
Singular destiny where the goal moves about,
And being nowhere can be anywhere !
Toward which Man, whose hope never grows weary,
Is ever running like a madman to find rest !
Our soul's a three-master seeking Icaria ;
A voice resounds upon the bridge : "Keep a sharp eye !" "
From aloft a voice, ardent and wild, cries :
"Love... glory... happiness !" – Damnation ! It's a shoal !
Every small island sighted by the man on watch
Is the Eldorado promised by Destiny ;
Imagination preparing for her orgy
Finds but a reef in the light of the dawn.
O the poor lover of imaginary lands !
Must he be put in irons, thrown into the sea,
That drunken tar, inventor of Americas,
Whose mirage makes the abyss more bitter ?
Thus the old vagabond tramping through the mire
Dreams with his nose in the air of brilliant Edens ;
His enchanted eye discovers a Capua
Wherever a candle lights up a hut.

III

Astonishing voyagers ! What splendid stories
We read in your eyes as deep as the seas !
Show us the chest of your rich memories,
Those marvelous jewels, made of ether and stars.

We wish to voyage without steam and without sails !
To brighten the ennui of our prisons,
Make your memories, framed in their horizons,
Pass across our minds stretched like canvasses.
Tell us what you have seen.

IV

"We have seen stars
And waves ; we have also seen sandy wastes ;
And in spite of many a shock and unforeseen
Disaster, we were often bored, as we are here.
The glory of sunlight upon the purple sea,
The glory of cities against the setting sun,
Kindled in our hearts a troubling desire
To plunge into a sky of alluring colors.
The richest cities, the finest landscapes,
Never contained the mysterious attraction
Of the ones that chance fashions from the clouds
And desire was always making us more avid !
– Enjoyment fortifies desire.
Desire, old tree fertilized by pleasure,
While your bark grows thick and hardens,
Your branches strive to get closer to the sun !
Will you always grow, tall tree more hardy
Than the cypress ? – However, we have carefully
Gathered a few sketches for your greedy album,
Brothers who think lovely all that comes from afar !
We have bowed to idols with elephantine trunks ;
Thrones studded with luminous jewels ;
Palaces so wrought that their fairly-like splendor
Would make your bankers have dreams of ruination ;
And costumes that intoxicate the eyes ;
Women whose teeth and fingernails are dyed
And clever mountebanks whom the snake caresses."

V

And then, and then what else ?

VI

"O childish minds !
Not to forget the most important thing,
We saw everywhere, without seeking it,
From the foot to the top of the fatal ladder,
The wearisome spectacle of immortal sin :
Woman, a base slave, haughty and stupid,
Adoring herself without laughter or disgust ;
Man, a greedy tyrant, ribald, hard and grasping,
A slave of the slave, a gutter in the sewer ;
The hangman who feels joy and the martyr who sobs,
The festival that blood flavors and perfumes ;
The poison of power making the despot weak,
And the people loving the brutalizing whip ;
Several religions similar to our own,
All climbing up to heaven ; Saintliness
Like a dilettante who sprawls in a feather bed,
Seeking voluptuousness on horsehair and nails ;
Prating humanity, drunken with its genius,
And mad now as it was in former times,
Crying to God in its furious death-struggle :
'O my fellow, O my master, may you be damned !'
The less foolish, bold lovers of Madness,
Fleeing the great flock that Destiny has folded,
Taking refuge in opium's immensity !
– That's the unchanging report of the entire globe."

VII

Bitter is the knowledge one gains from voyaging !
The world, monotonous and small, today,
Yesterday, tomorrow, always, shows us our image :
An oasis of horror in a desert of ennui !
Must one depart ? Remain ? If you can stay, remain ;
Leave, if you must. One runs, another hides
To elude the vigilant, fatal enemy,
Time ! There are, alas ! those who rove without respite,
Like the Wandering Jew and like the Apostles,
Whom nothing suffices, neither coach nor vessel,
To flee this infamous retiary ; and others

Who know how to kill him without leaving their cribs.
And when at last he sets his foot upon our spine,
We can hope and cry out : Forward !
Just as in other times we set out for China,
Our eyes fixed on the open sea, hair in the wind,
We shall embark on the sea of Darkness
With the glad heart of a young traveler.
Do you hear those charming, melancholy voices
Singing : "Come this way ! You who wish to eat
The perfumed Lotus ! It's here you gather
The miraculous fruits for which your heart hungers ;
Come and get drunken with the strange sweetness
Of this eternal afternoon ?"
By the familiar accent we know the specter ;
Our Pylades yonder stretch out their arms towards us.
"To refresh your heart swim to your Electra !"
Cries she whose knees we kissed in other days.

VIII

O Death, old captain, it is time ! let's weigh anchor !
This country wearies us, O Death ! Let us set sail !
Though the sea and the sky are black as ink,
Our hearts which you know well are filled with rays of light
Pour out your poison that it may refresh us !
This fire burns our brains so fiercely, we wish to plunge
To the abyss' depths, Heaven or Hell, does it matter ?
To the depths of the Unknown to find something new !

– William Aggeler, 1954

The Voyage

To Maxime du Camp

I

For children crazed with postcards, prints, and stamps
All space can scarce suffice their appetite.
How vast the world seems by the light of lamps,
But in the eyes of memory how slight !

One morning we set sail, with brains on fire,
And hearts swelled up with rancorous emotion,
Balancing, to the rhythm of its lyre,
Our infinite upon the finite ocean.

Some wish to leave their venal native skies,
Some flee their birthplace, others change their ways,
Astrologers who've drowned in Beauty's eyes,
Tyrannic Circe with the scent that slays.

Not to be changed to beasts, they have their fling
With space, and splendour, and the burning sky,
The suns that bronze them and the frosts that sting
Efface the mark of kisses by and by.

But the true travellers are those who go
Only to get away : hearts like balloons
Unballasted, with their own fate aglow,
Who know not why they fly with the monsoons :

Those whose desires are in the shape of clouds.
And dream, as raw recruits of shot and shell,
Of mighty raptures in strange, transient crowds
Of which no human soul the name can tell.

II

Horror ! We imitate the top and bowl
In swerve and bias. Through our sleep it runs.
It's Curiosity that makes us roll
As the fierce Angel whips the whirling suns.

Singular game ! where the goal changes places ;
The winning-post is nowhere, yet all round ;
Where Man tires not of the mad hope he races
Thinking, some day, that respite will be found.

Our soul's like a three-master, where one hears
A voice that from the bridge would warn all hands.
Another from the foretop madly cheers
"Love, joy, and glory" ... Hell ! we're on the sands !

The watchmen think each isle that heaves in view
An Eldorado, shouting their belief.
Imagination riots in the crew
Who in the morning only find a reef.

The fool that dotes on far, chimeric lands –
Put him in irons, or feed him to the shark !

The drunken sailor's visionary lands
Can only leave the bitter truth more stark.
So some old vagabond, in mud who grovels,
Dreams, nose in air, of Edens sweet to roam.
Wherever smoky wicks illumine hovels
He sees another Capua or Rome.

III

Amazing travellers, what noble stories
We read in the deep oceans of your gaze !
Show us your memory's casket, and the glories
Streaming from gems made out of stars and rays !
We, too, would roam without a sail or steam,
And to combat the boredom of our jail,
Would stretch, like canvas on our souls, a dream,
Framed in horizons, of the seas you sail.
What have you seen ?

IV

"We have seen stars and waves.
We have seen sands and shores and oceans too,
In spite of shocks and unexpected graves,
We have been bored, at times, the same as you.
The solar glories on the violet ocean
And those of spires that in the sunset rise,
Lit, in our hearts, a yearning, fierce emotion
To plunge into those ever-luring skies.
The richest cities and the scenes most proud
In nature, have no magic to enamour
Like those which hazard traces in the cloud
While wistful longing magnifies their glamour.
Enjoyment adds more fuel for desire,
Old tree, to which all pleasure is manure ;
As the bark hardens, so the boughs shoot higher,
And nearer to the sun would grow mature.
Tree, will you always flourish, more vivacious
Than cypress ? – None the less, these views are yours :
We took some photographs for your voracious
Album, who only care for distant shores.
We have seen idols elephantine-snouted,

And thrones with living gems bestarred and pearled,
And palaces whose riches would have routed
The dreams of all the bankers in the world.
We have seen wonder-striking robes and dresses,
Women whose nails and teeth the betel stains
And jugglers whom the rearing snake caresses."

V

What then? What then?

VI

"O childish little brains,
Not to forget the greatest wonder there –
We've seen in every country, without searching,
From top to bottom of the fatal stair
Immortal sin ubiquitously lurching :
Woman, a vile slave, proud in her stupidity,
Self-worshipping, without the least disgust :
Man, greedy, lustful, ruthless in cupidity,
Slave to a slave, and sewer to her lust :
The torturer's delight, the martyr's sobs,
The feasts where blood perfumes the giddy rout :
Power sapping its own tyrants : servile mobs
In amorous obeisance to the knout :
Some similar religions to our own,
All climbing skywards : Sanctity who treasures,
As in his downy couch some dainty drone,
In horsehair, nails, and whips, his dearest pleasures.
Prating Humanity, with genius raving,
As mad today as ever from the first,
Cries in fierce agony, its Maker braving,
'O God, my Lord and likeness, be thou cursed !'
But those less dull, the lovers of Dementia,
Fleeing the herd which fate has safe impounded,
In opium seek for limitless adventure.
– That's all the record of the globe we rounded."

VII

It's bitter knowledge that one learns from travel.
The world so small and drab, from day to day,

The horror of our image will unravel,
A pool of dread in deserts of dismay.
Must we depart, or stay ? Stay if you can.
Go if you must. One runs : another hides
To baffle Time, that fatal foe to man.
And there are runners, whom no rest betides,
Like the Apostles or the Wandering Jew,
Whom neither ship nor waggon can enable
To cheat the retriary. But not a few
Have killed him without stirring from their cradle.
But when he sets his foot upon our nape
We still can hope and cry "Leave all behind!"
As in old times to China we'll escape
With eyes turned seawards, hair that fans the wind,
We'll sail once more upon the sea of Shades
With heart like that of a young sailor beating.
I hear the rich, sad voices of the Trades
Who cry "This Way ! all you who would be eating
The scented Lotus. Here it is they range
The piles of magic fruit. O hungry friend,
Come here and swoon away into the strange
Trance of an afternoon that has no end."
In the familiar tones we sense the spectre.
Our Pylades stretch arms across the seas,
"To salve your heart, now swim to your Electra"
She cries, of whom we used to kiss the knees.

VIII

O Death, old Captain, it is time. Weigh anchor !
To sail beyond the doldrums of our days.
Though black as pitch the sea and sky, we hanker
For space ; you know our hearts are full of rays.
Pour us your poison to revive our soul !
It cheers the burning quest that we pursue,
Careless if Hell or Heaven be our goal,
Beyond the known world to seek out the New !

– Roy Campbell, 1952



CARLO S. SCHWABE 86

LES ÉPAVES
SCRAPS
1866

Les Promesses d'un visage

Les Promesses d'un visage

J'aime, ô pâle beauté, tes sourcils surbaissés,
D'où semblent couler des ténèbres ;
Tes yeux, quoique très-noirs, m'inspirent des pensers
Qui ne sont pas du tout funèbres.
Tes yeux, qui sont d'accord avec tes noirs cheveux,
Avec ta crinière élastique,
Tes yeux, languissamment, me disent : « Si tu veux,
Amant de la muse plastique,
Suivre l'espoir qu'en toi nous avons excité,
Et tous les goûts que tu professes,
Tu pourras constater notre véracité
Depuis le nombril jusqu'aux fesses ;
Tu trouveras au bout de deux beaux seins bien lourds,
Deux larges médailles de bronze,
Et sous un ventre uni, doux comme du velours,
Bistré comme la peau d'un bonze,
Une riche toison qui, vraiment, est la soeur
De cette énorme chevelure,
Souple et frisée, et qui t'égale en épaisseur,
Nuit sans étoiles, Nuit obscure ! »

– Charles Baudelaire

The Promises of a Face

I love your elliptical eyebrows, my pale beauty,
From which darkness seems to flow ;
Although so black, your eyes suggest to me

Thoughts in no way funereal.
Your eyes, in harmony with your black hair,
With your buoyant mane,
Your swooning eyes now tell me : "If you wish,
O lover of the plastic muse,
To follow the hope we have excited in you,
And all the fancies you profess,
You will be able to prove our truthfulness
From the navel to the buttocks ;
You will find at the tips of two heavy breasts
Two slack bronze medallions,
And under a smooth belly, soft as velvet,
Swarthy as the skin of a Buddhist,
A rich fleece, which truly is the sister
Of this huge head of hair,
Compliant and curly, its thickness equals
Black night, night without stars!"

– Geoffrey Wagner, 1974

Le Monstre

Le Monstre

I

Tu n'es certes pas, ma très-chère,
Ce que Veuillot nomme un tendron.
Le jeu, l'amour, la bonne chère,
Bouillonnent en toi, vieux chaudron !
Tu n'es plus fraîche, ma très-chère,
Ma vieille infante ! Et cependant
Tes caravanes insensées
T'ont donné ce lustre abondant
Des choses qui sont très-usées,
Mais qui séduisent cependant.
Je ne trouve pas monotone
La verdure de tes quarante ans ;
Je préfère tes fruits, Automne,
Aux fleurs banales du Printemps !
Non ! tu n'es jamais monotone !
Ta carcasse à des agréments
Et des grâces particulières ;
Je trouve d'étranges piments
Dans le creux de tes deux salières ;
Ta carcasse à des agréments !
Nargue des amants ridicules
Du melon et du giraumont !
Je préfère tes clavicules
A celles du roi Salomon,
Et je plains ces gens ridicules !
Tes cheveux, comme un casque bleu,
Ombragent ton front de guerrière,

Qui ne pense et rougit que peu,
Et puis se sauvent par derrière,
Comme les crins d'un casque bleu.
Tes yeux qui semblent de la boue,
Où scintille quelque fanal,
Ravivés au fard de ta joue,
Lancent un éclair infernal !
Tes yeux sont noirs comme la boue !
Par sa luxure et son dédain
Ta lèvre amère nous provoque ;
Cette lèvre, c'est un Eden
Qui nous attire et qui nous choque.
Quelle luxure ! et quel dédain !
Ta jambe muscleuse et sèche
Sait gravir au haut des volcans,
Et malgré la neige et la dèche
Danser les plus fougueux cancans.
Ta jambe est muscleuse et sèche ;
Ta peau brûlante et sans douceur,
Comme celle des vieux gendarmes,
Ne connaît pas plus la sueur
Que ton oeil ne connaît les larmes.
(Et pourtant elle a sa douceur !)

II

Sotte, tu t'en vas droit au Diable !
Volontiers j'irais avec toi,
Si cette vitesse effroyable
Ne me causait pas quelque émoi.
Va-t'en donc, toute seule, au Diable !
Mon rein, mon poumon, mon jarret
Ne me laissent plus rendre hommage
A ce Seigneur, comme il faudrait.
« Hélas ! c'est vraiment bien dommage ! »
Disent mon rein et mon jarret.
Oh ! très-sincèrement je souffre
De ne pas aller aux sabbats,
Pour voir, quand il pète du soufre,
Comment tu lui baisses son cas !
Oh ! très-sincèrement je souffre !

Je suis diablement affligé
De ne pas être ta torchère,
Et de te demander congé,
Flambeau d'enfer ! Juge, ma chère,
Combien je dois être affligé,
Puisque depuis longtemps je t'aime,
Étant très-logique ! En effet,
Voulant du Mal chercher la crème
Et n'aimer qu'un monstre parfait,
Vraiment oui ! vieux monstre, je t'aime !

– Charles Baudelaire

I

Beloved, certainly you're not
What Veuillot calls a "tenderling."
Bubbling in you, as in a pot,
Dice, lust and revel have their fling.
My dear old child, you're surely not
Too fresh these days. However, dear,
Your tireless game of fast-and-loose
Has given you that smooth veneer,
That things acquire from constant use.
It has its charms, however dear.
I do not find it growing stale –
That sap your forty summers bring
Since autumn fruits with me prevail
Over the banal flowers of spring.
No ! you are never dull nor stale.
Your carcase for your age atones,
And gives particular delight
In hollows of your collar bones,
And other places out of sight.
Your carcase certainly atones.
A fig for those poor doting fools
Who're melon-struck and pumpkin mad,
Since I prefer your clavicles

To those King Solomon once had.
A fig for such poor doting fools !
A blue-black helmet is your hair.
It shades your warrior's brow whereon
Both thoughts and blushes are so rare –
And then sweeps backward, and is gone !
A blue black helmet is your hair.
Your eyes resemble mud and mire,
Whereon a flaring lantern streaks,
Reflects the fard upon your checks,
And glows with pale infernal fire.
Your eyes are coloured like the mire.
By its voluptuous disdain
Your bitter lip provokes our lust.
It's Eden's apple once again,
Half is attraction, half disgust,
In its voluptuous disdain.
Your leg, so muscular and dry,
Could climb volcanoes, never stop,
And, spite of snow, and wind, and rain,
Perform a cancan at the top.
Your leg is muscular and dry.
Your burning skin is void of sweetness :
Like an old soldier's it appears.
To sweat it never had the weakness
More than your eyes could furnish tears.
And yet it has a kind of sweetness !

II

Fool ! You are driving to the Devil.
Willingly I would go with you
If the momentum of your revel
Did not exasperate me too.
Fool ! go, alone, then, to the Devil.
My hip, my lung, my hams, my thigh
Won't let me longer pay respects
(Although it often makes me sigh)
To that great Lord, as he expects.
It's very sad for ham and thigh
Oh most sincerely do I suffer

Not to accompany your freaks ;
When he is flatulating sulphur
To see you kiss him where he leaks.
O most sincerely do I suffer !
I feel so devilish annoyed
No more to serve you as a socket,
You hellish torch ! Infernal rocket !
And to declare my duty void ;
I do feel devilish annoyed,
Since for a long, long time I love you
Being so logical. My dream
Was of all ill to skim the cream,
Place no monstrosity above you
And own you in that line supreme.
Truly, old monster ! yes, I love you.

– Roy Campbell, 1952

Sur les débuts d'Amina Boschetti

Sur les débuts d'Amina Boschetti

Amina bondit, – fuit, – puis voltige et sourit ;
Le Welche dit : « Tout ça, pour moi, c'est du prâcrit ;
Je ne connais, en fait de nymphes bocagères,
Que celle de Montagne-aux-Herbes-potagères. »
Du bout de son pied fin et de son oeil qui rit,
Amina verse à flots le délire et l'esprit ;
Le Welche dit : « Fuyez, délices mensongères !
Mon épouse n'a pas ces allures légères. »
Vous ignorez, sylphide au jarret triomphant,
Qui voulez enseigner la valse à l'éléphant,
Au hibou la gaieté, le rire à la cigogne,
Que sur la grâce en feu le Welche dit : « Haro ! »
Et que, le doux Bacchus lui versant du bourgogne,
Le monstre répondrait : « J'aime mieux le faro ! »

– Charles Baudelaire

Amina Boschetti

Amina bounds... is startled... whirls and smiles.
The Belgian says, "That's fraud, a pure deceit.
As for your woodland nymphs, I know the wiles
Only of those on Brussels' Market Street."
From shapely foot and lively, laughing eye
Amina spills light elegance and wit.
The Belgian says, "Be gone, ye joys that fly !
My wife's attractions have more merit."
Oh, you forget, nymph of the winsome stance,

That though you'd teach an elephant to dance,
Teach owls new melodies, make dull birds shine,
All glimmering grace brings but a Belgian sneer :
Bacchus himself could pour bright southern wine,
This Boor would say, "Give me thick Brussels beer."

– **Kenneth O. Hanson**, 1955

À M. Eugène Fromentin

À M. Eugène Fromentin à propos d'un importun qui se disait son ami

Il me dit qu'il était très riche,
Mais qu'il craignait le choléra ;
– Que de son or il était chiche,
Mais qu'il goûtait fort l'Opéra ;
– Qu'il raffolait de la nature,
Ayant connu monsieur Corot ;
– Qu'il n'avait pas encor voiture,
Mais que cela viendrait bientôt ;
– Qu'il aimait le marbre et la brique,
Les bois noirs et les bois dorés ;
– Qu'il possédait dans sa fabrique
Trois contremaîtres décorés ;
– Qu'il avait, sans compter le reste,
Vingt mille actions sur le Nord ;
Qu'il avait trouvé, pour un zeste,
Des encadrements d'Oppenord ;
Qu'il donnerait (fût-ce à Luzarches !)
Dans le bric-à-brac jusqu'au cou,
Et qu'au Marché des Patriarches
Il avait fait plus d'un bon coup ;
Qu'il n'aimait pas beaucoup sa femme,
Ni sa mère ; – mais qu'il croyait
A l'immortalité de l'âme,
Et qu'il avait lu Niboyet !
– Qu'il penchait pour l'amour physique,
Et qu'à Rome, séjour d'ennui,
Une femme, d'ailleurs phtisique,

Etais morte d'amour pour lui.
Pendant trois heures et demie,
Ce bavard, venu de Tournai,
M'a dégoisé toute sa vie ;
J'en ai le cerveau consterné.
S'il fallait décrire ma peine,
Ce serait à n'en plus finir ;
Je me disais, domptant ma haine :
« Au moins, si je pouvais dormir ! »
Comme un qui n'est pas à son aise,
Et qui n'ose pas s'en aller,
Je frottais de mon cul ma chaise,
Rêvant de le faire empaler.
Ce monstre se nomme Bastogne ;
Il fuyait devant le fléau.
Moi, je fuirai jusqu'en Gascogne,
Ou j'irai me jeter à l'eau,
Si dans ce Paris, qu'il redoute,
Quand chacun sera retourné,
Je trouve encore sur ma route
Ce fléau, natif de Tournai.

– Charles Baudelaire

About a Bore Who Claimed His Acquaintance

To M. Eugene Fromentin

He told me just how rich he was,
But nervous of the cholera ;
– That he took good care where the money goes,
But he liked a seat at the Opera.
– That he was simply wild about nature,
Monsieur Corot being quite an old chum ;
– That a carriage was still a missing feature
Among his goods – but it would come ;
– That marble and brick divided his fancy,
Along with ebony and gilded wood ;
– That there were in his factory
Three foremen who had been decorated ;

– That, not to mention all the rest,
He had twenty thousand shares in the Nord ;
– That he'd found some picture-frames for next
To nothing, and all by Oppenord.
– That he'd go as far even as Luzarches
To steep himself in bric-a-brac ;
– That the Marché des Patriarches
Had more than once proved his collector's knack ;
That he didn't care much for his wife
Nor for his mother, but – theirs apart –
He believed in the soul's immortal life,
Niboyet's works he had by heart !
– That he quite approved of physical passion,
And once, on a tedious stay in Rome,
A consumptive lady, much in fashion,
Had died away for love of him.
– For three solid hours and a half,
This chatteringer, born in Tournai,
Dished up to me the whole of his life,
Until my brain almost fainted away.
If I had to tell you all I suffered
I would never be able to give up.
I sat in helpless hate, and muttered
"If only I could lie down and sleep!"
Like someone whose seat can give no rest
But who cannot get up and make his escape,
I squirmed and brooded on all the best
Methods of torturing the ape.
Bastogne this monstrosity's called ;
He was running away from the infection.
I would drown myself, or take the road
To Gascony, or in any direction
If, when everybody gets back
To the Paris he's so much afraid of,
I should happen to cross the track
Of this pest that Tournai bore – and got rid of !

– David Paul, 1955

Un Cabaret folâtre

Un Cabaret folâtre

(Sur la route de Bruxelles à Uccle)

Vous qui raffolez des squelettes
Et des emblèmes détestés,
Pour épicer les voluptés,
(Fût-ce de simples omelettes !)
Vieux Pharaon, ô Monselet !
Devant cette enseigne imprévue,
J'ai rêvé de vous : *À la vue*
Du Cimetière, Estaminet !

– Charles Baudelaire

A Gay Chophouse

(On the road from Brussels to Uccle)

You who adore the skeleton
And all such horrible devices
As so many *relishes* and spices
To tickle the delicate palate on,
You old Pharaoh, Monselet,
Here's a sign I saw that will surely whet
Your appetite for an omelette ;
It read : *Cemetery View. Estaminet.*

– David Paul, 1955

APPENDIX

Charles Pierre Baudelaire

Charles Pierre Baudelaire (April 9, 1821 – August 31, 1867) was an influential nineteenth century French poet, critic and acclaimed translator.

Baudelaire was born in Paris. His father, a senior civil servant and amateur artist, died early in Baudelaire's life in 1827. In the following year, his mother married a lieutenant colonel Jacques Aupick, who later became a French ambassador to various courts. Baudelaire was educated in Lyon and at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand in Paris. Upon gaining his degree in 1839, he decided to embark upon a literary career, and for the next two years led an irregular life. He may have contracted syphilis during this period. In the hope of reforming him, his guardians sent him on a voyage to India in 1841, but he never arrived. When he returned to Paris, after less than a year's absence, he received a small inheritance, but he spent it within a few years. His family obtained a decree to place his property in trust. During this time he met Jeanne Duval, who was to become his longest romantic association.

His art reviews of 1845 and 1846 attracted immediate attention for their boldness ; many of his critical opinions were novel in their time, but have since been generally accepted. He took part in the Revolutions of 1848, and for some years was interested in republican politics, but his political convictions spanned the anarchism of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the history of the *Raison d'État* of Giuseppe Ferrari, and ultramontane critique of liberalism of Joseph de Maistre.

Baudelaire was a slow and fastidious worker, and it was not until 1857 that he published his first and most famous volume of poems, *Les Fleurs du mal* ("The Flowers of Evil"). Some of these poems had already appeared in the *Revue des deux mondes* (*Review of Two Worlds*), when they were published by Baudelaire's friend Auguste Poulet Malassis, who had inherited a printing business at Alençon. The poems found a small appreciative audience, but greater public attention was given to their subject matter. The principal themes of sex and death were considered scandalous, and the book became a byword for unwholesomeness among mainstream critics

of the day. Baudelaire, his publisher, and the printer were successfully prosecuted for creating an offense against public morals. In the poem "*Au lecteur*" ("To the Reader") that prefaces *Les fleurs du mal*, Baudelaire accuses his readers of hypocrisy and of being as guilty of sins and lies as the poet :

... If rape or arson, poison, or the knife
Has wove no pleasing patterns in the stuff
Of this drab canvas we accept as life—
It is because we are not bold enough!

(Roy Campbell's translation)

Six of the poems were suppressed, but printed later as *Les Épaves* ("The Wrecks") (Brussels, 1866). Another edition of *Les fleurs du mal*, without these poems, but with considerable additions, appeared in 1861.

His other works include *Petits Poèmes en prose* ("Small Prose poems"); *a series of art reviews published in the Pays, Exposition universelle* ("Country, World Fair"); *studies on Gustave Flaubert* (*in L'Artiste, October 18, 1857*) ; *on Théophile Gautier* (*Revue contemporaine, September, 1858*) ; *various articles contributed to Eugène Crepet's Poètes français* ; *Les Paradis artificiels : opium et haschisch* ("French poets ; Artificial Paradises : opium and hashish") (1860) ; and *Un Dernier Chapitre de l'histoire des œuvres de Balzac* ("A Final Chapter of the history of works of Balzac") (1880), originally an article entitled "Comment on paye ses dettes quand on a du génie" ("How one pays one's debts when one has genius"), in which his criticism turns against his friends Honoré de Balzac, Théophile Gautier, and Gérard de Nerval.

Baudelaire learned English in his childhood, and Gothic novels, such as Lewis's *The Monk*, became some of his favourite reading matter. In 1846 and 1847 he became acquainted with the works of Edgar Allan Poe, in which he found tales and poems which had, he claimed, long existed in his own brain but never taken shape. From this time until 1865, he was largely occupied with translating Poe's works ; his translations were widely praised. These were published as *Histoires extraordinaires* ("Extraordinary stories") (1852), *Nouvelles histoires extraordinaires* ("New extraordinary stories") (1857), *Aventures d'Arthur Gordon Pym, Eureka, and Histoires grotesques et sérieuses* ("Grotesque and serious stories") (1865). Two essays on Poe are to be found in his *Oeuvres complètes* ("Complete works") (Vols. V. and VI.).

His financial difficulties increased, particularly after his publisher Poulet Malassis went bankrupt in 1861, and in 1864 he left Paris for Belgium, partly in the hope of selling the rights to his works. For many years he had a long-standing relationship with a mixed-race woman, Jeanne Duval, whom he helped to the end of his life. He smoked opium, and in Brussels

he began to drink to excess. He suffered a massive stroke in 1866 and paralysis followed. The last two years of his life were spent in "*maisons de santé*" in Brussels and in Paris, where he died on August 31, 1867. Many of his works were published posthumously.

He is buried in the *Cimetière du Montparnasse*, Paris.

from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Baudelaire

