

Classic Poetry Series

Charles Baudelaire
- poems -

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Charles Baudelaire(9 April 1821 – 31 August 1867)

Charles Pierre Baudelaire was a French poet who produced notable work as an essayist, art critic, and pioneering translator of ["The Painter of Modern Life"](#)

Baudelaire the poet

Who among us has not dreamt, in moments of ambition, of the miracle of a poetic prose, musical without rhythm and rhyme, supple and staccato enough to adapt to the lyrical stirrings of the soul, the undulations of dreams, and sudden leaps of consciousness. This obsessive idea is above all a child of giant cities, of the intersecting of their myriad relations.

Baudelaire is one of the major innovators in French literature. His poetry is influenced by the French romantic poets of the earlier 19th century, although its attention to the formal features of verse connect it more closely to the work of the contemporary 'Parnassians'. As for theme and tone, in his works we see the rejection of the belief in the supremacy of nature and the fundamental goodness of man as typically espoused by the romantics and expressed by them in rhetorical, effusive and public voice in favor of a new urban sensibility, an awareness of individual moral complexity, an interest in vice (linked with decadence) and refined sensual and aesthetical pleasures, and the use of urban subject matter, such as the city, the crowd, individual passers-by, all expressed in highly ordered verse, sometimes through a cynical and ironic voice. Formally, the use of sound to create atmosphere, and of 'symbols', (images which take on an expanded function within the poem), betray a move towards considering the poem as a self-referential object, an idea further developed by the Symbolists Verlaine and Mallarmé, who acknowledge Baudelaire as a pioneer in this regard.

Beyond his innovations in versification and the theories of symbolism and 'correspondences', an awareness of which is essential to any appreciation of the literary value of his work, aspects of his work which regularly receive (or have received) much critical discussion include the role of women, the theological direction of his work and his alleged advocacy of 'satanism', his experience of drug-induced states of mind, the figure of the dandy, his stance regarding democracy and its implications for the individual, his response to the spiritual uncertainties of the time, his criticisms of the bourgeois, and his advocacy of modern music and painting (e.g., Wagner, Delacroix).

Early life

Baudelaire was born in Paris, France on April 9, 1821 and baptized two months later at Saint-Sulpice Roman Catholic Church. His father, François Baudelaire, a senior civil servant and amateur artist, was thirty-four years older than Baudelaire's mother. François died during Baudelaire's childhood, in 1827. The following year, Caroline married Lieutenant Colonel Jacques Aupick, who later became a French ambassador to various noble courts. Biographers have often seen this as a crucial moment, considering that finding himself no longer the sole focus of his mother's affection left him with a trauma which goes some way to explaining the excesses later apparent in his life. He stated in a letter to her that, "There was in my childhood a period of passionate love for you". Baudelaire regularly implored his mother for money throughout his career, often promising that a lucrative publishing contract or journalistic commission was just around the corner.

Baudelaire was educated in Lyon, where he boarded. Baudelaire at fourteen was described by a classmate: "He was much more refined and distinguished than any of our fellow pupils [...] we are bound to one another[...] by shared tastes and sympathies, the precocious love of fine works of literature". Baudelaire was erratic in his studies, at times diligent, at other times prone to "idleness". Later, he attended the Lycée Louis-le-Grand in Paris, studying law, a popular course for those not yet decided on any particular career. Baudelaire began to frequent prostitutes and may have contracted gonorrhoea and syphilis during this period. Baudelaire began to run up debts, mostly for clothes. Upon gaining his degree in 1839, he told his brother "I don't feel I have a vocation for anything." His stepfather had in mind a career in law or diplomacy, but instead Baudelaire decided to embark upon a literary career. His mother later recalled: "Oh, what grief! If Charles had let himself be guided by his stepfather, his career would have been very different... He would not have left a name in literature, it is true, but we should have been happier, all three of us".

His stepfather sent him on a voyage to Calcutta, India in 1841 in the hope of ending his dissolute habits. The trip provided strong impressions of the sea, sailing, and exotic ports, that he later employed in his poetry. (Baudelaire later exaggerated his aborted trip to create a legend about his youthful travels and experiences, including "riding on elephants".) Baudelaire returned to the taverns where he began to compose some of the poems of *Les Fleurs du Mal*. At twenty-one, he received a good-sized inheritance but squandered much of it within a few years. His family obtained a decree to place his property in trust which he resented bitterly, at one point arguing that allowing him to fail alone financially would have been the one sure way of teaching him the value of maintaining well-ordered finances.

Baudelaire became known in artistic circles as a dandy and free-spender. During this time Jeanne Duval became his mistress. His mother thought Duval a "Black Venus" who "tortured him in every way" and drained him of money at every opportunity. She was rejected by his family. He made a suicide attempt during this time.

Baudelaire took part in the Revolutions of 1848 and wrote for a revolutionary newspaper. However, his interest was passing, as he was later to note in his political writings in his journals.

In the early 1850s, Baudelaire struggled with poor health, pressing debts, and irregular literary output. He often moved from one lodging to another to escape creditors. He received many projects that he was unable to complete, though he did finish translations of stories by Edgar Allan Poe.

Upon the death of his stepfather in 1857, Baudelaire received no mention in the will but he was heartened nonetheless that the division with his mother might now be mended. At thirty-six he wrote her: "believe that I belong to you absolutely, and that I belong only to you".

Published career

His first published work was his art review "Salon of 1845," which attracted immediate attention for its boldness. Many of his critical opinions were novel in their time, including his championing of Delacroix, and some of his views seem remarkably in tune with the future theories of the Impressionist painters.

In 1846, Baudelaire wrote his second Salon review, gaining additional credibility as an advocate and critic of Romanticism. His support of Delacroix as the foremost Romantic artist gained widespread following year Baudelaire's novella *La Fanfarlo* was published.

The Flowers of Evil

Baudelaire was a slow and fastidious worker, often sidetracked by indolence, emotional distress and illness, 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.

The poems found a small, appreciative audience, but greater public attention was

given to their subject matter. The effect on fellow artists was, as Théodore de Banville stated, "immense, prodigious, unexpected, mingled with admiration and with some indefinable anxious fear". Flaubert, recently attacked in a similar fashion for *Madame Bovary* (and acquitted), was impressed and wrote to Baudelaire: "You have found a way to rejuvenate Romanticism... You are as unyielding as marble, and as penetrating as an English mist".

The principal themes of sex and death were considered scandalous. He also touched on lesbianism, sacred and profane love, metamorphosis, melancholy, the corruption of the city, lost innocence, the oppressiveness of living, and wine. Notable in some poems is Baudelaire's use of imagery of the sense of smell and of fragrances, which is used to evoke feelings of nostalgia and past intimacy.

The book, however, quickly became a byword for unwholesomeness among mainstream critics of the day. Some critics called a few of the poems "masterpieces of passion, art and poetry" but other poems were deemed to merit no less than legal action to suppress them. J. Habas writing in *Le Figaro*, led the charge against Baudelaire, writing: "Everything in it which is not hideous is incomprehensible, everything one understands is putrid". Then Baudelaire responded to the outcry, in a prophetic letter to his mother:

*"You know that I have always considered that literature and the arts pursue an aim independent of morality. Beauty of conception and style is enough for me. But this book, whose title (*Fleurs du mal*) says everything, is clad, as you will see, in a cold and sinister beauty. It was created with rage and patience. Besides, the proof of its positive worth is in all the ill that they speak of it. The book enrages people. Moreover, since I was terrified myself of the horror that I should inspire, I cut out a third from the proofs. They deny me everything, the spirit of invention and even the knowledge of the French language. I don't care a rap about all these imbeciles, and I know that this book, with its virtues and its faults, will make its way in the memory of the lettered public, beside the best poems of ["](#)*

Baudelaire, his publisher and the printer were successfully prosecuted for creating an offense against public morals. They were fined but Baudelaire was not imprisoned. 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. Many notables rallied behind Baudelaire and condemned the sentence. Victor Hugo wrote to him: "Your fleurs du mal shine and dazzle like stars... I applaud your vigorous spirit with all my might". Baudelaire did not appeal the judgment but his fine was reduced. Nearly 100 years later, on May 11, 1949, Baudelaire was

vindicated, the judgment officially reversed, and the six banned poems reinstated in France.[

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!*

Final years

Baudelaire next worked on a translation and adaptation of Thomas de Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*. Other works in the years that followed included *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 oeuvres de Balzac* (A Final Chapter of the history of works of Balzac) (1880), originally an article "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.

By 1859, his illnesses, his long-term use of laudanum, his life of stress and poverty had taken a toll and Baudelaire had aged noticeably. But at last, his mother relented and agreed to let him live with her for a while at Honfleur. Baudelaire was productive and at peace in the seaside town, his poem *Le Voyage* being one example of his efforts during that time. In 1860, he became an ardent supporter of Richard Wagner.

His financial difficulties increased again, however, particularly after his publisher Poulet Malassis went bankrupt in 1861. In 1864, he left Paris for Belgium, partly in the hope of selling the rights to his works and also to give lectures. His long-standing relationship with Jeanne Duval continued on-and-off, and he helped her to the end of his life. Baudelaire's relationships with actress Marie Daubrun and with courtesan Apollonie Sabatier, though the source of much inspiration, never produced any lasting satisfaction. He smoked opium, and in Brussels he began to

drink to excess. Baudelaire suffered a massive stroke in 1866 and paralysis followed. After more than a year of aphasia, he received the last rites of the Catholic Church. The last two years of his life were spent, in a semi-paralyzed state, in "maisons de santé" in Brussels and in Paris, where he died on August 31, 1867. Baudelaire is buried in the Cimetière du Montparnasse, Paris.

Many of Baudelaire's works were published posthumously. After his death, his mother paid off his substantial debts, and at last she found some comfort in Baudelaire's emerging fame. "I see that my son, for all his faults, has his place in literature". She lived another four years.

Critiques

Baudelaire was an active participant in the artistic life of his times. As critic and essayist, he wrote extensively and perceptively about the luminaries and themes of French culture. He was frank with friends and enemies, rarely took the diplomatic approach and sometimes responded violently verbally, which often undermined his cause. His associations were numerous and included: Gustave Courbet, Honoré Daumier, Franz Liszt, Champfleury, Victor Hugo, Gustave Flaubert, Balzac and the artists and writers that follow.

Edgar Allan Poe

In 1846 and 1847, Baudelaire became acquainted with the works of Poe, in which he found tales and poems that had, he claimed, long existed in his own brain but never taken shape. Baudelaire had much in common with Poe (who died in 1849 at age forty). The two poets display a similar sensibility of the macabre and supernatural turn of mind; each struggled with illness, poverty, and melancholy. Like Poe, Baudelaire believed in the doctrine of original sin, denounced democracy and the idea of progress and of man's natural goodness, and Poe held a disdainful aristocratic attitude similar to Baudelaire's dandy. Baudelaire saw in Poe a precursor and tried to be his French contemporary counterpart. From this time until 1865, he was largely occupied with translating Poe's works; his translations were widely praised. Baudelaire was not the first French translator of Poe, but his "scrupulous translations" were considered among the best. 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.).

Eugène Delacroix

A strong supporter of the Romantic painter Delacroix, Baudelaire called him "a poet in painting." Baudelaire also absorbed much of Delacroix's aesthetic ideas as expressed in his journals. As Baudelaire elaborated in his "Salon of 1846", "As one contemplates his series of pictures, one seems to be attending the celebration of some grievous mystery... This grave and lofty melancholy shines with a dull light... plaintive and profound like a melody by Weber". Delacroix, though appreciative, kept his distance from Baudelaire, particularly after the scandal of *Les Fleurs du mal*. In private correspondence, Delacroix stated that Baudelaire "really gets on my nerves" and he expressed his unhappiness with Baudelaire's persistent comments about "melancholy" and "feverishness".

Richard Wagner

Baudelaire had no formal musical training, and knew little of composers beyond Beethoven and Carl Maria von Weber. Weber was in some ways Wagner's precursor, using the leitmotif and conceiving the idea of the "total art work" ("Gesamtkunstwerk"), both of which found Baudelaire's admiration. Before even hearing Wagner's music, Baudelaire studied reviews and essays about him, and formulated his impressions. Later, Baudelaire put them into his non-technical analysis of Wagner, which was highly regarded, particularly his essay "Richard Wagner et Tannhäuser à Paris". Baudelaire's reaction to music was passionate and psychological. "Music engulfs (possesses) me like the sea". After attending three Wagner concerts in Paris in 1860, Baudelaire wrote to the composer: "I had a feeling of pride and joy in understanding, in being possessed, in being overwhelmed, a truly sensual pleasure like that of rising in the air". Baudelaire's writings contributed to the elevation of Wagner and to the cult of Wagnerism that swept Europe in the following decades.

Théophile Gautier

Gautier, writer and poet, earned Baudelaire's respect for his perfection of form and his mastery of language, though Baudelaire thought he lacked deeper emotion and spirituality. Both strove to express the artist's inner vision, which Heinrich Heine had earlier stated: "In artistic matters, I am a supernaturalist. I believe that the artist can not find all his forms in nature, but that the most remarkable are revealed to him in his soul". Gautier's frequent meditations on death and the horror of life are themes which influenced Baudelaire writings. In gratitude for their friendship and commonality of vision, Baudelaire dedicated *Les Fleurs du mal* to Gautier.

Édouard Manet

Manet and Baudelaire became constant companions from around 1855. In the early 1860s, Baudelaire accompanied Manet on daily sketching trips and often met him socially. Manet also lent Baudelaire money and looked after his affairs, particularly when Baudelaire went to Belgium. Baudelaire encouraged Manet to strike his own path and not succumb to criticism. "Manet has great talent, a talent which will stand the test of time. But he has a weak character. He seems to me crushed and stunned by shock". In his painting *Music in the Tuileries*, Manet includes portraits of his friends Théophile Gautier, Jacques Offenbach, and Baudelaire. While it's difficult to differentiate who influenced whom, both Manet and Baudelaire discussed and expressed some common themes through their respective arts. Baudelaire praised the modernity of Manet's subject matter: "almost all our originality comes from the stamp that 'time' imprints upon our feelings". When Manet's famous *Olympia* (1865), a portrait of a nude prostitute, provoked a scandal for its blatant realism mixed with an imitation of Renaissance motifs, Baudelaire worked privately to support his friend, though he offered no public defense (he was, however, ill at the time). When Baudelaire returned from Belgium after his stroke, Manet and his wife were frequent visitors at the nursing home and she would play passages from Wagner for Baudelaire on the piano.

Nadar

Nadar (Félix Tournachon) was a noted caricaturist, scientist and important early photographer. Baudelaire admired Nadar, one of his closest friends, and wrote: "Nadar is the most amazing manifestation of vitality". They moved in similar circles and Baudelaire made many social connections through him. Nadar's ex-mistress Jeanne Duval became Baudelaire's mistress around 1842. Baudelaire became interested in photography in the 1850s and denounced it as an art form and advocated for its return to "its real purpose, which is that of being the servant to the sciences and arts". Photography should not, according to Baudelaire, encroach upon "the domain of the impalpable and the imaginary". Nadar remained a stalwart friend right to Baudelaire's last days and wrote his obituary notice in *Le Figaro*.

Philosophy

Many of Baudelaire's philosophical proclamations were considered scandalous and intentionally provocative in his time. He wrote on a wide range of subjects, drawing criticism and outrage from many quarters.

Love

"There is an invincible taste for prostitution in the heart of man, from which comes his horror of solitude. He wants to be 'two'. The man of genius wants to be 'one'... It is this horror of solitude, the need to lose oneself in the external flesh, that man nobly calls 'the need to love'."

Marriage

"Unable to suppress love, the Church wanted at least to disinfect it, and it created marriage."

The artist

"The more a man cultivates the arts, the less randy he becomes... Only the brute is good at coupling, and copulation is the lyricism of the masses. To copulate is to enter into another—and the artist never emerges from himself."

"Style is character"

Pleasure

"Personally, I think that the unique and supreme delight lies in the certainty of doing 'evil'—and men and women know from birth that all pleasure lies in evil."

Politics

Along with Poe, Baudelaire named the arch-reactionary Joseph de Maistre as his maître à penser and adopted increasingly aristocratic views. In his journals, he wrote *"There is no form of rational and assured government save an aristocracy. A monarchy or a republic, based upon democracy, are equally absurd and feeble. The immense nausea of advertisements. There are but three beings worthy of respect: the priest, the warrior and the poet. To know, to kill and to create. The rest of mankind may be taxed and drudged, they are born for the stable, that is to say, to practise what they call professions."*

Influence

Baudelaire's influence on the direction of modern French (and English) language literature was considerable. The most significant French writers to come after him were generous with tributes; four years after his death, Arthur Rimbaud praised him in a letter as 'the king of poets, a true God'. In 1895, Stéphane

Mallarmé published a sonnet in Baudelaire's memory, 'Le Tombeau de Charles Baudelaire'. Marcel Proust, in an essay published in 1922, stated that along with

In the English-speaking world, Edmund Wilson credited Baudelaire as providing an initial impetus for the Symbolist movement, by virtue of his translations of Poe. In 1930,

At the same time that Eliot was affirming Baudelaire's importance from a broadly conservative and explicitly Christian viewpoint, left-wing critics such as Wilson and Walter Benjamin were able to do so from a dramatically different perspective. Benjamin translated Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens* into German and published a major essay on translation as the foreword.

In the late 1930s, Benjamin used Baudelaire as a starting point and focus for his monumental attempt at a materialist assessment of 19th century culture, *Das Passagenwerk*. For Benjamin, Baudelaire's importance lay in his anatomies of the crowd, of the city and of modernity.

In 1982, avant-garde performance artist and vocalist Diamanda Galás recorded an adaptation of his poem *The Litanies of Satan* (*Les Litanies de Satan*).

The Baudelaires, protagonists of Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, were named after him.

Currently, Vanderbilt University has "assembled one of the world's most comprehensive research collections on...Baudelaire."

À Une Dame Créole (To A Creole Lady)

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 maniérés;
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.

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.

Translated by William Aggeler

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.

Translated by Roy Campbell

To a Creole Lady

In that perfumed country caressed by the sun,
I have known, under a canopy of purple trees
And palms raining idleness upon the eyes,
A creole lady of private beauty.

Her shade is pale and warm; this brown enchantress
Has gracefully mannered airs in her neck;
Large and sinuous, walking like a huntress,
Her smile is silent and her eyes secure.

If you should go, Madam, to the true country of glory,

On the banks of the Seine or of the green Loire,
Fair lady fit to decorate ancient mansions,

In some shady and secluded refuge, you would awake
A thousand sonnets in the hearts of poets,
Whom your great eyes would make more subject than your Blacks.

Translated by Geoffrey Wagner

Charles Baudelaire

A Une Madone (To A Madonna)

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 Jalousie, 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!

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!

— Translated by William Aggeler

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 comer 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 prisoning 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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

À une Madone

I'll build for thee, Madonna, mistress mine,
deep in my crypt of woe a secret shrine;
— carve in the blackest corner of my heart,
from worldly lust and mocking eyes apart,
a niche, with gold and blue enamel blent,

to hold thy statue filled with wonderment.
my polished verse, of virgin metal hard
with crystal rhymes artistically starred,
shall raise for thee a towering diadem;
and from my jealousy I'll cut and hem
a mangle, mortal Lady mine, designed
as 'twere a sentry-box, stiff, heavy, lined
with barbs of keen suspicion and with fears,
embroidered, not with pearls, but all my tears!
to make thy robe I'll give thee my desire
that rises, falls and quivers like a fire,
clings to each summit, rests in each abyss,
and clothes thy rosy body with a kiss.
of my respect I'll make thee buskins fine
of satin, humbled by thy feet divine,
to prison them in soft embraces warm
and like a faithful mould to preserve their form.

then if my art is powerless to cut
thy pedestal, a silver moon, I'll put
beneath thy heel the serpent in my heart
for thee to bruise and mock, because thou art
the queen of my redemption, conquering all,
even that monster spewing hate and gall.
thine altar, like the Virgin's, shall be twined
with flowers, and like tapers all aligned,
my thoughts shall light the niche: from those blue skies,
watching thee always with their fiery eyes;
and since thou holdest all the love within
my heart, as incense, myrrh and benjamin,
in clouds forevermore to thee, its goal,
o snowy peak, shall rise my stormy soul.

and last, to make thee Mary utterly,
commingling love with savage cruelty,
— black joy! — with all the seven capital sins
I'll forge, remorsefully, seven javelins
knife-sharp, and like a juggler nonchalant,
taking thy love as target, I shall plant
deep in thy heart convulsed each deadly dart

— thy panting heart, thy sobbing, streaming heart!

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

Charles Baudelaire

Alchimie De La Douleur (The Alchemy Of Sorrow)

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.

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Alchimie de la douleur

one lights thee with his flame, another
puts in thee — Nature! — all his gloom!
what says to this man: lo! the tomb!
cries: life and splendour! to his brother.

o mage unknown whose powers assist
my art, and whom I always fear,
thou makest me a Midas — peer
of that most piteous alchemist;

for 'tis through thee I turn my gold
to iron, and in heaven behold
my hell: beneath her cloud-palls I

uncover corpses loved of old;
and where the shores celestial die
I carve vast tombs against the sky.

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

Charles Baudelaire

Anywhere Out Of The World

This life is a hospital where every patient is possessed with the desire to change beds; one man would like to suffer in front of the stove, and another believes that he would recover his health beside the window.

It always seems to me that I should feel well in the place where I am not, and this question of removal is one which I discuss incessantly with my soul.

'Tell me, my soul, poor chilled soul, what do you think of going to live in Lisbon? It must be warm there, and there you would invigorate yourself like a lizard. This city is on the sea-shore; they say that it is built of marble and that the people there have such a hatred of vegetation that they uproot all the trees. There you have a landscape that corresponds to your taste! a landscape made of light and mineral, and liquid to reflect them!'

My soul does not reply.

'Since you are so fond of stillness, coupled with the show of movement, would you like to settle in Holland, that beatifying country? Perhaps you would find some diversion in that land whose image you have so often admired in the art galleries. What do you think of Rotterdam, you who love forests of masts, and ships moored at the foot of houses?'

My soul remains silent.

'Perhaps Batavia attracts you more? There we should find, amongst other things, the spirit of Europe married to tropical beauty.'

Not a word. Could my soul be dead?

'Is it then that you have reached such a degree of lethargy that you acquiesce in your sickness? If so, let us flee to lands that are analogues of death. I see how it is, poor soul! We shall pack our trunks for Tornio. Let us go farther still to the extreme end of the Baltic; or farther still from life, if that is possible; let us settle at the Pole. There the sun only grazes the earth obliquely, and the slow alternation of light and darkness suppresses variety and increases monotony, that half-nothingness. There we shall be able to take long baths of darkness, while for our amusement the aurora borealis shall send us its rose-coloured rays that are like

the reflection of Hell's own
fireworks!

At last my soul explodes, and wisely cries out to me: 'No matter where! No
matter where! As long as it's out
of the world!'

Charles Baudelaire

At One O'Clock In The Morning

Alone, at last! Not a sound to be heard but the rumbling of some belated and decrepit cabs. For a few hours we shall have silence, if not repose. At last the tyranny of the human face has disappeared, and I myself shall be the only cause of my sufferings. At last, then, I am allowed to refresh myself in a bath of darkness! First of all, a double turn of the lock. It seems to me that this twist of the key will increase my solitude and fortify the barricades which at this instant separate me from the world. Horrible life! Horrible town! Let us recapitulate the day: seen several men of letters, one of whom asked me whether one could go to Russia by a land route (no doubt he took Russia to be an island); disputed generously with the editor of a review, who, to each of my objections, replied: 'We represent the cause of decent people,' which implies that all the other newspapers are edited by scoundrels; greeted some twenty persons, with fifteen of whom I am not acquainted; distributed handshakes in the same proportion, and this without having taken the precaution of buying gloves; to kill time, during a shower, went to see an acrobat, who asked me to design for her the costume of a Venustra; paid court to the director of a theatre, who, while dismissing me, said to me: 'Perhaps you would do well to apply to Z-----; he is the clumsiest, the stupidest and the most celebrated of my authors; together with him, perhaps, you would get somewhere. Go to see him, and after that we'll see;' boasted (why?) of several vile actions which I have never committed, and faint-heartedly denied some other misdeeds which I accomplished with joy, an error of bravado, an offence against human respect; refused a friend an easy service, and gave a written recommendation to a perfect clown; oh, isn't that enough? Discontented with everyone and discontented with myself, I would gladly redeem myself and elate myself a little in the silence and solitude of night. Souls of those I have loved, souls of those I have sung, strengthen me, support me, rid me of lies and the corrupting vapours of the world; and you, O Lord God, grant me the grace to

produce a few good verses, which shall prove to myself that I am not the lowest of men, that I am not inferior to those whom I despise.

Charles Baudelaire

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.

Charles Baudelaire

Autumn

Soon we will plunge ourselves into cold shadows,
And all of summer's stunning afternoons will be gone.
I already hear the dead thuds of logs below
Falling on the cobblestones and the lawn.

All of winter will return to me:
derision, Hate, shuddering, horror, drudgery and vice,
And exiled, like the sun, to a polar prison,
My soul will harden into a block of red ice.

I shiver as I listen to each log crash and slam:
The echoes are as dull as executioners' drums.
My mind is like a tower that slowly succumbs
To the blows of a relentless battering ram.

It seems to me, swaying to these shocks, that someone
Is nailing down a coffin in a hurry somewhere.
For whom? -- It was summer yesterday; now it's autumn.
Echoes of departure keep resounding in the air.

Charles Baudelaire

Avec Ses Vêtements Ondoyants Et Nacrés (With Waving Opalescence In Her Gown)

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.

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Avec ses vêtements ondoyants et nacrés

with all her undulant pearly draperies,
she moves in measures lovelier than a dance,
as in the fakirs' Indian sorceries
tall cobras 'neath a moving rod advance

like drear Sahara's sand or azure skies,
insentient both to human suffering,
like the long lacy nets the surges bring,
her slow indifferent length she amplifies.

her eyes are made from agates polished bright,
and in that strange symbolic soul which links
the inviolate angel and the fabled sphynx,

where all is gold, steel, diamonds and light,
glitters forever, starlike, far, inhuman,
the regal coldness of the sterile woman.

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

Sonnet

With her dresses undulating, pearly,
Even walking one would think her dancing,
Like those long serpents which holy charmers
Move in harmony at the tips of their batons.

Like the dull sand and the blue of deserts,
Unmoved alike by human pain,
Like the long fabric of the swell of seas,
She unfolds herself with indifference.

Her polished eyes are of delicious metals,
And in this strange, symbolic nature
Where virgin angel meets with ancient sphinx,

Where all is only gold and steel and light and diamonds,
There shines for ever, like a useless star,
The cold majesty of the sterile woman.

— Translated by Geoffrey Wagner

Charles Baudelaire

Be Drunk

You have to be always drunk. That's all there is to it--it's the only way. So as not to feel the horrible burden of time that breaks your back and bends you to the earth, you have to be continually drunk.

But on what? Wine, poetry or virtue, as you wish. But be drunk.

And if sometimes, on the steps of a palace or the green grass of a ditch, in the mournful solitude of your room, you wake again, drunkenness already diminishing or gone, ask the wind, the wave, the star, the bird, the clock, everything that is flying, everything that is groaning, everything that is rolling, everything that is singing, everything that is speaking. . .ask what time it is and wind, wave, star, bird, clock will answer you: "It is time to be drunk! So as not to be the martyred slaves of time, be drunk, be continually drunk! On wine, on poetry or on virtue as you wish."

Charles Baudelaire

Beacons

Reubens, river of forgetfulness, garden of sloth,
Pillow of wet flesh that one cannot love,
But where life throngs and seethes without cease
Like the air in the sky and the water in the sea.

Leonardo da Vinci, sinister mirror,
Where these charming angels with sweet smiles
Charged with mystery, appear in shadows
Of glaciers and pines that close off the country.

Rembrandt, sad hospital full of murmurs
Decorated only with a crucifix,
Where tearful prayers arise from filth
And a ray of winter light crosses brusquely.

Michelangelo, a wasteland where one sees Hercules
Mingling with Christ, and rising in a straight line
Powerful phantoms that in the twilight
Tear their shrouds with stretching fingers.

Rage of a boxer, impudence of a faun,
You who gather together the beauty of the boor,
Your big heart swelling with pride at man defective and yellow,
Puget, melancholy emperor of the poor.

Watteau, this carnival of illustrious hearts
Like butterflies, errant and flamboyant,
In the cool decor, with delicate lightning in the chandeliers
Crossing the madness of the twirling ball.

Goya, nightmare of unknown things,
Fetuses roasting on the spit,
Harridans in the mirror and naked children
Tempting demons by loosening their stockings.

Delacroix, haunted lake of blood and evil angels,
Shaded by evergreen forests of dark firs,
Where, under a grieving sky, strange fanfares
Pass, like a gasping breath of Weber.

These curses, these blasphemies, these moans,
These ecstasies, these tears, these cries of "Te Deum"
Are an echo reiterated in a thousand mazes;
It is for mortal hearts a divine opium!

It is a cry repeated by a thousand sentinels,
An order returned by a thousand megaphones,
A beacon lighting a thousand citadels
A summons to hunters lost in the wide woods.

For truly, O Lord, what better testimony
Can we give to our dignity
Than this burning sob that rolls from age to age
And comes to die on the shore of Your eternity?

Translated by William A. Sigler

Submitted by Ryan McGuire

Charles Baudelaire

Bénédition (Benediction)

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 rabougri,

Je ferai rejaillir 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'ambrosie 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 soulerai de nard, d'encens, de myrrhe,
De gémissements, de viandes et de vins,
Pour savoir si je puis dans un cœur qui m'admire
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 cœur se frayer un chemin.

Comme un tout jeune oiseau qui tremble et qui palpite,
J'arracherai ce cœur tout rouge de son sein,
Et, pour rassasier ma bête favorite
Je le lui jetterai par terre avec dédain!»

Vers le Ciel, où son œil 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!»

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!

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.

'Blessèd 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.'

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Benediction

When by decree of the almighty powers,
The Poet walks the world's wearisome sod,
His mother, blasphemous and fearful, cowers,
Clenching her fist against a pitying God:

— 'Ah, would whole knots of vipers were my spawn
Rather than this woeful abomination!
Cursed be the sweet swift night and evil dawn
Wherein my womb conceived my expiation!

Since of all women Thou hast chosen me
To be my sorry husband's shame of shames,
Since I may not toss this monstrosity
Like an old billet-doux into the flames,

Thy heavy hatred I shall vomit back
On the damned tool of your malevolence,
Twisting this wretched tree until it crack,
Never to sprout in buds of pestilence!

Thus she gulps down the froth of her despair,
Nor knowing the eternal paradigms,
Sinks deep into Gehenna to prepare,
Herself, the pyre set for a mother's crimes.

Yet guarded by an unseen Angel's favors,
The outcast child is fired by radiant suns,
In all he eats and all he drinks he savors
Ambrosial gifts and nectared benisons,

He sports with winds, he talks with clouds, he keeps
Singing along the road to Calvary,
While the bright Angel in his traces weeps,
Beholding him as free as birds are free.

All those whom he would love watch him with fear,
Or else, made bold by his serenity,
Wring groans from him that float sweet on the ear
Making him touchstone of their cruelty.

With his due bread and wine, hypocrites, they,
Mix ashes and fat gobs of spittle; grim,
What he has touched, these humbugs cast away,
Deeming it guilty but to follow him.

His wife cries in the market place: 'Behold
Since he adores me, I am fair, and fain,
As idols did, and images of old,
To be regilded and adored again.

I shall be drunk with spikenard, incense, myrrh,
With genuflections, viands and wine to see
If, as a glad usurper, I may stir
His heart to pay God's homages to me!

Tired of these impious japes and of their butt,
My strong lithe hand's caress with subtle art
And my sharp nails like harpy claws shall cut
A mortal path straight to his quivering heart.

That heart which flutters like a fledgling bird,
I shall tear, bleeding, from his breast, to pitch
It blandly in the dust without a word
To slake the hunger of my favorite bitch.'

To Heaven where he spies a splendid throne,
Serene, the Poet lifts rapt arms; and bright
Luminous thoughts that shine through him alone
Conceal the furious rabble from his sight:

— 'Blessèd, O God, who send woe for a cure,
A balm divine for our impurities,
Of essences the noblest and most pure
To school the strong for holy ecstasies!

I know the Poet has his place above

Amid God's saintly hosts and congregations,
Guest at the everlasting banquet of
The Thrones, the Virtues and the Dominations.

Sorrow alone is noble and august,
A force nor earth nor hell shall ever mar,
To weave my mystic crown I know you must
Tax every age and universe that are.

Old Tadmor's vanished gems beyond all price,
Metals unknown, pearls from the richest sea,
Set by Thy holy hand, cannot suffice
To match this dazzling chapter's splendency;

This diadem shall be of sheerest light,
Drawn from the sacred source of primal rays,
Whereof our mortal eyes, however bright,
Serve but as piteous mirrors dull with glaze.'

— Translated by Jacques LeClercq

Benediction

When, on a certain day, into this harassed world
The Poet, by decree of the high powers, was born,
His mother, overwhelmed by shame and fury, hurled
These blasphemies at God, clenching her fists in scorn:

'Would I had whelped a knot of vipers — at the worst
'Twere better than this runt that whines and snivels there!
Oh, cursèd be that night of pleasure, thrice accurst
My womb, that has conceived and nourished my despair!

'Since, of all mortal women, it would seem my fate
To be my saddened husband's horror and disgust;
And since I may not toss this monster in the grate —
Like any crumpled letter, reeking of stale lust —

'Upon his helpless form, whereby Thou humblest me,
I shall divert Thy hatred in one raging flood;

And I shall twist so well this miserable tree
That it shall not put forth one pestilential bud!

Thus did she foam with anger, railing, swallowing froth;
And, unaware of what the mighty powers had willed,
She set about to draw Gehenna on them both,
Eyeing the fire, considering how he might be killed.

Meantime, above the child an unseen angel beats
His wings, and the poor waif runs laughing in the sun;
And everything he drinks and everything he eats
Are nectar and ambrosia to this hapless one.

Companioned by the wind, conversing with the cloud,
Along the highway to the Cross his song is heard;
And the bright Spirit, following him, weeps aloud
To see him hop so gaily, like a little bird.

Those whom he longs to love observe him with constraint
And fear, as he grows up; or, seeing how calm he is,
Grow bold, and seek to draw from him some sharp complaint,
Wreaking on him all day their dull ferocities.

Cinders are in his bread, are gritty in his teeth;
Spittle is in his wine. Where his footprints are seen
They hesitate to set their shoes, mincing beneath
Hypocrisy; all things he touched, they call unclean.

His wife in public places cries, 'Since after all
He loves me so, that he's the laughingstock of men,
I'll make a business of it, be an idol, call
For gold, to have myself regilded now and then!

'And some day, when I'm drunk with frankincense, rich food,
Flattery, genuflexions, spikenard, beady wine,
I'll get from him (while laughing in his face, I could!)
That homage he has kept, so far, for things divine.

'And, when my pleasure in these impious farces fails,
My dainty, terrible hands shall tear his breast apart,
And these long nails of mine, so like to harpies' nails,
Shall dig till they have dug a tunnel to his heart.

'Then, like a young bird, caught and fluttering to be freed,
('Twill make a tasty morsel for my favorite hound)
I'll wrench his heart out, warm and bleeding — let it bleed! —
And drop it, with contempt and loathing, to the ground.'

Meanwhile toward Heaven, the goal of his mature desire,
The Poet, oblivious, lifts up his arms in prayer;
His lucid essence flames with lightnings — veiled by fire
Is all the furious world, all the lewd conflict there.

'Be praised, Almighty God, that givest to faulty me
This suffering, to purge my spirit of its sin,
To fortify my puny strength, to bid me see
Pure Faith, and what voluptuous blisses dwell therein.

'I know that in those ranks on ranks of happy blest
The Poet shall have some place among Thy Seraphim;
And that Thou wilt at length to the eternal feast
Of Virtues, Thrones and Dominations, summon him.

'I know, Pain is the one nobility we have
Which not the hungry ground nor hell shall ever gnaw;
I know that space and time, beyond the temporal grave,
Weave me a mystic crown, free from all earthly flaw.

'Not emeralds, not all the pearls of the deep sea,
All the rare metals, every lost and buried gem
Antique Palmyra hides, could ever seem to me
So beautiful as that clear glittering diadem.

'Of Light, of Light alone, it will be fashioned, Light
Drawn from the holy fount, rays primitive and pure,
Whereof the eyes of mortal men, so starry bright,
Are but the mirrors, mirrors cloudy and obscure.'

— Translated by Edna St. Vincent Millay

Charles Baudelaire

Beowulf

LO, praise of the prowess of people-kings
of spear-armed Danes, in days long sped,
we have heard, and what honor the athelings won!
Oft Scyld the Scefing from squadroned foes,
from many a tribe, the mead-bench tore,
awing the earls. Since erst he lay
friendless, a foundling, fate repaid him:
for he waxed under welkin, in wealth he throve,
till before him the folk, both far and near,
who house by the whale-path, heard his mandate,
gave him gifts: a good king he!
To him an heir was afterward born,
a son in his halls, whom heaven sent
to favor the folk, feeling their woe
that erst they had lacked an earl for leader
so long a while; the Lord endowed him,
the Wielder of Wonder, with world's renown.
Famed was this Beowulf: far flew the boast of him,
son of Scyld, in the Scandian lands.
So becomes it a youth to quit him well
with his father's friends, by fee and gift,
that to aid him, aged, in after days,
come warriors willing, should war draw nigh,
liegemen loyal: by lauded deeds
shall an earl have honor in every clan.
Forth he fared at the fated moment,
sturdy Scyld to the shelter of God.
Then they bore him over to ocean's billow,
loving clansmen, as late he charged them,
while wielded words the winsome Scyld,
the leader beloved who long had ruled....
In the roadstead rocked a ring-dight vessel,
ice-flecked, outbound, atheling's barge:
there laid they down their darling lord
on the breast of the boat, the breaker-of-rings,
by the mast the mighty one. Many a treasure
fetched from far was freighted with him.
No ship have I known so nobly dight
with weapons of war and weeds of battle,

with breastplate and blade: on his bosom lay
a heaped hoard that hence should go
far o'er the flood with him floating away.
No less these loaded the lordly gifts,
thanes' huge treasure, than those had done
who in former time forth had sent him
sole on the seas, a suckling child.
High o'er his head they hoist the standard,
a gold-wove banner; let billows take him,
gave him to ocean. Grave were their spirits,
mournful their mood. No man is able
to say in sooth, no son of the halls,
no hero 'neath heaven, - who harbored that freight!

I

Now Beowulf bode in the burg of the Scyldings,
leader beloved, and long he ruled
in fame with all folk, since his father had gone
away from the world, till awoke an heir,
haughty Healfdene, who held through life,
sage and sturdy, the Scyldings glad.
Then, one after one, there woke to him,
to the chieftain of clansmen, children four:
Heorogar, then Hrothgar, then Halga brave;
and I heard that - was -'s queen,
the Heathoscyfing's helpmate dear.
To Hrothgar was given such glory of war,
such honor of combat, that all his kin
obeyed him gladly till great grew his band
of youthful comrades. It came in his mind
to bid his henchmen a hall uprear,
a master mead-house, mightier far
than ever was seen by the sons of earth,
and within it, then, to old and young
he would all allot that the Lord had sent him,
save only the land and the lives of his men.
Wide, I heard, was the work commanded,
for many a tribe this mid-earth round,
to fashion the folkstead. It fell, as he ordered,
in rapid achievement that ready it stood there,
of halls the noblest: Heorot [1] he named it
whose message had might in many a land.

Not reckless of promise, the rings he dealt,
treasure at banquet: there towered the hall,
high, gabled wide, the hot surge waiting
of furious flame. [2] Nor far was that day
when father and son-in-law stood in feud
for warfare and hatred that woke again.
With envy and anger an evil spirit
endured the dole in his dark abode,
that he heard each day the din of revel
high in the hall: there harps rang out,
clear song of the singer. He sang who knew
tales of the early time of man,
how the Almighty made the earth,
fairest fields enfolded by water,
set, triumphant, sun and moon
for a light to lighten the land-dwellers,
and braided bright the breast of earth
with limbs and leaves, made life for all
of mortal beings that breathe and move.
So lived the clansmen in cheer and revel
a winsome life, till one began
to fashion evils, that field of hell.
Grendel this monster grim was called,
march-riever [5] mighty, in moorland living,
in fen and fastness; fief of the giants
the hapless wight a while had kept
since the Creator his exile doomed.
On kin of Cain was the killing avenged
by sovran God for slaughtered Abel.
Ill fared his feud, [6] and far was he driven,
for the slaughter's sake, from sight of men.
Of Cain awoke all that woful breed,
Etins [7] and elves and evil-spirits,
as well as the giants that warred with God
weary while: but their wage was paid them!

II

WENT he forth to find at fall of night
that haughty house, and heed wherever
the Ring-Danes, outrevelled, to rest had gone.
Found within it the atheling band
asleep after feasting and fearless of sorrow,

of human hardship. Unhallowed wight,
grim and greedy, he grasped betimes,
wrathful, reckless, from resting-places,
thirty of the thanes, and thence he rushed
fain of his fell spoil, faring homeward,
laden with slaughter, his lair to seek.
Then at the dawning, as day was breaking,
the might of Grendel to men was known;
then after wassail was wail uplifted,
loud moan in the morn. The mighty chief,
atheling excellent, unblithe sat,
labored in woe for the loss of his thanes,
when once had been traced the trail of the fiend,
spirit accurst: too cruel that sorrow,
too long, too loathsome. Not late the respite;
with night returning, anew began
ruthless murder; he recked no whit,
firm in his guilt, of the feud and crime.
They were easy to find who elsewhere sought
in room remote their rest at night,
bed in the bowers, [1] when that bale was shown,
was seen in sooth, with surest token, -
the hall-thane's [2] hate. Such held themselves
far and fast who the fiend outran!
Thus ruled unrighteous and raged his fill
one against all; until empty stood
that lordly building, and long it bode so.
Twelve years' tide the trouble he bore,
sovrán of Scyldings, sorrows in plenty,
boundless cares. There came unhidden
tidings true to the tribes of men,
in sorrowful songs, how ceaselessly Grendel
harassed Hrothgar, what hate he bore him,
what murder and massacre, many a year,
feud unfading, - refused consent
to deal with any of Daneland's earls,
make pact of peace, or compound for gold:
still less did the wise men ween to get
great fee for the feud from his fiendish hands.
But the evil one ambushed old and young
death-shadow dark, and dogged them still,
lured, or lurked in the livelong night

of misty moorlands: men may say not
where the haunts of these Hell-Runes be.
Such heaping of horrors the hater of men,
lonely roamer, wrought unceasing,
harassings heavy. O'er Heorot he lorded,
gold-bright hall, in gloomy nights;
and ne'er could the prince [4] approach his throne,
- 'twas judgment of God, - or have joy in his hall.
Sore was the sorrow to Scyldings'-friend,
heart-rending misery. Many nobles
sat assembled, and searched out counsel
how it were best for bold-hearted men
against harassing terror to try their hand.
Whiles they vowed in their heathen fanes
altar-offerings, asked with words [5]
that the slayer-of-souls would succor give them
for the pain of their people. Their practice this,
their heathen hope; 'twas Hell they thought of
in mood of their mind. Almighty they knew not,
Doomsman of Deeds and dreadful Lord,
nor Heaven's-Helmet heeded they ever,
Wielder-of-Wonder. - Woe for that man
who in harm and hatred hales his soul
to fiery embraces; - nor favor nor change
awaits he ever. But well for him
that after death-day may draw to his Lord,
and friendship find in the Father's arms!

III

THUS seethed unceasing the son of Healfdene
with the woe of these days; not wisest men
assuaged his sorrow; too sore the anguish,
loathly and long, that lay on his folk,
most baneful of burdens and bales of the night.
This heard in his home Hygelac's thane,
great among Geats, of Grendel's doings.
He was the mightiest man of valor
in that same day of this our life,
stalwart and stately. A stout wave-walker
he bade make ready. Yon battle-king, said he,
far o'er the swan-road he fain would seek,
the noble monarch who needed men!

The prince's journey by prudent folk
was little blamed, though they loved him dear;
they whetted the hero, and hailed good omens.
And now the bold one from bands of Geats
comrades chose, the keenest of warriors
e'er he could find; with fourteen men
the sea-wood [1] he sought, and, sailor proved,
led them on to the land's confines.
Time had now flown; [2] afloat was the ship,
boat under bluff. On board they climbed,
warriors ready; waves were churning
sea with sand; the sailors bore
on the breast of the bark their bright array,
their mail and weapons: the men pushed off,
on its willing way, the well-braced craft.
Then moved o'er the waters by might of the wind
that bark like a bird with breast of foam,
till in season due, on the second day,
the curved prow such course had run
that sailors now could see the land,
sea-cliffs shining, steep high hills,
headlands broad. Their haven was found,
their journey ended. Up then quickly
the Weders' [3] clansmen climbed ashore,
anchored their sea-wood, with armor clashing
and gear of battle: God they thanked
for passing in peace o'er the paths of the sea.
Now saw from the cliff a Scylding clansman,
a warden that watched the water-side,
how they bore o'er the gangway glittering shields,
war-gear in readiness; wonder seized him
to know what manner of men they were.
Straight to the strand his steed he rode,
Hrothgar's henchman; with hand of might
he shook his spear, and spake in parley.
'Who are ye, then, ye armed men,
mailed folk, that yon mighty vessel
have urged thus over the ocean ways,
here o'er the waters? A warden I,
sentinel set o'er the sea-march here,
lest any foe to the folk of Danes
with harrying fleet should harm the land.

No aliens ever at ease thus bore them,
linden-wielders: [4] yet word-of-leave
clearly ye lack from clansmen here,
my folk's agreement. - A greater ne'er saw I
of warriors in world than is one of you, -
yon hero in harness! No henchman he
worthied by weapons, if witness his features,
his peerless presence! I pray you, though, tell
your folk and home, lest hence ye fare
suspect to wander your way as spies
in Danish land. Now, dwellers afar,
ocean-travellers, take from me
simple advice: the sooner the better
I hear of the country whence ye came.'

IV

To him the stateliest spake in answer;
the warriors' leader his word-hoard unlocked:-
'We are by kin of the clan of Geats,
and Hygelac's own hearth-fellows we.
To folk afar was my father known,
noble atheling, Ecgtheow named.
Full of winters, he fared away
aged from earth; he is honored still
through width of the world by wise men all.
To thy lord and liege in loyal mood
we hasten hither, to Healfdene's son,
people-protector: be pleased to advise us!
To that mighty-one come we on mickle errand,
to the lord of the Danes; nor deem I right
that aught be hidden. We hear - thou knowest
if sooth it is - the saying of men,
that amid the Scyldings a scathing monster,
dark ill-doer, in dusky nights
shows terrific his rage unmatched,
hatred and murder. To Hrothgar I
in greatness of soul would succor bring,
so the Wise-and-Brave [1] may worst his foes, -
if ever the end of ills is fated,
of cruel contest, if cure shall follow,
and the boiling care-waves cooler grow;
else ever afterward anguish-days

he shall suffer in sorrow while stands in place
high on its hill that house unpeered!
Astride his steed, the strand-ward answered,
clansman unquailing: 'The keen-souled thane
must be skilled to sever and sunder duly
words and works, if he well intends.
I gather, this band is graciously bent
to the Scyldings' master. March, then, bearing
weapons and weeds the way I show you.
I will bid my men your boat meanwhile
to guard for fear lest foemen come, -
your new-tarred ship by shore of ocean
faithfully watching till once again
it waft o'er the waters those well-loved thanes,
- winding-neck'd wood, - to Weders' bounds,
heroes such as the hest of fate
shall succor and save from the shock of war.'
They bent them to march, - the boat lay still,
fettered by cable and fast at anchor,
broad-bosomed ship. - Then shone the boars
over the cheek-guard; chased with gold,
keen and gleaming, guard it kept
o'er the man of war, as marched along
heroes in haste, till the hall they saw,
broad of gable and bright with gold:
that was the fairest, 'mid folk of earth,
of houses 'neath heaven, where Hrothgar lived,
and the gleam of it lightened o'er lands afar.
The sturdy shieldsman showed that bright
burg-of-the-boldest; bade them go
straightway thither; his steed then turned,
hardy hero, and hailed them thus:-
'Tis time that I fare from you. Father Almighty
in grace and mercy guard you well,
safe in your seekings. Seaward I go,
'gainst hostile warriors hold my watch.'

V

STONE-BRIGHT the street: it showed the way
to the crowd of clansmen. Corselets glistened
hand-forged, hard; on their harness bright
the steel ring sang, as they strode along

in mail of battle, and marched to the hall.
There, weary of ocean, the wall along
they set their bucklers, their broad shields, down,
and bowed them to bench: the breastplates clanged,
war-gear of men; their weapons stacked,
spears of the seafarers stood together,
gray-tipped ash: that iron band
was worthily weaponed! - A warrior proud
asked of the heroes their home and kin.
'Whence, now, bear ye burnished shields,
harness gray and helmets grim,
spears in multitude? Messenger, I,
Hrothgar's herald! Heroes so many
ne'er met I as strangers of mood so strong.
'Tis plain that for prowess, not plunged into exile,
for high-hearted valor, Hrothgar ye seek!'
Him the sturdy-in-war bespake with words,
proud earl of the Weders answer made,
hardy 'neath helmet: - 'Hygelac's, we,
fellows at board; I am Beowulf named.
I am seeking to say to the son of Healfdene
this mission of mine, to thy master-lord,
the doughty prince, if he deign at all
grace that we greet him, the good one, now.'
Wulfgar spake, the Wendles' chieftain,
whose might of mind to many was known,
his courage and counsel: 'The king of Danes,
the Scyldings' friend, I fain will tell,
the Breaker-of-Rings, as the boon thou askest,
the famed prince, of thy faring hither,
and, swiftly after, such answer bring
as the doughty monarch may deign to give.'
Hied then in haste to where Hrothgar sat
white-haired and old, his earls about him,
till the stout thane stood at the shoulder there
of the Danish king: good courtier he!
Wulfgar spake to his winsome lord: -
'Hither have fared to thee far-come men
o'er the paths of ocean, people of Geatland;
and the stateliest there by his sturdy band
is Beowulf named. This boon they seek,
that they, my master, may with thee

have speech at will: nor spurn their prayer
to give them hearing, gracious Hrothgar!
In weeds of the warrior worthy they,
methinks, of our liking; their leader most surely,
a hero that hither his henchmen has led.'

VI

HROTHGAR answered, helmet of Scyldings:-

'I knew him of yore in his youthful days;
his aged father was Ecgtheow named,
to whom, at home, gave Hrethel the Geat
his only daughter. Their offspring bold
fares hither to seek the steadfast friend.
And seamen, too, have said me this, -
who carried my gifts to the Geatish court,
thither for thanks, - he has thirty men's
heft of grasp in the gripe of his hand,
the bold-in-battle. Blessed God
out of his mercy this man hath sent
to Danes of the West, as I ween indeed,
against horror of Grendel. I hope to give
the good youth gold for his gallant thought.
Be thou in haste, and bid them hither,
clan of kinsmen, to come before me;
and add this word, - they are welcome guests
to folk of the Danes.'

[To the door of the hall

Wulfgar went] and the word declared:-

'To you this message my master sends,
East-Danes' king, that your kin he knows,
hardy heroes, and hails you all
welcome hither o'er waves of the sea!
Ye may wend your way in war-attire,
and under helmets Hrothgar greet;
but let here the battle-shields bide your parley,
and wooden war-shafts wait its end.'

Uprose the mighty one, ringed with his men,
brave band of thanes: some bode without,
battle-gear guarding, as bade the chief.
Then hied that troop where the herald led them,
under Heorot's roof: [the hero strode,]
hardy 'neath helm, till the hearth he neared.

Beowulf spake, - his breastplate gleamed,
war-net woven by wit of the smith:-
'Thou Hrothgar, hail! Hygelac's I,
kinsman and follower. Fame a plenty
have I gained in youth! These Grendel-deeds
I heard in my home-land heralded clear.
Seafarers say how stands this hall,
of buildings best, for your band of thanes
empty and idle, when evening sun
in the harbor of heaven is hidden away.
So my vassals advised me well, -
brave and wise, the best of men, -
O sovran Hrothgar, to seek thee here,
for my nerve and my might they knew full well.
Themselves had seen me from slaughter come
blood-flecked from foes, where five I bound,
and that wild brood worsted. I' the waves I slew
nicors [1] by night, in need and peril
avenging the Weders, [2] whose woe they sought, -
crushing the grim ones. Grendel now,
monster cruel, be mine to quell
in single battle! So, from thee,
thou sovran of the Shining-Danes,
Scyldings'-bulwark, a boon I seek, -
and, Friend-of-the-folk, refuse it not,
O Warriors'-shield, now I've wandered far, -
that I alone with my liegemen here,
this hardy band, may Heorot purge!
More I hear, that the monster dire,
in his wanton mood, of weapons recks not;
hence shall I scorn - so Hygelac stay,
king of my kindred, kind to me! -
brand or buckler to bear in the fight,
gold-colored targe: but with gripe alone
must I front the fiend and fight for life,
foe against foe. Then faith be his
in the doom of the Lord whom death shall take.
Fain, I ween, if the fight he win,
in this hall of gold my Geatish band
will he fearless eat, - as oft before, -
my noblest thanes. Nor need'st thou then
to hide my head; [3] for his shall I be,

dyed in gore, if death must take me;
and my blood-covered body he'll bear as prey,
ruthless devour it, the roamer-lonely,
with my life-blood redden his lair in the fen:
no further for me need'st food prepare!
To Hygelac send, if Hild [4] should take me,
best of war-weeds, warding my breast,
armor excellent, heirloom of Hrethel
and work of Wayland. [5] Fares Wyrð as she must.'

VII

HROTHGAR spake, the Scyldings'-helmet:-
'For fight defensive, Friend my Beowulf,
to succor and save, thou hast sought us here.
Thy father's combat [1] a feud enkindled
when Heatholaf with hand he slew
among the Wylfings; his Weder kin
for horror of fighting feared to hold him.
Fleeing, he sought our South-Dane folk,
over surge of ocean the Honor-Scyldings,
when first I was ruling the folk of Danes,
wielded, youthful, this widespread realm,
this hoard-hold of heroes. Heorogar was dead,
my elder brother, had breathed his last,
Healfdene's bairn: he was better than I!
Straightway the feud with fee [2] I settled,
to the Wylfings sent, o'er watery ridges,
treasures olden: oaths he [3] swore me.
Sore is my soul to say to any
of the race of man what ruth for me
in Heorot Grendel with hate hath wrought,
what sudden harryings. Hall-folk fail me,
my warriors wane; for Wyrð hath swept them
into Grendel's grasp. But God is able
this deadly foe from his deeds to turn!
Boasted full oft, as my beer they drank,
earls o'er the ale-cup, armed men,
that they would bide in the beer-hall here,
Grendel's attack with terror of blades.
Then was this mead-house at morning tide
dyed with gore, when the daylight broke,
all the boards of the benches blood-besprinkled,

gory the hall: I had heroes the less,
doughty dear-ones that death had reft.
- But sit to the banquet, unbind thy words,
hardy hero, as heart shall prompt thee.'
Gathered together, the Geatish men
in the banquet-hall on bench assigned,
sturdy-spirited, sat them down,
hardy-hearted. A henchman attended,
carried the carven cup in hand,
served the clear mead. Oft minstrels sang
blithe in Heorot. Heroes revelled,
no dearth of warriors, Weder and Dane.

VIII

UNFERTH spake, the son of Ecglaf,
who sat at the feet of the Scyldings' lord,
unbound the battle-runes. - Beowulf's quest,
sturdy seafarer's, sorely galled him;
ever he envied that other men
should more achieve in middle-earth
of fame under heaven than he himself. -
'Art thou that Beowulf, Breca's rival,
who emulous swam on the open sea,
when for pride the pair of you proved the floods,
and wantonly dared in waters deep
to risk your lives? No living man,
or lief or loath, from your labor dire
could you dissuade, from swimming the main.
Ocean-tides with your arms ye covered,
with strenuous hands the sea-streets measured,
swam o'er the waters. Winter's storm
rolled the rough waves. In realm of sea
a sennight strove ye. In swimming he topped thee,
had more of main! Him at morning-tide
billows bore to the Battling Reamas,
whence he hied to his home so dear
beloved of his liegemen, to land of Brondings,
fastness fair, where his folk he ruled,
town and treasure. In triumph o'er thee
Beanstan's bairn [2] his boast achieved.
So ween I for thee a worse adventure
- though in buffet of battle thou brave hast been,

in struggle grim, - if Grendel's approach
thou darst await through the watch of night!
Beowulf spake, bairn of Ecgtheow:-
'What a deal hast uttered, dear my Unferth,
drunken with beer, of Breca now,
told of his triumph! Truth I claim it,
that I had more of might in the sea
than any man else, more ocean-endurance.
We twain had talked, in time of youth,
and made our boast, - we were merely boys,
striplings still, - to stake our lives
far at sea: and so we performed it.
Naked swords, as we swam along,
we held in hand, with hope to guard us
against the whales. Not a whit from me
could he float afar o'er the flood of waves,
haste o'er the billows; nor him I abandoned.
Together we twain on the tides abode
five nights full till the flood divided us,
churning waves and chillest weather,
darkling night, and the northern wind
ruthless rushed on us: rough was the surge.
Now the wrath of the sea-fish rose apace;
yet me 'gainst the monsters my mailed coat,
hard and hand-linked, help afforded, -
battle-sark braided my breast to ward,
garnished with gold. There grasped me firm
and haled me to bottom the hated foe,
with grimmest gripe. 'Twas granted me, though,
to pierce the monster with point of sword,
with blade of battle: huge beast of the sea
was whelmed by the hurly through hand of mine.

IX

ME thus often the evil monsters
thronging threatened. With thrust of my sword,
the darling, I dealt them due return!
Nowise had they bliss from their booty then
to devour their victim, vengeful creatures,
seated to banquet at bottom of sea;
but at break of day, by my brand sore hurt,
on the edge of ocean up they lay,

put to sleep by the sword. And since, by them
on the fathomless sea-ways sailor-folk
are never molested. - Light from east,
came bright God's beacon; the billows sank,
so that I saw the sea-cliffs high,
windy walls. For Wyrð oft saveth
earl undoomed if he doughty be!
And so it came that I killed with my sword
nine of the nicors. Of night-fought battles
ne'er heard I a harder 'neath heaven's dome,
nor adrift on the deep a more desolate man!
Yet I came unharmed from that hostile clutch,
though spent with swimming. The sea upbore me,
flood of the tide, on Finnish land,
the welling waters. No wise of thee
have I heard men tell such terror of falchions,
bitter battle. Breca ne'er yet,
not one of you pair, in the play of war
such daring deed has done at all
with bloody brand, - I boast not of it! -
though thou wast the bane [1] of thy brethren dear,
thy closest kin, whence curse of hell
awaits thee, well as thy wit may serve!
For I say in sooth, thou son of Ecglaf,
never had Grendel these grim deeds wrought,
monster dire, on thy master dear,
in Heorot such havoc, if heart of thine
were as battle-bold as thy boast is loud!
But he has found no feud will happen;
from sword-clash dread of your Danish clan
he vaunts him safe, from the Victor-Scyldings.
He forces pledges, favors none
of the land of Danes, but lustily murders,
fights and feasts, nor feud he dreads
from Spear-Dane men. But speedily now
shall I prove him the prowess and pride of the Geats,
shall bid him battle. Blithe to mead
go he that listeth, when light of dawn
this morrow morning o'er men of earth,
ether-robed sun from the south shall beam!
Joyous then was the Jewel-giver,
hoar-haired, war-brave; help awaited

the Bright-Danes' prince, from Beowulf hearing,
folk's good shepherd, such firm resolve.
Then was laughter of liegemen loud resounding
with winsome words. Came Wealhtheow forth,
queen of Hrothgar, heedful of courtesy,
gold-decked, greeting the guests in hall;
and the high-born lady handed the cup
first to the East-Danes' heir and warden,
bade him be blithe at the beer-carouse,
the land's beloved one. Lustily took he
banquet and beaker, battle-famed king.
Through the hall then went the Helmings' Lady,
to younger and older everywhere
carried the cup, till come the moment
when the ring-graced queen, the royal-hearted,
to Beowulf bore the beaker of mead.
She greeted the Geats' lord, God she thanked,
in wisdom's words, that her will was granted,
that at last on a hero her hope could lean
for comfort in terrors. The cup he took,
hardy-in-war, from Wealhtheow's hand,
and answer uttered the eager-for-combat.
Beowulf spake, bairn of Ecgtheow:-
'This was my thought, when my thanes and I
bent to the ocean and entered our boat,
that I would work the will of your people
fully, or fighting fall in death,
in fiend's gripe fast. I am firm to do
an earl's brave deed, or end the days
of this life of mine in the mead-hall here.'
Well these words to the woman seemed,
Beowulf's battle-boast. - Bright with gold
the stately dame by her spouse sat down.
Again, as erst, began in hall
warriors' wassail and words of power,
the proud-band's revel, till presently
the son of Healfdene hastened to seek
rest for the night; he knew there waited
fight for the fiend in that festal hall,
when the sheen of the sun they saw no more,
and dusk of night sank darkling nigh,
and shadowy shapes came striding on,

wan under welkin. The warriors rose.
Man to man, he made harangue,
Hrothgar to Beowulf, bade him hail,
let him wield the wine hall: a word he added:-
'Never to any man erst I trusted,
since I could heave up hand and shield,
this noble Dane-Hall, till now to thee.
Have now and hold this house unpeered;
remember thy glory; thy might declare;
watch for the foe! No wish shall fail thee
if thou bidest the battle with bold-won life.'

X

THEN Hrothgar went with his hero-train,
defence-of-Scyldings, forth from hall;
fain would the war-lord Wealhtheow seek,
couch of his queen. The King-of-Glory
against this Grendel a guard had set,
so heroes heard, a hall-defender,
who warded the monarch and watched for the monster.
In truth, the Geats' prince gladly trusted
his mettle, his might, the mercy of God!
Cast off then his corselet of iron,
helmet from head; to his henchman gave, -
choicest of weapons, - the well-chased sword,
bidding him guard the gear of battle.
Spake then his Vaunt the valiant man,
Beowulf Geat, ere the bed be sought:-
'Of force in fight no feebler I count me,
in grim war-deeds, than Grendel deems him.
Not with the sword, then, to sleep of death
his life will I give, though it lie in my power.
No skill is his to strike against me,
my shield to hew though he hardy be,
bold in battle; we both, this night,
shall spurn the sword, if he seek me here,
unweaponed, for war. Let wisest God,
sacred Lord, on which side soever
doom decree as he deemeth right.'
Reclined then the chieftain, and cheek-pillows held
the head of the earl, while all about him
seamen hardy on hall-beds sank.

None of them thought that thence their steps
to the folk and fastness that fostered them,
to the land they loved, would lead them back!
Full well they wist that on warriors many
battle-death seized, in the banquet-hall,
of Danish clan. But comfort and help,
war-weal weaving, to Weder folk
the Master gave, that, by might of one,
over their enemy all prevailed,
by single strength. In sooth 'tis told
that highest God o'er human kind
hath wielded ever! - Thro' wan night striding,
came the walker-in-shadow. Warriors slept
whose hest was to guard the gabled hall, -
all save one. 'Twas widely known
that against God's will the ghostly ravager
him [1] could not hurl to haunts of darkness;
wakeful, ready, with warrior's wrath,
bold he bided the battle's issue.

XI

THEN from the moorland, by misty crags,
with God's wrath laden, Grendel came.
The monster was minded of mankind now
sundry to seize in the stately house.
Under welkin he walked, till the wine-palace there,
gold-hall of men, he gladly discerned,
flashing with fretwork. Not first time, this,
that he the home of Hrothgar sought, -
yet ne'er in his life-day, late or early,
such hardy heroes, such hall-thanes, found!
To the house the warrior walked apace,
parted from peace; [1] the portal opened,
though with forged bolts fast, when his fists had
struck it,
and baleful he burst in his blatant rage,
the house's mouth. All hastily, then,
o'er fair-paved floor the fiend trod on,
ireful he strode; there streamed from his eyes
fearful flashes, like flame to see.
He spied in hall the hero-band,
kin and clansmen clustered asleep,

hardy liegemen. Then laughed his heart;
for the monster was minded, ere morn should dawn,
savage, to sever the soul of each,
life from body, since lusty banquet
waited his will! But Wyrð forbade him
to seize any more of men on earth
after that evening. Eagerly watched
Hygelac's kinsman his cursed foe,
how he would fare in fell attack.
Not that the monster was minded to pause!
Straightway he seized a sleeping warrior
for the first, and tore him fiercely asunder,
the bone-frame bit, drank blood in streams,
swallowed him piecemeal: swiftly thus
the lifeless corse was clear devoured,
e'en feet and hands. Then farther he hied;
for the hardy hero with hand he grasped,
felt for the foe with fiendish claw,
for the hero reclining, - who clutched it boldly,
prompt to answer, propped on his arm.
Soon then saw that shepherd-of-evils
that never he met in this middle-world,
in the ways of earth, another wight
with heavier hand-gripe; at heart he feared,
sorrowed in soul, - none the sooner escaped!
Fain would he flee, his fastness seek,
the den of devils: no doings now
such as oft he had done in days of old!
Then bethought him the hardy Hygelac-thane
of his boast at evening: up he bounded,
grasped firm his foe, whose fingers cracked.
The fiend made off, but the earl close followed.
The monster meant - if he might at all -
to fling himself free, and far away
fly to the fens, - knew his fingers' power
in the gripe of the grim one. Gruesome march
to Heorot this monster of harm had made!
Din filled the room; the Danes were bereft,
castle-dwellers and clansmen all,
earls, of their ale. Angry were both
those savage hall-guards: the house resounded.
Wonder it was the wine-hall firm

in the strain of their struggle stood, to earth
the fair house fell not; too fast it was
within and without by its iron bands
craftily clamped; though there crashed from sill
many a mead-bench - men have told me -
gay with gold, where the grim foes wrestled.
So well had weened the wisest Scyldings
that not ever at all might any man
that bone-decked, brave house break asunder,
crush by craft, - unless clasp of fire
in smoke engulfed it. - Again uprose
din redoubled. Danes of the North
with fear and frenzy were filled, each one,
who from the wall that wailing heard,
God's foe sounding his grisly song,
cry of the conquered, clamorous pain
from captive of hell. Too closely held him
he who of men in might was strongest
in that same day of this our life.

XII

NOT in any wise would the earls'-defence [1]
suffer that slaughterous stranger to live,
useless deeming his days and years
to men on earth. Now many an earl
of Beowulf brandished blade ancestral,
fain the life of their lord to shield,
their praised prince, if power were theirs;
never they knew, - as they neared the foe,
hardy-hearted heroes of war,
aiming their swords on every side
the accursed to kill, - no keenest blade,
no farest of falchions fashioned on earth,
could harm or hurt that hideous fiend!
He was safe, by his spells, from sword of battle,
from edge of iron. Yet his end and parting
on that same day of this our life
woful should be, and his wandering soul
far off flit to the fiends' domain.
Soon he found, who in former days,
harmful in heart and hated of God,
on many a man such murder wrought,

that the frame of his body failed him now.
For him the keen-souled kinsman of Hygelac
held in hand; hateful alive
was each to other. The outlaw dire
took mortal hurt; a mighty wound
showed on his shoulder, and sinews cracked,
and the bone-frame burst. To Beowulf now
the glory was given, and Grendel thence
death-sick his den in the dark moor sought,
noisome abode: he knew too well
that here was the last of life, an end
of his days on earth. - To all the Danes
by that bloody battle the boon had come.
From ravage had rescued the roving stranger
Hrothgar's hall; the hardy and wise one
had purged it anew. His night-work pleased him,
his deed and its honor. To Eastern Danes
had the valiant Geat his vaunt made good,
all their sorrow and ills assuaged,
their bale of battle borne so long,
and all the dole they erst endured
pain a-plenty. - 'Twas proof of this,
when the hardy-in-fight a hand laid down,
arm and shoulder, - all, indeed,
of Grendel's gripe, - 'neath the gabled roof.

XIII

MANY at morning, as men have told me,
warriors gathered the gift-hall round,
folk-leaders faring from far and near,
o'er wide-stretched ways, the wonder to view,
trace of the traitor. Not troublous seemed
the enemy's end to any man
who saw by the gait of the graceless foe
how the weary-hearted, away from thence,
baffled in battle and banned, his steps
death-marked dragged to the devils' mere.
Bloody the billows were boiling there,
turbid the tide of tumbling waves
horribly seething, with sword-blood hot,
by that doomed one dyed, who in den of the moor
laid forlorn his life adown,

his heathen soul,-and hell received it.
Home then rode the hoary clansmen
from that merry journey, and many a youth,
on horses white, the hardy warriors,
back from the mere. Then Beowulf's glory
eager they echoed, and all averred
that from sea to sea, or south or north,
there was no other in earth's domain,
under vault of heaven, more valiant found,
of warriors none more worthy to rule!
(On their lord beloved they laid no slight,
gracious Hrothgar: a good king he!)

From time to time, the tried-in-battle
their gray steeds set to gallop amain,
and ran a race when the road seemed fair.
From time to time, a thane of the king,
who had made many vaunts, and was mindful of verses,
stored with sagas and songs of old,
bound word to word in well-knit rime,
welded his lay; this warrior soon
of Beowulf's quest right cleverly sang,
and artfully added an excellent tale,
in well-ranged words, of the warlike deeds
he had heard in saga of Sigemund.
Strange the story: he said it all, -
the Waelsing's wanderings wide, his struggles,
which never were told to tribes of men,
the feuds and the frauds, save to Fitela only,
when of these doings he deigned to speak,
uncle to nephew; as ever the twain
stood side by side in stress of war,
and multitude of the monster kind
they had felled with their swords. Of Sigemund
grew,
when he passed from life, no little praise;
for the doughty-in-combat a dragon killed
that herded the hoard: [1] under hoary rock
the atheling dared the deed alone
fearful quest, nor was Fitela there.
Yet so it befell, his falchion pierced
that wondrous worm, - on the wall it struck,
best blade; the dragon died in its blood.

Thus had the dread-one by daring achieved
over the ring-hoard to rule at will,
himself to pleasure; a sea-boat he loaded,
and bore on its bosom the beaming gold,
son of Waels; the worm was consumed.
He had of all heroes the highest renown
among races of men, this refuge-of-warriors,
for deeds of daring that decked his name
since the hand and heart of Heremod
grew slack in battle. He, swiftly banished
to mingle with monsters at mercy of foes,
to death was betrayed; for torrents of sorrow
had lamed him too long; a load of care
to earls and athelings all he proved.
Oft indeed, in earlier days,
for the warrior's wayfaring wise men mourned,
who had hoped of him help from harm and bale,
and had thought their sovran's son would thrive,
follow his father, his folk protect,
the hoard and the stronghold, heroes' land,
home of Scyldings. - But here, thanes said,
the kinsman of Hygelac kinder seemed
to all: the other [2] was urged to crime!
And afresh to the race, [3] the fallow roads
by swift steeds measured! The morning sun
was climbing higher. Clansmen hastened
to the high-built hall, those hardy-minded,
the wonder to witness. Warden of treasure,
crowned with glory, the king himself,
with stately band from the bride-bower strode;
and with him the queen and her crowd of maidens
measured the path to the mead-house fair.

XIV

HROTHGAR spake, - to the hall he went,
stood by the steps, the steep roof saw,
garnished with gold, and Grendel's hand:-
'For the sight I see to the Sovran Ruler
be speedy thanks! A throng of sorrows
I have borne from Grendel; but God still works
wonder on wonder, the Warden-of-Glory.
It was but now that I never more

for woes that weighed on me waited help
long as I lived, when, laved in blood,
stood sword-gore-stained this stateliest house, -
widespread woe for wise men all,
who had no hope to hinder ever
foes infernal and fiendish sprites
from havoc in hall. This hero now,
by the Wielder's might, a work has done
that not all of us erst could ever do
by wile and wisdom. Lo, well can she say
whoso of women this warrior bore
among sons of men, if still she liveth,
that the God of the ages was good to her
in the birth of her bairn. Now, Beowulf, thee,
of heroes best, I shall heartily love
as mine own, my son; preserve thou ever
this kinship new: thou shalt never lack
wealth of the world that I wield as mine!
Full oft for less have I largess showered,
my precious hoard, on a punier man,
less stout in struggle. Thyself hast now
fulfilled such deeds, that thy fame shall endure
through all the ages. As ever he did,
well may the Wielder reward thee still!
Beowulf spake, bairn of Ecgtheow:-
'This work of war most willingly
we have fought, this fight, and fearlessly dared
force of the foe. Fain, too, were I
hadst thou but seen himself, what time
the fiend in his trappings tottered to fall!
Swiftly, I thought, in strongest gripe
on his bed of death to bind him down,
that he in the hent of this hand of mine
should breathe his last: but he broke away.
Him I might not - the Maker willed not -
hinder from flight, and firm enough hold
the life-destroyer: too sturdy was he,
the ruthless, in running! For rescue, however,
he left behind him his hand in pledge,
arm and shoulder; nor aught of help
could the cursed one thus procure at all.
None the longer liveth he, loathsome fiend,

sunk in his sins, but sorrow holds him
tightly grasped in gripe of anguish,
in baleful bonds, where bide he must,
evil outlaw, such awful doom
as the Mighty Maker shall mete him out.'
More silent seemed the son of Ecglaf [1]
in boastful speech of his battle-deeds,
since athelings all, through the earl's great prowess,
beheld that hand, on the high roof gazing,
foeman's fingers, - the forepart of each
of the sturdy nails to steel was likest, -
heathen's 'hand-spear,' hostile warrior's
claw uncanny. 'Twas clear, they said,
that him no blade of the brave could touch,
how keen soever, or cut away
that battle-hand bloody from baneful foe.

XV

THERE was hurry and hest in Heorot now
for hands to bedeck it, and dense was the throng
of men and women the wine-hall to cleanse,
the guest-room to garnish. Gold-gay shone the hangings
that were wove on the wall, and wonders many
to delight each mortal that looks upon them.
Though braced within by iron bands,
that building bright was broken sorely; [1]
rent were its hinges; the roof alone
held safe and sound, when, seared with crime,
the fiendish foe his flight essayed,
of life despairing. - No light thing that,
the flight for safety, - essay it who will!
Forced of fate, he shall find his way
to the refuge ready for race of man,
for soul-possessors, and sons of earth;
and there his body on bed of death
shall rest after revel.
Arrived was the hour
when to hall proceeded Healfdene's son:
the king himself would sit to banquet.
Ne'er heard I of host in haughtier throng
more graciously gathered round giver-of-rings!
Bowed then to bench those bearers-of-glory,

fain of the feasting. Featly received
many a mead-cup the mighty-in-spirit,
kinsmen who sat in the sumptuous hall,
Hrothgar and Hrothulf. Heorot now
was filled with friends; the folk of Scyldings
ne'er yet had tried the traitor's deed.
To Beowulf gave the bairn of Healfdene
a gold-wove banner, guerdon of triumph,
broidered battle-flag, breastplate and helmet;
and a splendid sword was seen of many
borne to the brave one. Beowulf took
cup in hall: for such costly gifts
he suffered no shame in that soldier throng.
For I heard of few heroes, in heartier mood,
with four such gifts, so fashioned with gold,
on the ale-bench honoring others thus!
O'er the roof of the helmet high, a ridge,
wound with wires, kept ward o'er the head,
lest the relict-of-files should fierce invade,
sharp in the strife, when that shielded hero
should go to grapple against his foes.
Then the earls'-defence on the floor bade lead
coursers eight, with carven head-gear,
adown the hall: one horse was decked
with a saddle all shining and set in jewels;
'twas the battle-seat of the best of kings,
when to play of swords the son of Healfdene
was fain to fare. Ne'er failed his valor
in the crush of combat when corpses fell.
To Beowulf over them both then gave
the refuge-of-Ingwines right and power,
o'er war-steeds and weapons: wished him joy of them.
Manfully thus the mighty prince,
hoard-guard for heroes, that hard fight repaid
with steeds and treasures contemned by none
who is willing to say the sooth aright.

XVI

AND the lord of earls, to each that came
with Beowulf over the briny ways,
an heirloom there at the ale-bench gave,
precious gift; and the price [] bade pay

in gold for him whom Grendel erst
murdered, - and fain of them more had killed,
had not wisest God their Wyrð averted,
and the man's brave mood. The Maker then
ruled human kind, as here and now.
Therefore is insight always best,
and forethought of mind. How much awaits him
of lief and of loath, who long time here,
through days of warfare this world endures!
Then song and music mingled sounds
in the presence of Healfdene's head-of-armies
and harping was heard with the hero-lay
as Hrothgar's singer the hall-joy woke
along the mead-seats, making his song
of that sudden raid on the sons of Finn.
Healfdene's hero, Hnaef the Scylding,
was fated to fall in the Frisian slaughter.
Hildeburh needed not hold in value
her enemies' honor! [6] Innocent both
were the loved ones she lost at the linden-play,
bairn and brother, they bowed to fate,
stricken by spears; 'twas a sorrowful woman!
None doubted why the daughter of Hoc
bewailed her doom when dawning came,
and under the sky she saw them lying,
kinsmen murdered, where most she had kenned
of the sweets of the world! By war were swept, too,
Finn's own liegemen, and few were left;
in the parleying-place he could ply no longer
weapon, nor war could he wage on Hengest,
and rescue his remnant by right of arms
from the prince's thane. A pact he offered:
another dwelling the Danes should have,
hall and high-seat, and half the power
should fall to them in Frisian land;
and at the fee-gifts, Folcwald's son
day by day the Danes should honor,
the folk of Hengest favor with rings,
even as truly, with treasure and jewels,
with fretted gold, as his Frisian kin
he meant to honor in ale-hall there.
Pact of peace they plighted further

on both sides firmly. Finn to Hengest
with oath, upon honor, openly promised
that woful remnant, with wise-men's aid,
nobly to govern, so none of the guests
by word or work should warp the treaty,
or with malice of mind bemoan themselves
as forced to follow their fee-giver's slayer,
lordless men, as their lot ordained.
Should Frisian, moreover, with foeman's taunt,
that murderous hatred to mind recall,
then edge of the sword must seal his doom.
Oaths were given, and ancient gold
heaped from hoard. - The hardy Scylding,
battle-thane best, [9] on his balefire lay.
All on the pyre were plain to see
the gory sark, the gilded swine-crest,
boar of hard iron, and athelings many
slain by the sword: at the slaughter they fell.
It was Hildeburh's hest, at Hnaef's own pyre
the bairn of her body on brands to lay,
his bones to burn, on the balefire placed,
at his uncle's side. In sorrowful dirges
bewept them the woman: great wailing ascended.
Then wound up to welkin the wildest of death-fires,
roared o'er the hillock: [10] heads all were melted,
gashes burst, and blood gushed out
from bites [11] of the body. Balefire devoured,
greediest spirit, those spared not by war
out of either folk: their flower was gone.

XVII

THEN hastened those heroes their home to see,
friendless, to find the Frisian land,
houses and high burg. Hengest still
through the death-dyed winter dwelt with Finn,
holding pact, yet of home he minded,
though powerless his ring-decked prow to drive
over the waters, now waves rolled fierce
lashed by the winds, or winter locked them
in icy fetters. Then fared another
year to men's dwellings, as yet they do,
the sunbright skies, that their season ever

duly await. Far off winter was driven;
fair lay earth's breast; and fain was the rover,
the guest, to depart, though more gladly he pondered
on wreaking his vengeance than roaming the deep,
and how to hasten the hot encounter
where sons of the Frisians were sure to be.
So he escaped not the common doom,
when Hun with 'Lafing,' the light-of-battle,
best of blades, his bosom pierced:
its edge was famed with the Frisian earls.
On fierce-heart Finn there fell likewise,
on himself at home, the horrid sword-death;
for Guthlaf and Oslaf of grim attack
had sorrowing told, from sea-ways landed,
mourning their woes. [1] Finn's wavering spirit
bode not in breast. The burg was reddened
with blood of foemen, and Finn was slain,
king amid clansmen; the queen was taken.
To their ship the Scylding warriors bore
all the chattels the chieftain owned,
whatever they found in Finn's domain
of gems and jewels. The gentle wife
o'er paths of the deep to the Danes they bore,
led to her land.
The lay was finished,
the gleeman's song. Then glad rose the revel;
bench-joy brightened. Bearers draw
from their 'wonder-vats' wine. Comes Wealhtheow forth,
under gold-crown goes where the good pair sit,
uncle and nephew, true each to the other one,
kindred in amity. Unferth the spokesman
at the Scylding lord's feet sat: men had faith in his Spirit,
his keenness of courage, though kinsmen had found him
unsure at the sword-play. The Scylding queen spoke:
'Quaff of this cup, my king and lord,
breaker of rings, and blithe be thou,
gold-friend of men; to the Geats here speak
such words of mildness as man should use.
Be glad with thy Geats; of those gifts be mindful,
or near or far, which now thou hast.
Men say to me, as son thou wishest
yon hero to hold. Thy Heorot purged,

jewel-hall brightest, enjoy while thou canst,
with many a largess; and leave to thy kin
folk and realm when forth thou goest
to greet thy doom. For gracious I deem
my Hrothulf, [2] willing to hold and rule
nobly our youths, if thou yield up first,
prince of Scyldings, thy part in the world.
I ween with good he will well requite
offspring of ours, when all he minds
that for him we did in his helpless days
of gift and grace to gain him honor!
Then she turned to the seat where her sons were placed,
Hrethric and Hrothmund, with heroes' bairns,
young men together: the Geat, too, sat there,
Beowulf brave, the brothers between.

XVIII

A CUP she gave him, with kindly greeting
and winsome words. Of wunden gold,
she offered, to honor him, arm-jewels twain,
corselet and rings, and of collars the noblest
that ever I knew the earth around.
Ne'er heard I so mighty, 'neath heaven's dome,
a hoard-gem of heroes, since Hama bore
to his bright-built burg the Brisings' necklace,
jewel and gem casket. - Jealousy fled he,
Eormenric's hate: chose help eternal.
Hygelac Geat, grandson of Swerting,
on the last of his raids this ring bore with him,
under his banner the booty defending,
the war-spoil warding; but Wyrð o'erwhelmed him
what time, in his daring, dangers he sought,
feud with Frisians. Fairest of gems
he bore with him over the beaker-of-waves,
soveran strong: under shield he died.
Fell the corpse of the king into keeping of Franks,
gear of the breast, and that gorgeous ring;
weaker warriors won the spoil,
after gripe of battle, from Geatland's lord,
and held the death-field.
Din rose in hall.
Wealhtheow spake amid warriors, and said:-

'This jewel enjoy in thy jocund youth,
Beowulf lov'd, these battle-weeds wear,
a royal treasure, and richly thrive!
Preserve thy strength, and these striplings here
counsel in kindness: requital be mine.
Hast done such deeds, that for days to come
thou art famed among folk both far and near,
so wide as washeth the wave of Ocean
his windy walls. Through the ways of life
prosper, O prince! I pray for thee
rich possessions. To son of mine
be helpful in deed and uphold his joys!
Here every earl to the other is true,
mild of mood, to the master loyal!
Thanes are friendly, the throng obedient,
liegemen are revelling: list and obey!
Went then to her place.-That was proudest of feasts;
flowed wine for the warriors. Wyrð they knew not,
destiny dire, and the doom to be seen
by many an earl when eve should come,
and Hrothgar homeward hasten away,
royal, to rest. The room was guarded
by an army of earls, as erst was done.
They bared the bench-boards; abroad they spread
beds and bolsters. - One beer-carouser
in danger of doom lay down in the hall. -
At their heads they set their shields of war,
bucklers bright; on the bench were there
over each atheling, easy to see,
the high battle-helmet, the haughty spear,
the corselet of rings. 'Twas their custom so
ever to be for battle prepared,
at home, or harrying, which it were,
even as oft as evil threatened
their sovran king. - They were clansmen good.

XIX

THEN sank they to sleep. With sorrow one bought
his rest of the evening, - as ofttime had happened
when Grendel guarded that golden hall,
evil wrought, till his end drew nigh,
slaughter for sins. 'Twas seen and told

how an avenger survived the fiend,
as was learned afar. The livelong time
after that grim fight, Grendel's mother,
monster of women, mourned her woe.
She was doomed to dwell in the dreary waters,
cold sea-courses, since Cain cut down
with edge of the sword his only brother,
his father's offspring: outlawed he fled,
marked with murder, from men's delights
warded the wilds. - There woke from him
such fate-sent ghosts as Grendel, who,
war-wolf horrid, at Heorot found
a warrior watching and waiting the fray,
with whom the grisly one grappled amain.
But the man remembered his mighty power,
the glorious gift that God had sent him,
in his Maker's mercy put his trust
for comfort and help: so he conquered the foe,
felled the fiend, who fled abject,
reft of joy, to the realms of death,
mankind's foe. And his mother now,
gloomy and grim, would go that quest
of sorrow, the death of her son to avenge.
To Heorot came she, where helmeted Danes
slept in the hall. Too soon came back
old ills of the earls, when in she burst,
the mother of Grendel. Less grim, though, that terror,
e'en as terror of woman in war is less,
might of maid, than of men in arms
when, hammer-forged, the falchion hard,
sword gore-stained, through swine of the helm,
crested, with keen blade carves amain.
Then was in hall the hard-edge drawn,
the swords on the settles, [1] and shields a-many
firm held in hand: nor helmet minded
nor harness of mail, whom that horror seized.
Haste was hers; she would hie afar
and save her life when the liegemen saw her.
Yet a single atheling up she seized
fast and firm, as she fled to the moor.
He was for Hrothgar of heroes the dearest,
of trusty vassals betwixt the seas,

whom she killed on his couch, a clansman famous,
in battle brave. - Nor was Beowulf there;
another house had been held apart,
after giving of gold, for the Geat renowned. -
Uproar filled Heorot; the hand all had viewed,
blood-flecked, she bore with her; bale was returned,
dole in the dwellings: 'twas dire exchange
where Dane and Geat were doomed to give
the lives of loved ones. Long-tried king,
the hoary hero, at heart was sad
when he knew his noble no more lived,
and dead indeed was his dearest thane.
To his bower was Beowulf brought in haste,
dauntless victor. As daylight broke,
along with his earls the atheling lord,
with his clansmen, came where the king abode
waiting to see if the Wielder-of-All
would turn this tale of trouble and woe.
Strode o'er floor the famed-in-strife,
with his hand-companions, - the hall resounded, -
wishing to greet the wise old king,
Ingwines' lord; he asked if the night
had passed in peace to the prince's mind.

XX

HROTHGAR spake, helmet-of-Scyldings:-
'Ask not of pleasure! Pain is renewed
to Danish folk. Dead is Aeschere,
of Yrmenlaf the elder brother,
my sage adviser and stay in council,
shoulder-comrade in stress of fight
when warriors clashed and we warded our heads,
hewed the helm-boars; hero famed
should be every earl as Aeschere was!
But here in Heorot a hand hath slain him
of wandering death-sprite. I wot not whither,
proud of the prey, her path she took,
fain of her fill. The feud she avenged
that yesternight, unyieldingly,
Grendel in grimmest grasp thou killedst, -
seeing how long these liegemen mine
he ruined and ravaged. Reft of life,

in arms he fell. Now another comes,
keen and cruel, her kin to avenge,
faring far in feud of blood:
so that many a thane shall think, who e'er
sorrows in soul for that sharer of rings,
this is hardest of heart-bales. The hand lies low
that once was willing each wish to please.
Land-dwellers here [2] and liegemen mine,
who house by those parts, I have heard relate
that such a pair they have sometimes seen,
march-stalkers mighty the moorland haunting,
wandering spirits: one of them seemed,
so far as my folk could fairly judge,
of womankind; and one, accursed,
in man's guise trod the misery-track
of exile, though huger than human bulk.
Grendel in days long gone they named him,
folk of the land; his father they knew not,
nor any brood that was born to him
of treacherous spirits. Untrod is their home;
by wolf-cliffs haunt they and windy headlands,
fenways fearful, where flows the stream
from mountains gliding to gloom of the rocks,
underground flood. Not far is it hence
in measure of miles that the mere expands,
and o'er it the frost-bound forest hanging,
sturdily rooted, shadows the wave.
By night is a wonder weird to see,
fire on the waters. So wise lived none
of the sons of men, to search those depths!
Nay, though the heath-rover, harried by dogs,
the horn-proud hart, this holt should seek,
long distance driven, his dear life first
on the brink he yields ere he brave the plunge
to hide his head: 'tis no happy place!
Thence the welter of waters washes up
wan to welkin when winds bestir
evil storms, and air grows dusk,
and the heavens weep. Now is help once more
with thee alone! The land thou knowst not,
place of fear, where thou findest out
that sin-flecked being. Seek if thou dare!

I will reward thee, for waging this fight,
with ancient treasure, as erst I did,
with winding gold, if thou winnest back.'

XXI

BÉOWULF spake, bairn of Ecgtheow:
'Sorrow not, sage! It beseems us better
friends to avenge than fruitlessly mourn them.
Each of us all must his end abide
in the ways of the world; so win who may
glory ere death! When his days are told,
that is the warrior's worthiest doom.
Rise, O realm-warder! Ride we anon,
and mark the trail of the mother of Grendel.
No harbor shall hide her - heed my promise! -
enfolding of field or forested mountain
or floor of the flood, let her flee where she will!
But thou this day endure in patience,
as I ween thou wilt, thy woes each one.'
Leaped up the graybeard: God he thanked,
mighty Lord, for the man's brave words.
For Hrothgar soon a horse was saddled
wave-maned steed. The sovran wise
stately rode on; his shield-armed men
followed in force. The footprints led
along the woodland, widely seen,
a path o'er the plain, where she passed, and trod
the murky moor; of men-at-arms
she bore the bravest and best one, dead,
him who with Hrothgar the homestead ruled.
On then went the atheling-born
o'er stone-cliffs steep and strait defiles,
narrow passes and unknown ways,
headlands sheer, and the haunts of the Nicors.
Foremost he [1] fared, a few at his side
of the wiser men, the ways to scan,
till he found in a flash the forested hill
hanging over the hoary rock,
a woful wood: the waves below
were dyed in blood. The Danish men
had sorrow of soul, and for Scyldings all,
for many a hero, 'twas hard to bear,

ill for earls, when Aeschere's head
they found by the flood on the foreland there.
Waves were welling, the warriors saw,
hot with blood; but the horn sang oft
battle-song bold. The band sat down,
and watched on the water worm-like things,
sea-dragons strange that sounded the deep,
and nicors that lay on the ledge of the ness -
such as oft essay at hour of morn
on the road-of-sails their ruthless quest, -
and sea-snakes and monsters. These started away,
swollen and savage that song to hear,
that war-horn's blast. The warden of Geats,
with bolt from bow, then balked of life,
of wave-work, one monster, amid its heart
went the keen war-shaft; in water it seemed
less doughty in swimming whom death had seized.
Swift on the billows, with boar-spears well
hooked and barbed, it was hard beset,
done to death and dragged on the headland,
wave-roamer wondrous. Warriors viewed the grisly guest.
Then girt him Beowulf
in martial mail, nor mourned for his life.
His breastplate broad and bright of hues,
woven by hand, should the waters try;
well could it ward the warrior's body
that battle should break on his breast in vain
nor harm his heart by the hand of a foe.
And the helmet white that his head protected
was destined to dare the deeps of the flood,
through wave-whirl win: 'twas wound with chains,
decked with gold, as in days of yore
the weapon-smith worked it wondrously,
with swine-forms set it, that swords nowise,
brandished in battle, could bite that helm.
Nor was that the meanest of mighty helps
which Hrothgar's orator offered at need:
'Hrunting' they named the hilted sword,
of old-time heirlooms easily first;
iron was its edge, all etched with poison,
with battle-blood hardened, nor blenched it at fight
in hero's hand who held it ever,

on paths of peril prepared to go
to folkstead [2] of foes. Not first time this
it was destined to do a daring task.
For he bore not in mind, the bairn of Ecglaf
sturdy and strong, that speech he had made,
drunk with wine, now this weapon he lent
to a stouter swordsman. Himself, though, durst not
under welter of waters wager his life
as loyal liegeman. So lost he his glory,
honor of earls. With the other not so,
who girded him now for the grim encounter.

XXII

BEOWULF spake, bairn of Ecgtheow:-
'Have mind, thou honored offspring of Healfdene
gold-friend of men, now I go on this quest,
sovrán wise, what once was said:
if in thy cause it came that I
should lose my life, thou wouldst loyal bide
to me, though fallen, in father's place!
Be guardian, thou, to this group of my thanes,
my warrior-friends, if War should seize me;
and the goodly gifts thou gavest me,
Hrothgar beloved, to Hygelac send!
Geatland's king may ken by the gold,
Hrethel's son see, when he stares at the treasure,
that I got me a friend for goodness famed,
and joyed while I could in my jewel-bestower.
And let Unferth wield this wondrous sword,
earl far-honored, this heirloom precious,
hard of edge: with Hrunting I
seek doom of glory, or Death shall take me.'
After these words the Weder-Geat lord
boldly hastened, biding never
answer at all: the ocean floods
closed o'er the hero. Long while of the day
fled ere he felt the floor of the sea.
Soon found the fiend who the flood-domain
sword-hungry held these hundred winters,
greedy and grim, that some guest from above,
some man, was raiding her monster-realm.
She grasped out for him with grisly claws,

and the warrior seized; yet scathed she not
his body hale; the breastplate hindered,
as she strove to shatter the sark of war,
the linked harness, with loathsome hand.
Then bore this brine-wolf, when bottom she touched,
the lord of rings to the lair she haunted
whiles vainly he strove, though his valor held,
weapon to wield against wondrous monsters
that sore beset him; sea-beasts many
tried with fierce tusks to tear his mail,
and swarmed on the stranger. But soon he marked
he was now in some hall, he knew not which,
where water never could work him harm,
nor through the roof could reach him ever
fangs of the flood. Firelight he saw,
beams of a blaze that brightly shone.
Then the warrior was ware of that wolf-of-the-deep,
mere-wife monstrous. For mighty stroke
he swung his blade, and the blow withheld not.
Then sang on her head that seemly blade
its war-song wild. But the warrior found
the light-of-battle [1] was loath to bite,
to harm the heart: its hard edge failed
the noble at need, yet had known of old
strife hand to hand, and had helmets cloven,
doomed men's fighting-gear. First time, this,
for the gleaming blade that its glory fell.
Firm still stood, nor failed in valor,
heedful of high deeds, Hygelac's kinsman;
flung away fretted sword, featly jewelled,
the angry earl; on earth it lay
steel-edged and stiff. His strength he trusted,
hand-gripe of might. So man shall do
whenever in war he weens to earn him
lasting fame, nor fears for his life!
Seized then by shoulder, shrank not from combat,
the Geatish war-prince Grendel's mother.
Flung then the fierce one, filled with wrath,
his deadly foe, that she fell to ground.
Swift on her part she paid him back
with grisly grasp, and grappled with him.
Spent with struggle, stumbled the warrior,

fiercest of fighting-men, fell adown.
On the hall-guest she hurled herself,
hent her short sword,
broad and brown-edged, the bairn to avenge,
the sole-born son. - On his shoulder lay
braided breast-mail, barring death,
withstanding entrance of edge or blade.
Life would have ended for Ecgtheow's son,
under wide earth for that earl of Geats,
had his armor of war not aided him,
battle-net hard, and holy God
wielded the victory, wisest Maker.
The Lord of Heaven allowed his cause;
and easily rose the earl erect.

XXIII

'MID the battle-gear saw he a blade triumphant,
old-sword of Eotens, with edge of proof,
warriors' heirloom, weapon unmatched,
- save only 'twas more than other men
to bandy-of-battle could bear at all -
as the giants had wrought it, ready and keen.
Seized then its chain-hilt the Scyldings' chieftain,
bold and battle-grim, brandished the sword,
reckless of life, and so wrathfully smote
that it gripped her neck and grasped her hard,
her bone-rings breaking: the blade pierced through
that fated-one's flesh: to floor she sank.
Bloody the blade: he was blithe of his deed.
Then blazed forth light. 'Twas bright within
as when from the sky there shines unclouded
heaven's candle. The hall he scanned.
By the wall then went he; his weapon raised
high by its hilts the Hygelac-thane,
angry and eager. That edge was not useless
to the warrior now. He wished with speed
Grendel to guerdon for grim raids many,
for the war he waged on Western-Danes
oftener far than an only time,
when of Hrothgar's hearth-companions
he slew in slumber, in sleep devoured,
fifteen men of the folk of Danes,

and as many others outward bore,
his horrible prey. Well paid for that
the wrathful prince! For now prone he saw
Grendel stretched there, spent with war,
spoiled of life, so scathed had left him
Heorot's battle. The body sprang far
when after death it endured the blow,
sword-stroke savage, that severed its head.
Soon, [1] then, saw the sage companions
who waited with Hrothgar, watching the flood,
that the tossing waters turbid grew,
blood-stained the mere. Old men together,
hoary-haired, of the hero spake;
the warrior would not, they weened, again,
proud of conquest, come to seek
their mighty master. To many it seemed
the wolf-of-the-waves had won his life.
The ninth hour came. The noble Scyldings
left the headland; homeward went
the gold-friend of men. [2] But the guests sat on,
stared at the surges, sick in heart,
and wished, yet weened not, their winsome lord
again to see.
Now that sword began,
from blood of the fight, in battle-droppings,
war-blade, to wane: 'twas a wondrous thing
that all of it melted as ice is wont
when frosty fetters the Father loosens,
unwinds the wave-bonds, wielding all
seasons and times: the true God he!
Nor took from that dwelling the duke of the Geats
precious things, though a plenty he saw,
save only the head and that hilt withal
blazoned with jewels: the blade had melted,
burned was the bright sword, her blood was so hot,
so poisoned the hell-sprite who perished within there.
Soon he was swimming who safe saw in combat
downfall of demons; up-dove through the flood.
The clashing waters were cleansed now,
waste of waves, where the wandering fiend
her life-days left and this lapsing world.
Swam then to strand the sailors'-refuge,

sturdy-in-spirit, of sea-booty glad,
of burden brave he bore with him.
Went then to greet him, and God they thanked,
the thane-band choice of their chieftain blithe,
that safe and sound they could see him again.
Soon from the hardy one helmet and armor
deftly they doffed: now drowed the mere,
water 'neath welkin, with war-blood stained.
Forth they fared by the footpaths thence,
merry at heart the highways measured,
well-known roads. Courageous men
carried the head from the cliff by the sea,
an arduous task for all the band,
the firm in fight, since four were needed
on the shaft-of-slaughter [4] strenuously
to bear to the gold-hall Grendel's head.
So presently to the palace there
foemen fearless, fourteen Geats,
marching came. Their master-of-clan
mighty amid them the meadow-ways trod.
Strode then within the sovran thane
fearless in fight, of fame renowned,
hardy hero, Hrothgar to greet.
And next by the hair into hall was borne
Grendel's head, where the henchmen were drinking,
an awe to clan and queen alike,
a monster of marvel: the men looked on.

XXIV

BEOWULF spake, bairn of Ecgtheow:-
'Lo, now, this sea-booty, son of Healfdene,
Lord of Scyldings, we've lustily brought thee,
sign of glory; thou seest it here.
Not lightly did I with my life escape!
In war under water this work I essayed
with endless effort; and even so
my strength had been lost had the Lord not shielded me.
Not a whit could I with Hrunting do
in work of war, though the weapon is good;
yet a sword the Sovran of Men vouchsafed me
to spy on the wall there, in splendor hanging,
old, gigantic, - how oft He guides

the friendless wight! - and I fought with that brand,
 felling in fight, since fate was with me,
 the house's wardens. That war-sword then all burned, bright blade, when the
 blood gushed o'er it,
 battle-sweat hot; but the hilt I brought back
 from my foes. So avenged I their fiendish deeds
 death-fall of Danes, as was due and right.
 And this is my hest, that in Heorot now
 safe thou canst sleep with thy soldier band,
 and every thane of all thy folk
 both old and young; no evil fear,
 Scyldings' lord, from that side again,
 aught ill for thy earls, as erst thou must!
 Then the golden hilt, for that gray-haired leader,
 hoary hero, in hand was laid,
 giant-wrought, old. So owned and enjoyed it
 after downfall of devils, the Danish lord,
 wonder-smiths' work, since the world was rid
 of that grim-souled fiend, the foe of God,
 murder-marked, and his mother as well.
 Now it passed into power of the people's king,
 best of all that the oceans bound
 who have scattered their gold o'er Scandia's isle.
 Hrothgar spake - the hilt he viewed,
 heirloom old, where was etched the rise
 of that far-off fight when the floods o'erwhelmed,
 raging waves, the race of giants
 (fearful their fate!), a folk estranged
 from God Eternal: whence guerdon due
 in that waste of waters the Wielder paid them.
 So on the guard of shining gold
 in runic staves it was rightly said
 for whom the serpent-traced sword was wrought,
 best of blades, in bygone days,
 and the hilt well wound. - The wise-one spake,
 son of Healfdene; silent were all:-
 'Lo, so may he say who sooth and right
 follows 'mid folk, of far times mindful,
 a land-warden old, [1] that this earl belongs
 to the better breed! So, borne aloft,
 thy fame must fly, O friend my Beowulf,
 far and wide o'er folksteads many. Firmly thou

shalt all maintain,
mighty strength with mood of wisdom. Love of
mine will I assure thee,
as, awhile ago, I promised;
thou shalt prove a stay in future,
in far-off years, to folk of thine,
to the heroes a help. Was not Heremod thus
to offspring of Ecgwela, Honor-Scyldings,
nor grew for their grace, but for grisly slaughter,
for doom of death to the Danishmen.
He slew, wrath-swollen, his shoulder-comrades,
companions at board! So he passed alone,
chieftain haughty, from human cheer.
Though him the Maker with might endowed,
delights of power, and uplifted high
above all men, yet blood-fierce his mind,
his breast-hoard, grew, no bracelets gave he
to Danes as was due; he endured all joyless
strain of struggle and stress of woe,
long feud with his folk. Here find thy lesson!
Of virtue advise thee! This verse I have said for thee,
wise from lapsed winters. Wondrous seems
how to sons of men Almighty God
in the strength of His spirit sendeth wisdom,
estate, high station: He swayeth all things.
Whiles He letteth right lustily fare
the heart of the hero of high-born race, -
in seat ancestral assigns him bliss,
his folk's sure fortress in fee to hold,
puts in his power great parts of the earth,
empire so ample, that end of it
this wanter-of-wisdom weeneth none.
So he waxes in wealth, nowise can harm him
illness or age; no evil cares
shadow his spirit; no sword-hate threatens
from ever an enemy: all the world
wends at his will, no worse he knoweth,
till all within him obstinate pride
waxes and wakes while the warden slumbers,
the spirit's sentry; sleep is too fast
which masters his might, and the murderer nears,
stealthily shooting the shafts from his bow!

XXV

'UNDER harness his heart then is hit indeed
by sharpest shafts; and no shelter avails
from foul behest of the hellish fiend.
Him seems too little what long he possessed.
Greedy and grim, no golden rings
he gives for his pride; the promised future
forgets he and spurns, with all God has sent him,
Wonder-Wielder, of wealth and fame.
Yet in the end it ever comes
that the frame of the body fragile yields,
fated falls; and there follows another
who joyously the jewels divides,
the royal riches, nor recks of his forebear.
Ban, then, such baleful thoughts, Beowulf dearest,
best of men, and the better part choose,
profit eternal; and temper thy pride,
warrior famous! The flower of thy might
lasts now a while: but ere long it shall be
that sickness or sword thy strength shall minish,
or fang of fire, or flooding billow,
or bite of blade, or brandished spear,
or odious age; or the eyes' clear beam
wax dull and darken: Death even thee
in haste shall o'erwhelm, thou hero of war!
So the Ring-Danes these half-years a hundred I ruled,
wielded 'neath welkin, and warded them bravely
from mighty-ones many o'er middle-earth,
from spear and sword, till it seemed for me
no foe could be found under fold of the sky.
Lo, sudden the shift! To me seated secure
came grief for joy when Grendel began
to harry my home, the hellish foe;
for those ruthless raids, unresting I suffered
heart-sorrow heavy. Heaven be thanked,
Lord Eternal, for life extended
that I on this head all hewn and bloody,
after long evil, with eyes may gaze!
- Go to the bench now! Be glad at banquet,
warrior worthy! A wealth of treasure
at dawn of day, be dealt between us!'

Glad was the Geats' lord, going betimes
to seek his seat, as the Sage commanded.
Afresh, as before, for the famed-in-battle,
for the band of the hall, was a banquet dight
nobly anew. The Night-Helm darkened
dusk o'er the drinkers.

The doughty ones rose:

for the hoary-headed would hasten to rest,
aged Scylding; and eager the Geat,
shield-fighter sturdy, for sleeping yearned.

Him wander-weary, warrior-guest
from far, a hall-thane heralded forth,
who by custom courtly cared for all
needs of a thane as in those old days
warrior-wanderers wont to have.

So slumbered the stout-heart. Stately the hall
rose gabled and gilt where the guest slept on
till a raven black the rapture-of-heaven [2]

blithe-heart boded. Bright came flying
shine after shadow. The swordsmen hastened,
athelings all were eager homeward
forth to fare; and far from thence

the great-hearted guest would guide his keel.

Bade then the hardy-one Hrunting be brought
to the son of Ecglaf, the sword bade him take,
excellent iron, and uttered his thanks for it,
quoth that he counted it keen in battle,

'war-friend' winsome: with words he slandered not
edge of the blade: 'twas a big-hearted man!

Now eager for parting and armed at point
warriors waited, while went to his host
that Darling of Danes. The doughty atheling
to high-seat hastened and Hrothgar greeted.

XXVI

BEOWULF spake, bairn of Ecgtheow:-

'Lo, we seafarers say our will,

far-come men, that we fain would seek

Hygelac now. We here have found

hosts to our heart: thou hast harbored us well.

If ever on earth I am able to win me
more of thy love, O lord of men,

aught anew, than I now have done,
for work of war I am willing still!
If it come to me ever across the seas
that neighbor foemen annoy and fright thee, -
as they that hate thee erewhile have used, -
thousands then of thanes I shall bring,
heroes to help thee. Of Hygelac I know,
ward of his folk, that, though few his years,
the lord of the Geats will give me aid
by word and by work, that well I may serve thee,
wielding the war-wood to win thy triumph
and lending thee might when thou lackest men.
If thy Hrethric should come to court of Geats,
a sovran's son, he will surely there
find his friends. A far-off land
each man should visit who vaunts him brave.'
Him then answering, Hrothgar spake:-
'These words of thine the wisest God
sent to thy soul! No sager counsel
from so young in years e'er yet have I heard.
Thou art strong of main and in mind art wary,
art wise in words! I ween indeed
if ever it hap that Hrethel's heir
by spear be seized, by sword-grim battle,
by illness or iron, thine elder and lord,
people's leader, - and life be thine, -
no seemlier man will the Sea-Geats find
at all to choose for their chief and king,
for hoard-guard of heroes, if hold thou wilt
thy kinsman's kingdom! Thy keen mind pleases me
the longer the better, Beowulf loved!
Thou hast brought it about that both our peoples,
sons of the Geat and Spear-Dane folk,
shall have mutual peace, and from murderous strife,
such as once they waged, from war refrain.
Long as I rule this realm so wide,
let our hoards be common, let heroes with gold
each other greet o'er the gannet's-bath,
and the ringed-prow bear o'er rolling waves
tokens of love. I trow my landfolk
towards friend and foe are firmly joined,
and honor they keep in the olden way.'

To him in the hall, then, Healfdene's son
gave treasures twelve, and the trust-of-earls
bade him fare with the gifts to his folk beloved,
hale to his home, and in haste return.
Then kissed the king of kin renowned,
Scyldings' chieftain, that choicest thane,
and fell on his neck. Fast flowed the tears
of the hoary-headed. Heavy with winters,
he had chances twain, but he clung to this, [1] -
that each should look on the other again,
and hear him in hall. Was this hero so dear to him.
his breast's wild billows he banned in vain;
safe in his soul a secret longing,
locked in his mind, for that loved man
burned in his blood. Then Beowulf strode,
glad of his gold-gifts, the grass-plot o'er,
warrior blithe. The wave-roamer bode
riding at anchor, its owner awaiting.
As they hastened onward, Hrothgar's gift
they lauded at length. - 'Twas a lord unpeered,
every way blameless, till age had broken
- it spareth no mortal - his splendid might.

XXVII

CAME now to ocean the ever-courageous
hardy henchmen, their harness bearing,
woven war-sarks. The warden marked,
trusty as ever, the earl's return.
From the height of the hill no hostile words
reached the guests as he rode to greet them;
but 'Welcome!' he called to that Weder clan
as the sheen-mailed spoilers to ship marched on.
Then on the strand, with steeds and treasure
and armor their roomy and ring-dight ship
was heavily laden: high its mast
rose over Hrothgar's hoarded gems.
A sword to the boat-guard Beowulf gave,
mounted with gold; on the mead-bench since
he was better esteemed, that blade possessing,
heirloom old. - Their ocean-keel boarding,
they drove through the deep, and Daneland left.
A sea-cloth was set, a sail with ropes,

firm to the mast; the flood-timbers moaned;
nor did wind over billows that wave-swimmer blow
across from her course. The craft sped on,
foam-necked it floated forth o'er the waves,
keel firm-bound over briny currents,
till they got them sight of the Geatish cliffs,
home-known headlands. High the boat,
stirred by winds, on the strand updrove.
Helpful at haven the harbor-guard stood,
who long already for loved companions
by the water had waited and watched afar.
He bound to the beach the broad-bosomed ship
with anchor-bands, lest ocean-billows
that trusty timber should tear away.
Then Beowulf bade them bear the treasure,
gold and jewels; no journey far
was it thence to go to the giver of rings,
Hygelac Hrethling: at home he dwelt
by the sea-wall close, himself and clan.
Haughty that house, a hero the king,
high the hall, and Hygd right young,
wise and wary, though winters few
in those fortress walls she had found a home,
Haereth's daughter. Nor humble her ways,
nor grudged she gifts to the Geatish men,
of precious treasure. Not Thryth's pride showed she,
folk-queen famed, or that fell deceit.
Was none so daring that durst make bold
(save her lord alone) of the liegemen dear
that lady full in the face to look,
but forged fetters he found his lot,
bonds of death! And brief the respite;
soon as they seized him, his sword-doom was spoken,
and the burnished blade a baleful murder
proclaimed and closed. No queenly way
for woman to practise, though peerless she,
that the weaver-of-peace [3] from warrior dear
by wrath and lying his life should reave!
But Hemming's kinsman hindered this. -
For over their ale men also told
that of these folk-horrors fewer she wrought,
onslaughts of evil, after she went,

gold-decked bride, to the brave young prince,
atheling haughty, and Offa's hall
o'er the fallow flood at her father's bidding
safely sought, where since she prospered,
royal, throned, rich in goods,
fain of the fair life fate had sent her,
and leal in love to the lord of warriors.
He, of all heroes I heard of ever
from sea to sea, of the sons of earth,
most excellent seemed. Hence Offa was praised
for his fighting and feeing by far-off men,
the spear-bold warrior; wisely he ruled
over his empire. Eomer woke to him,
help of heroes, Hemming's kinsman,
Grandson of Garmund, grim in war.

XXVIII

HASTENED the hardy one, henchmen with him,
sandy strand of the sea to tread
and widespread ways. The world's great candle,
sun shone from south. They strode along
with sturdy steps to the spot they knew
where the battle-king young, his burg within,
slayer of Ongentheow, shared the rings,
shelter-of-heroes. To Hygelac
Beowulf's coming was quickly told, -
that there in the court the clansmen's refuge,
the shield-companion sound and alive,
hale from the hero-play homeward strode.
With haste in the hall, by highest order,
room for the rovers was readily made.
By his sovran he sat, come safe from battle,
kinsman by kinsman. His kindly lord
he first had greeted in gracious form,
with manly words. The mead dispensing,
came through the high hall Haereth's daughter,
winsome to warriors, wine-cup bore
to the hands of the heroes. Hygelac then
his comrade fairly with question plied
in the lofty hall, sore longing to know
what manner of sojourn the Sea-Geats made.
'What came of thy quest, my kinsman Beowulf,

when thy yearnings suddenly swept thee yonder
battle to seek o'er the briny sea,
combat in Heorot? Hrothgar couldst thou
aid at all, the honored chief,
in his wide-known woes? With waves of care
my sad heart seethed; I sore mistrusted
my loved one's venture: long I begged thee
by no means to seek that slaughtering monster,
but suffer the South-Danes to settle their feud
themselves with Grendel. Now God be thanked
that safe and sound I can see thee now!'
Beowulf spake, the bairn of Ecgtheow:-
"Tis known and unhidden, Hygelac Lord,
to many men, that meeting of ours,
struggle grim between Grendel and me,
which we fought on the field where full too many
sorrows he wrought for the Scylding-Victors,
evils unending. These all I avenged.
No boast can be from breed of Grendel,
any on earth, for that uproar at dawn,
from the longest-lived of the loathsome race
in fleshly fold! - But first I went
Hrothgar to greet in the hall of gifts,
where Healfdene's kinsman high-renowned,
soon as my purpose was plain to him,
assigned me a seat by his son and heir.
The liegemen were lusty; my life-days never
such merry men over mead in hall
have I heard under heaven! The high-born queen,
people's peace-bringer, passed through the hall,
cheered the young clansmen, clasps of gold,
ere she sought her seat, to sundry gave.
Oft to the heroes Hrothgar's daughter,
to earls in turn, the ale-cup tendered, -
she whom I heard these hall-companions
Freawaru name, when fretted gold
she proffered the warriors. Promised is she,
gold-decked maid, to the glad son of Froda.
Sage this seems to the Scylding's-friend,
kingdom's-keeper: he counts it wise
the woman to wed so and ward off feud,
store of slaughter. But seldom ever

when men are slain, does the murder-spear sink
but briefest while, though the bride be fair! [1]
'Nor haply will like it the Heathobard lord,
and as little each of his liegemen all,
when a thane of the Danes, in that doughty throng,
goes with the lady along their hall,
and on him the old-time heirlooms glisten
hard and ring-decked, Heathobard's treasure,
weapons that once they wielded fair
until they lost at the linden-play [2]
liegeman leal and their lives as well.
Then, over the ale, on this heirloom gazing,
some ash-wielder old who has all in mind
that spear-death of men, [3] - he is stern of mood,
heavy at heart, - in the hero young
tests the temper and tries the soul
and war-hate wakens, with words like these:-
_Canst thou not, comrade, ken that sword
which to the fray thy father carried
in his final feud, 'neath the fighting-mask,
dearest of blades, when the Danish slew him
and wielded the war-place on Withergild's fall,
after havoc of heroes, those hardy Scyldings?
Now, the son of a certain slaughtering Dane,
proud of his treasure, paces this hall,
joys in the killing, and carries the jewel [4]
that rightfully ought to be owned by thee!_
Thus he urges and eggs him all the time
with keenest words, till occasion offers
that Freawaru's thane, for his father's deed,
after bite of brand in his blood must slumber,
losing his life; but that liegeman flies
living away, for the land he kens.
And thus be broken on both their sides
oaths of the earls, when Ingeld's breast
wells with war-hate, and wife-love now
after the care-billows cooler grows.
'So [5] I hold not high the Heathobards' faith
due to the Danes, or their during love
and pact of peace. - But I pass from that,
turning to Grendel, O giver-of-treasure,
and saying in full how the fight resulted,

hand-fray of heroes. When heaven's jewel
had fled o'er far fields, that fierce sprite came,
night-foe savage, to seek us out
where safe and sound we sentried the hall.
To Hondscio then was that harassing deadly,
his fall there was fated. He first was slain,
girded warrior. Grendel on him
turned murderous mouth, on our mighty kinsman,
and all of the brave man's body devoured.
Yet none the earlier, empty-handed,
would the bloody-toothed murderer, mindful of bale,
outward go from the gold-decked hall:
but me he attacked in his terror of might,
with greedy hand grasped me. A glove hung by him [6]
wide and wondrous, wound with bands;
and in artful wise it all was wrought,
by devilish craft, of dragon-skins.
Me therein, an innocent man,
the fiendish foe was fain to thrust
with many another. He might not so,
when I all angrily upright stood.
'Twere long to relate how that land-destroyer
I paid in kind for his cruel deeds;
yet there, my prince, this people of thine
got fame by my fighting. He fled away,
and a little space his life preserved;
but there staid behind him his stronger hand
left in Heorot; heartsick thence
on the floor of the ocean that outcast fell.
Me for this struggle the Scyldings'-friend
paid in plenty with plates of gold,
with many a treasure, when morn had come
and we all at the banquet-board sat down.
Then was song and glee. The gray-haired Scylding,
much tested, told of the times of yore.
Whiles the hero his harp bestirred,
wood-of-delight; now lays he chanted
of sooth and sadness, or said aright
legends of wonder, the wide-hearted king;
or for years of his youth he would yearn at times,
for strength of old struggles, now stricken with age,
hoary hero: his heart surged full

when, wise with winters, he wailed their flight.
Thus in the hall the whole of that day
at ease we feasted, till fell o'er earth
another night. Anon full ready
in greed of vengeance, Grendel's mother
set forth all doleful. Dead was her son
through war-hate of Weders; now, woman monstrous
with fury fell a foeman she slew,
avenged her offspring. From Aeschere old,
loyal councillor, life was gone;
nor might they e'en, when morning broke,
those Danish people, their death-done comrade
burn with brands, on balefire lay
the man they mourned. Under mountain stream
she had carried the corpse with cruel hands.
For Hrothgar that was the heaviest sorrow
of all that had laden the lord of his folk.
The leader then, by thy life, besought me
(sad was his soul) in the sea-waves' coil
to play the hero and hazard my being
for glory of prowess: my guerdon he pledged.
I then in the waters - 'tis widely known -
that sea-floor-guardian savage found.
Hand-to-hand there a while we struggled;
billows welled blood; in the briny hall
her head I hewed with a hardy blade
from Grendel's mother, - and gained my life,
though not without danger. My doom was not yet.
Then the haven-of-heroes, Healfdene's son,
gave me in guerdon great gifts of price.

XXXI

'So held this king to the customs old,
that I wanted for nought in the wage I gained,
the meed of my might; he made me gifts,
Healfdene's heir, for my own disposal.
Now to thee, my prince, I proffer them all,
gladly give them. Thy grace alone
can find me favor. Few indeed
have I of kinsmen, save, Hygelac, thee!
Then he bade them bear him the boar-head standard,
the battle-helm high, and breastplate gray,

the splendid sword; then spake in form:-
'Me this war-gear the wise old prince,
Hrothgar, gave, and his hest he added,
that its story be straightway said to thee. -
A while it was held by Heorogar king,
for long time lord of the land of Scyldings;
yet not to his son the sovran left it,
to daring Heorowearð, - dear as he was to him,
his harness of battle. - Well hold thou it all!
And I heard that soon passed o'er the path of this treasure, all apple-fallow, four
good steeds,
each like the others, arms and horses
he gave to the king. So should kinsmen be,
not weave one another the net of wiles,
or with deep-hid treachery death contrive
for neighbor and comrade. His nephew was ever
by hardy Hygelac held full dear,
and each kept watch o'er the other's weal.
I heard, too, the necklace to Hygd he presented,
wonder-wrought treasure, which Wealhtheow gave him
sovran's daughter: three steeds he added,
slender and saddle-gay. Since such gift
the gem gleamed bright on the breast of the queen.
Thus showed his strain the son of Ecgtheow
as a man remarked for mighty deeds
and acts of honor. At ale he slew not
comrade or kin; nor cruel his mood,
though of sons of earth his strength was greatest,
a glorious gift that God had sent
the splendid leader. Long was he spurned,
and worthless by Geatish warriors held;
him at mead the master-of-clans
failed full oft to favor at all.
Slack and shiftless the strong men deemed him,
profitless prince; but payment came,
to the warrior honored, for all his woes. -
Then the bulwark-of-earls [1] bade bring within,
hardy chieftain, Hrethel's heirloom
garnished with gold: no Geat e'er knew
in shape of a sword a statelier prize.
The brand he laid in Beowulf's lap;
and of hides assigned him seven thousand,

with house and high-seat. They held in common
land alike by their line of birth,
inheritance, home: but higher the king
because of his rule o'er the realm itself.
Now further it fell with the flight of years,
with harrings horrid, that Hygelac perished,
and Heardred, too, by hewing of swords
under the shield-wall slaughtered lay,
when him at the van of his victor-folk
sought hardy heroes, Heatho-Scilfings,
in arms o'erwhelming Hereric's nephew.
Then Beowulf came as king this broad
realm to wield; and he ruled it well
fifty winters, [4] a wise old prince,
warding his land, until One began
in the dark of night, a Dragon, to rage.
In the grave on the hill a hoard it guarded,
in the stone-barrow steep. A strait path reached it,
unknown to mortals. Some man, however,
came by chance that cave within
to the heathen hoard. [5] In hand he took
a golden goblet, nor gave he it back,
stole with it away, while the watcher slept,
by thievish wiles: for the warden's wrath
prince and people must pay betimes!

XXXII

THAT way he went with no will of his own,
in danger of life, to the dragon's hoard,
but for pressure of peril, some prince's thane.
He fled in fear the fatal scourge,
seeking shelter, a sinful man,
and entered in. At the awful sight
tottered that guest, and terror seized him;
yet the wretched fugitive rallied anon
from fright and fear ere he fled away,
and took the cup from that treasure-hoard.
Of such besides there was store enough,
heirlooms old, the earth below,
which some earl forgotten, in ancient years,
left the last of his lofty race,
heedfully there had hidden away,

dearest treasure. For death of yore
had hurried all hence; and he alone
left to live, the last of the clan,
weeping his friends, yet wished to bide
warding the treasure, his one delight,
though brief his respite. The barrow, new-ready,
to strand and sea-waves stood anear,
hard by the headland, hidden and closed;
there laid within it his lordly heirlooms
and heaped hoard of heavy gold
that warden of rings. Few words he spake:
'Now hold thou, earth, since heroes may not,
what earls have owned! Lo, erst from thee
brave men brought it! But battle-death seized
and cruel killing my clansmen all,
robbed them of life and a liegeman's joys.
None have I left to lift the sword,
or to cleanse the carven cup of price,
beaker bright. My brave are gone.
And the helmet hard, all haughty with gold,
shall part from its plating. Polishers sleep
who could brighten and burnish the battle-mask;
and those weeds of war that were wont to brave
over bicker of shields the bite of steel
rust with their bearer. The ringed mail
fares not far with famous chieftain,
at side of hero! No harp's delight,
no glee-wood's gladness! No good hawk now
flies through the hall! Nor horses fleet
stamp in the burgstead! Battle and death
the flower of my race have reft away.'
Mournful of mood, thus he moaned his woe,
alone, for them all, and unblithe wept
by day and by night, till death's fell wave
o'erwhelmed his heart. His hoard-of-bliss
that old ill-doer open found,
who, blazing at twilight the barrows haunteth,
naked foe-dragon flying by night
folded in fire: the folk of earth
dread him sore. 'Tis his doom to seek
hoard in the graves, and heathen gold
to watch, many-wintered: nor wins he thereby!

Powerful this plague-of-the-people thus
held the house of the hoard in earth
three hundred winters; till One aroused
wrath in his breast, to the ruler bearing
that costly cup, and the king implored
for bond of peace. So the barrow was plundered,
borne off was booty. His boon was granted
that wretched man; and his ruler saw
first time what was fashioned in far-off days.
When the dragon awoke, new woe was kindled.
O'er the stone he snuffed. The stark-heart found
footprint of foe who so far had gone
in his hidden craft by the creature's head. -
So may the undoomed easily flee
evils and exile, if only he gain
the grace of The Wielder! - That warden of gold
o'er the ground went seeking, greedy to find
the man who wrought him such wrong in sleep.
Savage and burning, the barrow he circled
all without; nor was any there,
none in the waste.... Yet war he desired,
was eager for battle. The barrow he entered,
sought the cup, and discovered soon
that some one of mortals had searched his treasure,
his lordly gold. The guardian waited
ill-enduring till evening came;
boiling with wrath was the barrow's keeper,
and fain with flame the foe to pay
for the dear cup's loss. - Now day was fled
as the worm had wished. By its wall no more
was it glad to bide, but burning flew
folded in flame: a fearful beginning
for sons of the soil; and soon it came,
in the doom of their lord, to a dreadful end.

XXXIII

THEN the baleful fiend its fire belched out,
and bright homes burned. The blaze stood high
all landsfolk frightening. No living thing
would that loathly one leave as aloft it flew.
Wide was the dragon's warring seen,
its fiendish fury far and near,

as the grim destroyer those Geatish people
hated and hounded. To hidden lair,
to its hoard it hastened at hint of dawn.
Folk of the land it had lapped in flame,
with bale and brand. In its barrow it trusted,
its battling and bulwarks: that boast was vain!
To Beowulf then the bale was told
quickly and truly: the king's own home,
of buildings the best, in brand-waves melted,
that gift-throne of Geats. To the good old man
sad in heart, 'twas heaviest sorrow.
The sage assumed that his sovran God
he had angered, breaking ancient law,
and embittered the Lord. His breast within
with black thoughts welled, as his wont was never.
The folk's own fastness that fiery dragon
with flame had destroyed, and the stronghold all
washed by waves; but the warlike king,
prince of the Weders, plotted vengeance.
Warriors'-bulwark, he bade them work
all of iron - the earl's commander -
a war-shield wondrous: well he knew
that forest-wood against fire were worthless,
linden could aid not. - Atheling brave,
he was fated to finish this fleeting life,
his days on earth, and the dragon with him,
though long it had watched o'er the wealth of the hoard! -
Shame he reckoned it, sharer-of-rings,
to follow the flyer-afar with a host,
a broad-flung band; nor the battle feared he,
nor deemed he dreadful the dragon's warring,
its vigor and valor: ventures desperate
he had passed a-plenty, and perils of war,
contest-crash, since, conqueror proud,
Hrothgar's hall he had wholly purged,
and in grapple had killed the kin of Grendel,
loathsome breed! Not least was that
of hand-to-hand fights where Hygelac fell,
when the ruler of Geats in rush of battle,
lord of his folk, in the Frisian land,
son of Hrethel, by sword-draughts died,
by brands down-beaten. Thence Beowulf fled

through strength of himself and his swimming power,
though alone, and his arms were laden with thirty
coats of mail, when he came to the sea!
Nor yet might Hetwaras [2] haughtily boast
their craft of contest, who carried against him
shields to the fight: but few escaped
from strife with the hero to seek their homes!
Then swam over ocean Ecgtheow's son
lonely and sorrowful, seeking his land,
where Hygd made him offer of hoard and realm,
rings and royal-seat, reckoning naught
the strength of her son to save their kingdom
from hostile hordes, after Hygelac's death.
No sooner for this could the stricken ones
in any wise move that atheling's mind
over young Heardred's head as lord
and ruler of all the realm to be:
yet the hero upheld him with helpful words,
aided in honor, till, older grown,
he wielded the Weder-Geats. - Wandering exiles
sought him o'er seas, the sons of Ohtere,
who had spurned the sway of the Scylfings'-helmet,
the bravest and best that broke the rings,
in Swedish land, of the sea-kings' line,
haughty hero. [3] Hence Heardred's end.
For shelter he gave them, sword-death came,
the blade's fell blow, to bairn of Hygelac;
but the son of Ongentheow sought again
house and home when Heardred fell,
leaving Beowulf lord of Geats
and gift-seat's master. - A good king he!

XXXIV

THE fall of his lord he was fain to requite
in after days; and to Eadgils he proved
friend to the friendless, and forces sent
over the sea to the son of Ohtere,
weapons and warriors: well repaid he
those care-paths cold when the king he slew. [1]
Thus safe through struggles the son of Ecgtheow
had passed a plenty, through perils dire,

with daring deeds, till this day was come
that doomed him now with the dragon to strive.
With comrades eleven the lord of Geats
swollen in rage went seeking the dragon.
He had heard whence all the harm arose
and the killing of clansmen; that cup of price
on the lap of the lord had been laid by the finder.
In the throng was this one thirteenth man,
starter of all the strife and ill,
care-laden captive; cringing thence
forced and reluctant, he led them on
till he came in ken of that cavern-hall,
the barrow delved near billowy surges,
flood of ocean. Within 'twas full
of wire-gold and jewels; a jealous warden,
warrior trusty, the treasures held,
lurked in his lair. Not light the task
of entrance for any of earth-born men!
Sat on the headland the hero king,
spake words of hail to his hearth-companions,
gold-friend of Geats. All gloomy his soul,
wavering, death-bound. Wyrð full nigh
stood ready to greet the gray-haired man,
to seize his soul-hoard, sunder apart
life and body. Not long would be
the warrior's spirit enwound with flesh.
Beowulf spake, the bairn of Ecgtheow:-
'Through store of struggles I strove in youth,
mighty feuds; I mind them all.
I was seven years old when the sovrán of rings,
friend-of-his-folk, from my father took me,
had me, and held me, Hrethel the king,
with food and fee, faithful in kinship.
Ne'er, while I lived there, he loathlier found me,
bairn in the burg, than his birthright sons,
Herebeald and Haethcyn and Hygelac mine.
For the eldest of these, by unmeet chance,
by kinsman's deed, was the death-bed strewn,
when Haethcyn killed him with horny bow,
his own dear liege laid low with an arrow,
missed the mark and his mate shot down,
one brother the other, with bloody shaft.

A feeless fight, [2] and a fearful sin,
horror to Hrethel; yet, hard as it was,
unavenged must the atheling die!
Too awful it is for an aged man
to bide and bear, that his bairn so young
rides on the gallows. A rime he makes,
sorrow-song for his son there hanging
as rapture of ravens; no rescue now
can come from the old, disabled man!
Still is he minded, as morning breaks,
of the heir gone elsewhere; [3] another he hopes not
he will bide to see his burg within
as ward for his wealth, now the one has found
doom of death that the deed incurred.
Forlorn he looks on the lodge of his son,
wine-hall waste and wind-swept chambers
reft of revel. The rider sleepeth,
the hero, far-hidden; [4] no harp resounds,
in the courts no wassail, as once was heard.

XXXV

'THEN he goes to his chamber, a grief-song chants
alone for his lost. Too large all seems,
homestead and house. So the helmet-of-Weders
hid in his heart for Herebeald
waves of woe. No way could he take
to avenge on the slayer slaughter so foul;
nor e'en could he harass that hero at all
with loathing deed, though he loved him not.
And so for the sorrow his soul endured,
men's gladness he gave up and God's light chose.
Lands and cities he left his sons
(as the wealthy do) when he went from earth.
There was strife and struggle 'twixt Swede and Geat
o'er the width of waters; war arose,
hard battle-horror, when Hrethel died,
and Ongentheow's offspring grew
strife-keen, bold, nor brooked o'er the seas
pact of peace, but pushed their hosts
to harass in hatred by Hreosnabeorh.
Men of my folk for that feud had vengeance,

for woful war ('tis widely known),
though one of them bought it with blood of his heart,
a bargain hard: for Haethcyn proved
fatal that fray, for the first-of-Geats.
At morn, I heard, was the murderer killed
by kinsman for kinsman, [1] with clash of sword,
when Ongentheow met Eofor there.
Wide split the war-helm: wan he fell,
hoary Scylfing; the hand that smote him
of feud was mindful, nor flinched from the death-blow.
- 'For all that he [2] gave me, my gleaming sword
repaid him at war, - such power I wielded, -
for lordly treasure: with land he entrusted me,
homestead and house. He had no need
from Swedish realm, or from Spear-Dane folk,
or from men of the Gifths, to get him help, -
some warrior worse for wage to buy!
Ever I fought in the front of all,
sole to the fore; and so shall I fight
while I bide in life and this blade shall last
that early and late hath loyal proved
since for my doughtiness Daeghrefn fell,
slain by my hand, the Hugas' champion.
Nor fared he thence to the Frisian king
with the booty back, and breast-adornments;
but, slain in struggle, that standard-bearer
fell, atheling brave. Not with blade was he slain,
but his bones were broken by brawny gripe,
his heart-waves stilled. - The sword-edge now,
hard blade and my hand, for the hoard shall strive.'
Beowulf spake, and a battle-vow made
his last of all: 'I have lived through many
wars in my youth; now once again,
old folk-defender, feud will I seek,
do doughty deeds, if the dark destroyer
forth from his cavern come to fight me!'
Then hailed he the helmeted heroes all,
for the last time greeting his liegemen dear,
comrades of war: 'I should carry no weapon,
no sword to the serpent, if sure I knew
how, with such enemy, else my vows
I could gain as I did in Grendel's day.

But fire in this fight I must fear me now,
and poisonous breath; so I bring with me
breastplate and board. [3] From the barrow's keeper
no footbreadth flee I. One fight shall end
our war by the wall, as Wyrd allots,
all mankind's master. My mood is bold
but forbears to boast o'er this battling-flyer.

- Now abide by the barrow, ye breastplate-mailed,
ye heroes in harness, which of us twain
better from battle-rush bear his wounds.

Wait ye the finish. The fight is not yours,
nor meet for any but me alone
to measure might with this monster here
and play the hero. Hardily I
shall win that wealth, or war shall seize,
cruel killing, your king and lord!

Up stood then with shield the sturdy champion,
stayed by the strength of his single manhood,
and hardy 'neath helmet his harness bore
under cleft of the cliffs: no coward's path!

Soon spied by the wall that warrior chief,
survivor of many a victory-field
where foemen fought with furious clashings,
an arch of stone; and within, a stream
that broke from the barrow. The brooklet's wave
was hot with fire. The hoard that way
he never could hope unharmed to near,
or endure those deeps, [4] for the dragon's flame.

Then let from his breast, for he burst with rage,
the Weder-Geat prince a word outgo;
stormed the stark-heart; stern went ringing
and clear his cry 'neath the cliff-rocks gray.

The hoard-guard heard a human voice;
his rage was enkindled. No respite now
for pact of peace! The poison-breath
of that foul worm first came forth from the cave,
hot reek-of-fight: the rocks resounded.

Stout by the stone-way his shield he raised,
lord of the Geats, against the loathed-one;
while with courage keen that coiled foe
came seeking strife. The sturdy king
had drawn his sword, not dull of edge,

heirloom old; and each of the two
felt fear of his foe, though fierce their mood.
Stoutly stood with his shield high-raised
the warrior king, as the worm now coiled
together amain: the mailed-one waited.
Now, spire by spire, fast sped and glided
that blazing serpent. The shield protected,
soul and body a shorter while
for the hero-king than his heart desired,
could his will have wielded the welcome respite
but once in his life! But Wyrd denied it,
and victory's honors. - His arm he lifted
lord of the Geats, the grim foe smote
with atheling's heirloom. Its edge was turned
brown blade, on the bone, and bit more feebly
than its noble master had need of then
in his baleful stress. - Then the barrow's keeper
waxed full wild for that weighty blow,
cast deadly flames; wide drove and far
those vicious fires. No victor's glory
the Geats' lord boasted; his brand had failed,
naked in battle, as never it should,
excellent iron! - 'Twas no easy path
that Ecgtheow's honored heir must tread
over the plain to the place of the foe;
for against his will he must win a home
elsewhere far, as must all men, leaving
this lapsing life! - Not long it was
ere those champions grimly closed again.
The hoard-guard was heartened; high heaved his breast
once more; and by peril was pressed again,
enfolded in flames, the folk-commander!
Nor yet about him his band of comrades,
sons of athelings, armed stood
with warlike front: to the woods they bent them,
their lives to save. But the soul of one
with care was cumbered. Kinship true
can never be marred in a noble mind!

XXXVI

WIGLAF his name was, Weohstan's son,
linden-thane loved, the lord of Scylfings,

Aelfhere's kinsman. His king he now saw
 with heat under helmet hard oppressed.
 He minded the prizes his prince had given him,
 wealthy seat of the Waegmunding line,
 and folk-rights that his father owned
 Not long he lingered. The linden yellow,
 his shield, he seized; the old sword he drew: -
 as heirloom of Eanmund earth-dwellers knew it,
 who was slain by the sword-edge, son of Ohtere,
 friendless exile, erst in fray
 killed by Weohstan, who won for his kin
 brown-bright helmet, breastplate ringed,
 old sword of Eotens, Onela's gift,
 weeds of war of the warrior-thane,
 battle-gear brave: though a brother's child
 had been felled, the feud was unfelt by Onela. [1]
 For winters this war-gear Weohstan kept,
 breastplate and board, till his bairn had grown
 earlship to earn as the old sire did:
 then he gave him, mid Geats, the gear of battle,
 portion huge, when he passed from life,
 fared aged forth. For the first time now
 with his leader-lord the liegeman young
 was bidden to share the shock of battle.
 Neither softened his soul, nor the sire's bequest
 weakened in war. [2] So the worm found out
 when once in fight the foes had met!
 Wiglaf spake, - and his words were sage;
 sad in spirit, he said to his comrades:-
 'I remember the time, when mead we took,
 what promise we made to this prince of ours
 in the banquet-hall, to our breaker-of-rings,
 for gear of combat to give him requital,
 for hard-sword and helmet, if hap should bring
 stress of this sort! Himself who chose us
 from all his army to aid him now,
 urged us to glory, and gave these treasures,
 because he counted us keen with the spear
 and hardy 'neath helm, though this hero-work
 our leader hoped unhelped and alone
 to finish for us, - folk-defender
 who hath got him glory greater than all men

for daring deeds! Now the day is come
that our noble master has need of the might
of warriors stout. Let us stride along
the hero to help while the heat is about him
glowing and grim! For God is my witness
I am far more fain the fire should seize
along with my lord these limbs of mine! [3]
Unsuited it seems our shields to bear
homeward hence, save here we essay
to fell the foe and defend the life
of the Weders' lord. I wot 'twere shame
on the law of our land if alone the king
out of Geatish warriors woe endured
and sank in the struggle! My sword and helmet,
breastplate and board, for us both shall serve!
Through slaughter-reek strode he to succor his Chieftain,
his battle-helm bore, and brief words spake:-
'Beowulf dearest, do all bravely,
as in youthful days of yore thou vowedst
that while life should last thou wouldst let no wise
thy glory droop! Now, great in deeds,
atheling steadfast, with all thy strength
shield thy life! I will stand to help thee.'
At the words the worm came once again,
murderous monster mad with rage,
with fire-billows flaming, its foes to seek,
the hated men. In heat-waves burned
that board [4] to the boss, and the breastplate failed
to shelter at all the spear-thane young.
Yet quickly under his kinsman's shield
went eager the earl, since his own was now
all burned by the blaze. The bold king again
had mind of his glory: with might his glaive
was driven into the dragon's head, -
blow nerved by hate. But Naegling was shivered,
broken in battle was Beowulf's sword,
old and gray. 'Twas granted him not
that ever the edge of iron at all
could help him at strife: too strong was his hand,
so the tale is told, and he tried too far
with strength of stroke all swords he wielded,
though sturdy their steel: they steaded him nought.

Then for the third time thought on its feud
that folk-destroyer, fire-dread dragon,
and rushed on the hero, where room allowed,
battle-grim, burning; its bitter teeth
closed on his neck, and covered him
with waves of blood from his breast that welled.

XXXVII

'Twas now, men say, in his sovran's need
that the earl made known his noble strain,
craft and keenness and courage enduring.
Heedless of harm, though his hand was burned,
hardy-hearted, he helped his kinsman.
A little lower the loathsome beast
he smote with sword; his steel drove in
bright and burnished; that blaze began
to lose and lessen. At last the king
wielded his wits again, war-knife drew,
a biting blade by his breastplate hanging,
and the Weders'-helm smote that worm asunder,
felled the foe, flung forth its life.
So had they killed it, kinsmen both,
athelings twain: thus an earl should be
in danger's day! - Of deeds of valor
this conqueror's-hour of the king was last,
of his work in the world. The wound began,
which that dragon-of-earth had erst inflicted,
to swell and smart; and soon he found
in his breast was boiling, baleful and deep,
pain of poison. The prince walked on,
wise in his thought, to the wall of rock;
then sat, and stared at the structure of giants,
where arch of stone and steadfast column
upheld forever that hall in earth.
Yet here must the hand of the henchman peerless
lave with water his winsome lord,
the king and conqueror covered with blood,
with struggle spent, and unspan his helmet.
Beowulf spake in spite of his hurt,
his mortal wound; full well he knew
his portion now was past and gone
of earthly bliss, and all had fled

of his file of days, and death was near:
'I would fain bestow on son of mine
this gear of war, were given me now
that any heir should after me come
of my proper blood. This people I ruled
fifty winters. No folk-king was there,
none at all, of the neighboring clans
who war would wage me with 'warriors'-friends' [1]
and threat me with horrors. At home I bided
what fate might come, and I cared for mine own;
feuds I sought not, nor falsely swore
ever on oath. For all these things,
though fatally wounded, fain am I!
From the Ruler-of-Man no wrath shall seize me,
when life from my frame must flee away,
for killing of kinsmen! Now quickly go
and gaze on that hoard 'neath the hoary rock,
Wiglaf loved, now the worm lies low,
sleeps, heart-sore, of his spoil bereaved.
And fare in haste. I would fain behold
the gorgeous heirlooms, golden store,
have joy in the jewels and gems, lay down
softlier for sight of this splendid hoard
my life and the lordship I long have held.'

XXXVIII

I HAVE heard that swiftly the son of Weohstan
at wish and word of his wounded king, -
war-sick warrior, - woven mail-coat,
battle-sark, bore 'neath the barrow's roof.
Then the clansman keen, of conquest proud,
passing the seat, [1] saw store of jewels
and glistening gold the ground along;
by the wall were marvels, and many a vessel
in the den of the dragon, the dawn-flier old:
unburnished bowls of bygone men
reft of richness; rusty helms
of the olden age; and arm-rings many
wondrously woven. - Such wealth of gold,
booty from barrow, can burden with pride
each human wight: let him hide it who will! -

His glance too fell on a gold-wove banner
high o'er the hoard, of handiwork noblest,
brilliantly broidered; so bright its gleam,
all the earth-floor he easily saw
and viewed all these vessels. No vestige now
was seen of the serpent: the sword had ta'en him.
Then, I heard, the hill of its hoard was reft,
old work of giants, by one alone;
he burdened his bosom with beakers and plate
at his own good will, and the ensign took,
brightest of beacons. - The blade of his lord
- its edge was iron - had injured deep
one that guarded the golden hoard
many a year and its murder-fire
spread hot round the barrow in horror-billows
at midnight hour, till it met its doom.
Hasted the herald, the hoard so spurred him
his track to retrace; he was troubled by doubt,
high-souled hero, if haply he'd find
alive, where he left him, the lord of Weders,
weakening fast by the wall of the cave.
So he carried the load. His lord and king
he found all bleeding, famous chief
at the lapse of life. The liegeman again
plashed him with water, till point of word
broke through the breast-hoard. Beowulf spake,
sage and sad, as he stared at the gold. -
'For the gold and treasure, to God my thanks,
to the Wielder-of-Wonders, with words I say,
for what I behold, to Heaven's Lord,
for the grace that I give such gifts to my folk
or ever the day of my death be run!
Now I've bartered here for booty of treasure
the last of my life, so look ye well
to the needs of my land! No longer I tarry.
A barrow bid ye the battle-fanned raise
for my ashes. 'Twill shine by the shore of the flood,
to folk of mine memorial fair
on Hrones Headland high uplifted,
that ocean-wanderers oft may hail
Beowulf's Barrow, as back from far
they drive their keels o'er the darkling wave.'

From his neck he unclasped the collar of gold,
valorous king, to his vassal gave it
with bright-gold helmet, breastplate, and ring,
to the youthful thane: bade him use them in joy.
'Thou art end and remnant of all our race
the Waegmunding name. For Wyrð hath swept them,
all my line, to the land of doom,
earls in their glory: I after them go.'
This word was the last which the wise old man
harbored in heart ere hot death-waves
of balefire he chose. From his bosom fled
his soul to seek the saints' reward.

XXXIX

IT was heavy hap for that hero young
on his lord beloved to look and find him
lying on earth with life at end,
sorrowful sight. But the slayer too,
awful earth-dragon, empty of breath,
lay felled in fight, nor, fain of its treasure,
could the writhing monster rule it more.
For edges of iron had ended its days,
hard and battle-sharp, hammers' leaving;
and that flier-afar had fallen to ground
hushed by its hurt, its hoard all near,
no longer lusty aloft to whirl
at midnight, making its merriment seen,
proud of its prizes: prone it sank
by the handiwork of the hero-king.
Forsooth among folk but few achieve,
- though sturdy and strong, as stories tell me,
and never so daring in deed of valor, -
the perilous breath of a poison-foe
to brave, and to rush on the ring-board hall,
whenever his watch the warden keeps
bold in the barrow. Beowulf paid
the price of death for that precious hoard;
and each of the foes had found the end
of this fleeting life.
Befell erelong
that the laggards in war the wood had left,

trothbreakers, cowards, ten together,
fearing before to flourish a spear
in the sore distress of their sovran lord.
Now in their shame their shields they carried,
armor of fight, where the old man lay;
and they gazed on Wiglaf. Wearied he sat
at his sovran's shoulder, shieldsman good,
to wake him with water. [2] Nowise it availed.
Though well he wished it, in world no more
could he barrier life for that leader-of-battles
nor baffle the will of all-wielding God.
Doom of the Lord was law o'er the deeds
of every man, as it is to-day.
Grim was the answer, easy to get,
from the youth for those that had yielded to fear!
Wiglaf spake, the son of Weohstan, -
mournful he looked on those men unloved:-
'Who sooth will speak, can say indeed
that the ruler who gave you golden rings
and the harness of war in which ye stand
- for he at ale-bench often-times
bestowed on hall-folk helm and breastplate,
lord to liegemen, the likeliest gear
which near of far he could find to give, -
threw away and wasted these weeds of battle,
on men who failed when the foemen came!
Not at all could the king of his comrades-in-arms
venture to vaunt, though the Victory-Wielder,
God, gave him grace that he got revenge
sole with his sword in stress and need.
To rescue his life, 'twas little that I
could serve him in struggle; yet shift I made
(hopeless it seemed) to help my kinsman.
Its strength ever waned, when with weapon I struck
that fatal foe, and the fire less strongly
flowed from its head. - Too few the heroes
in throe of contest that thronged to our king!
Now gift of treasure and girding of sword,
joy of the house and home-delight
shall fail your folk; his freehold-land
every clansman within your kin
shall lose and leave, when lords highborn

hear afar of that flight of yours,
a fameless deed. Yea, death is better
for liegemen all than a life of shame!

XL

THAT battle-toil bade he at burg to announce,
at the fort on the cliff, where, full of sorrow,
all the morning earls had sat,
daring shieldsmen, in doubt of twain:
would they wail as dead, or welcome home,
their lord beloved? Little [1] kept back
of the tidings new, but told them all,
the herald that up the headland rode. -
'Now the willing-giver to Weder folk
in death-bed lies; the Lord of Geats
on the slaughter-bed sleeps by the serpent's deed!
And beside him is stretched that slayer-of-men
with knife-wounds sick: [2] no sword availed
on the awesome thing in any wise
to work a wound. There Wiglaf sitteth,
Weohstan's bairn, by Beowulf's side,
the living earl by the other dead,
and heavy of heart a head-watch [3] keeps
o'er friend and foe. - Now our folk may look
for waging of war when once unhidden
to Frisian and Frank the fall of the king
is spread afar. - The strife began
when hot on the Hugas [4] Hygelac fell
and fared with his fleet to the Frisian land.
Him there the Hetwaras humbled in war,
plied with such prowess their power o'erwhelming
that the bold-in-battle bowed beneath it
and fell in fight. To his friends no wise
could that earl give treasure! And ever since
the Merowings' favor has failed us wholly.
Nor aught expect I of peace and faith
from Swedish folk. 'Twas spread afar
how Ongentheow reft at Ravenswood
Haethcyn Hrethling of hope and life,
when the folk of Geats for the first time sought
in wanton pride the Warlike-Scylfings.
Soon the sage old sire [5] of Ohtere,

ancient and awful, gave answering blow;
the sea-king [6] he slew, and his spouse redeemed,
his good wife rescued, though robbed of her gold,
mother of Ohtere and Onela.

Then he followed his foes, who fled before him
sore beset and stole their way,
bereft of a ruler, to Ravenswood.

With his host he besieged there what swords had left,
the weary and wounded; woes he threatened
the whole night through to that hard-pressed throng:
some with the morrow his sword should kill,
some should go to the gallows-tree
for rapture of ravens. But rescue came
with dawn of day for those desperate men
when they heard the horn of Hygelac sound,
tones of his trumpet; the trusty king
had followed their trail with faithful band.

XLI

'THE bloody swath of Swedes and Geats
and the storm of their strife, were seen afar,
how folk against folk the fight had wakened.
The ancient king with his atheling band
sought his citadel, sorrowing much:
Ongentheow earl went up to his burg.
He had tested Hygelac's hardihood,
the proud one's prowess, would prove it no longer,
defied no more those fighting-wanderers
nor hoped from the seamen to save his hoard,
his bairn and his bride: so he bent him again,
old, to his earth-walls. Yet after him came
with slaughter for Swedes the standards of Hygelac
o'er peaceful plains in pride advancing,
till Hrethelings fought in the fenced town. [1]
Then Ongentheow with edge of sword,
the hoary-bearded, was held at bay,
and the folk-king there was forced to suffer
Eofor's anger. In ire, at the king
Wulf Wonreding with weapon struck;
and the chieftain's blood, for that blow, in streams
flowed 'neath his hair. No fear felt he,
stout old Scylfing, but straightway repaid

in better bargain that bitter stroke
and faced his foe with fell intent.
Nor swift enough was the son of Wonred
answer to render the aged chief;
too soon on his head the helm was cloven;
blood-bedecked he bowed to earth,
and fell adown; not doomed was he yet,
and well he waxed, though the wound was sore.
Then the hardy Hygelac-thane, [2]
when his brother fell, with broad brand smote,
giants' sword crashing through giants'-helm
across the shield-wall: sank the king,
his folk's old herdsman, fatally hurt.
There were many to bind the brother's wounds
and lift him, fast as fate allowed
his people to wield the place-of-war.
But Eofor took from Ongentheow,
earl from other, the iron-breastplate,
hard sword hilted, and helmet too,
and the hoar-chief's harness to Hygelac carried,
who took the trappings, and truly promised
rich fee 'mid folk, - and fulfilled it so.
For that grim strife gave the Geatish lord,
Hrethel's offspring, when home he came,
to Eofor and Wulf a wealth of treasure,
Each of them had a hundred thousand [3]
in land and linked rings; nor at less price reckoned
mid-earth men such mighty deeds!
And to Eofor he gave his only daughter
in pledge of grace, the pride of his home.
'Such is the feud, the foeman's rage,
death-hate of men: so I deem it sure
that the Swedish folk will seek us home
for this fall of their friends, the fighting-Scylfings,
when once they learn that our warrior leader
lifeless lies, who land and hoard
ever defended from all his foes,
furthered his folk's weal, finished his course
a hardy hero. - Now haste is best,
that we go to gaze on our Geatish lord,
and bear the bountiful breaker-of-rings
to the funeral pyre. No fragments merely

shall burn with the warrior. Wealth of jewels,
gold untold and gained in terror,
treasure at last with his life obtained,
all of that booty the brands shall take,
fire shall eat it. No earl must carry
memorial jewel. No maiden fair
shall wreath her neck with noble ring:
nay, sad in spirit and shorn of her gold,
oft shall she pass o'er paths of exile
now our lord all laughter has laid aside,
all mirth and revel. Many a spear
morning-cold shall be clasped amain,
lifted aloft; nor shall lilt of harp
those warriors wake; but the wan-hued raven,
fain o'er the fallen, his feast shall praise
and boast to the eagle how bravely he ate
when he and the wolf were wasting the slain.'
So he told his sorrowful tidings,
and little [4] he lied, the loyal man
of word or of work. The warriors rose;
sad, they climbed to the Cliff-of-Eagles,
went, welling with tears, the wonder to view.
Found on the sand there, stretched at rest,
their lifeless lord, who had lavished rings
of old upon them. Ending-day
had dawned on the doughty-one; death had seized
in woful slaughter the Weders' king.
There saw they, besides, the strangest being,
loathsome, lying their leader near,
prone on the field. The fiery dragon,
fearful fiend, with flame was scorched.
Reckoned by feet, it was fifty measures
in length as it lay. Aloft erewhile
it had revelled by night, and anon come back,
seeking its den; now in death's sure clutch
it had come to the end of its earth-hall joys.
By it there stood the stoups and jars;
dishes lay there, and dear-decked swords
eaten with rust, as, on earth's lap resting,
a thousand winters they waited there.
For all that heritage huge, that gold
of bygone men, was bound by a spell, [5]

so the treasure-hall could be touched by none
of human kind, - save that Heaven's King,
God himself, might give whom he would,
Helper of Heroes, the hoard to open, -
even such a man as seemed to him meet.

XLII

A PERILOUS path, it proved, he [1] trod
who heinously hid, that hall within,
wealth under wall! Its watcher had killed
one of a few, [2] and the feud was avenged
in woful fashion. Wondrous seems it,
what manner a man of might and valor
oft ends his life, when the earl no longer
in mead-hall may live with loving friends.
So Beowulf, when that barrow's warden
he sought, and the struggle; himself knew not
in what wise he should wend from the world at last.
For [3] princes potent, who placed the gold,
with a curse to doomsday covered it deep,
so that marked with sin the man should be,
hedged with horrors, in hell-bonds fast,
racked with plagues, who should rob their hoard.
Yet no greed for gold, but the grace of heaven,
ever the king had kept in view. [4]
Wiglaf spake, the son of Weohstan:-
'At the mandate of one, oft warriors many
sorrow must suffer; and so must we.
The people's-shepherd showed not aught
of care for our counsel, king beloved!
That guardian of gold he should grapple not, urged we,
but let him lie where he long had been
in his earth-hall waiting the end of the world,
the hest of heaven. - This hoard is ours
but grievously gotten; too grim the fate
which thither carried our king and lord.
I was within there, and all I viewed,
the chambered treasure, when chance allowed me
(and my path was made in no pleasant wise)
under the earth-wall. Eager, I seized
such heap from the hoard as hands could bear

and hurriedly carried it hither back
to my liege and lord. Alive was he still,
still wielding his wits. The wise old man
spake much in his sorrow, and sent you greetings
and bade that ye build, when he breathed no more,
on the place of his balefire a barrow high,
memorial mighty. Of men was he
worthiest warrior wide earth o'er
the while he had joy of his jewels and burg.
Let us set out in haste now, the second time
to see and search this store of treasure,
these wall-hid wonders, - the way I show you, -
where, gathered near, ye may gaze your fill
at broad-gold and rings. Let the bier, soon made,
be all in order when out we come,
our king and captain to carry thither
- man beloved - where long he shall bide
safe in the shelter of sovran God.'
Then the bairn of Weohstan bade command,
hardy chief, to heroes many
that owned their homesteads, hither to bring
firewood from far - o'er the folk they ruled -
for the famed-one's funeral. ' Fire shall devour
and wan flames feed on the fearless warrior
who oft stood stout in the iron-shower,
when, sped from the string, a storm of arrows
shot o'er the shield-wall: the shaft held firm,
featly feathered, followed the barb.'
And now the sage young son of Weohstan
seven chose of the chieftain's thanes,
the best he found that band within,
and went with these warriors, one of eight,
under hostile roof. In hand one bore
a lighted torch and led the way.
No lots they cast for keeping the hoard
when once the warriors saw it in hall,
altogether without a guardian,
lying there lost. And little they mourned
when they had hastily haled it out,
dear-bought treasure! The dragon they cast,
the worm, o'er the wall for the wave to take,
and surges swallowed that shepherd of gems.

Then the woven gold on a wain was laden -
countless quite! - and the king was borne,
hoary hero, to Hrones-Ness.

XLIII

THEN fashioned for him the folk of Geats
firm on the earth a funeral-pile,
and hung it with helmets and harness of war
and breastplates bright, as the boon he asked;
and they laid amid it the mighty chieftain,
heroes mourning their master dear.
Then on the hill that hugest of balefires
the warriors wakened. Wood-smoke rose
black over blaze, and blent was the roar
of flame with weeping (the wind was still),
till the fire had broken the frame of bones,
hot at the heart. In heavy mood
their misery moaned they, their master's death.
Wailing her woe, the widow [1] old,
her hair upbound, for Beowulf's death
sung in her sorrow, and said full oft
she dreaded the doleful days to come,
deaths enow, and doom of battle,
and shame. - The smoke by the sky was devoured.
The folk of the Weders fashioned there
on the headland a barrow broad and high,
by ocean-farers far descried:
in ten days' time their toil had raised it,
the battle-brave's beacon. Round brands of the pyre
a wall they built, the worthiest ever
that wit could prompt in their wisest men.
They placed in the barrow that precious booty,
the rounds and the rings they had reft erewhile,
hardy heroes, from hoard in cave, -
trusting the ground with treasure of earls,
gold in the earth, where ever it lies
useless to men as of yore it was.
Then about that barrow the battle-keen rode,
atheling-born, a band of twelve,
lament to make, to mourn their king,
chant their dirge, and their chieftain honor.

They praised his earlship, his acts of prowess
worthily witnessed: and well it is
that men their master-friend mightily laud,
heartily love, when hence he goes
from life in the body forlorn away.
Thus made their mourning the men of Geatland,
for their hero's passing his hearth-companions:
quoth that of all the kings of earth,
of men he was mildest and most beloved,
to his kin the kindest, keenest for praise.

Charles Baudelaire

Bertha's Eyes

You can scorn more illustrious eyes,
sweet eyes of my child, through which there takes flight
something as good or as tender as night.

Turn to mine your charmed shadows, sweet eyes!

Great eyes of a child, adorable secrets,
you resemble those grottoes of magic
where, behind the dark and lethargic,
shine vague treasures the world forgets.

My child has veiled eyes, profound and vast,
and shining like you, Night, immense, above!

Their fires are of Trust, mixed with thoughts of Love,
that glitter in depths, voluptuous or chaste.

Charles Baudelaire

Bohémiens En Voyage (Gypsies On The Road)

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 verdure,

Fait couler le rocher et fleurir le désert
Devant ces voyageurs, pour lesquels est ouvert
L'empire familier des ténèbres futures.

Gypsies Traveling

The prophetic 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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

The Gypsies

They set out yesterday, the tribe of ragged seers
With burning eyes — bearing their little ones in nests
Upon their backs, or giving them, to stop their tears,
The teats of inexhaustible and swarthy breasts.

The men walk shouldering their rifles silently
Beside the hooded wagons with bright tatters hung,
And peer into the sky, as if they hoped to see
Some old mirage that beckoned them when they were young.

No matter where they journey through the meager land,
The cricket will sing louder from his lair of sand,
And Cybele, who loves them, will smile where they advance:

The desert will be fruitful, the arid rock will flow

Before the footsteps of these wayfarers, who go
Eternally into the lightless realm of chance.

— Translated by George Dillon

Travelling Bohemians

The prophetic tribe of the ardent eyes
Yesterday they took the road, holding their babies
On their backs, delivering to fierce appetites
The always ready treasure of pendulous breasts.

The men stick their feet out, waving their guns
Alongside the caravan where they tremble together,
Scanning the sky their eyes are weighted down
In mourning for absent chimeras.

At the bottom of his sandy retreat, a cricket
Watched passing, redoubles his song,
Cybele, who loves, adds more flower,

Makes fountains out of rock and blossoms from desert
Opening up before these travelers in a yawn—
A familiar empire, the inscrutable future.

Translated by William A. Sigler

Charles Baudelaire

Calm

Have patience, O my sorrow, and be still.
You asked for night: it falls: it is here.
A shadowy atmosphere enshrouds the hill,
to some men bringing peace, to others care.
While the vile human multitude
goes to earn remorse, in servile pleasure's play,
under the lash of joy, the torturer, who
is pitiless, Sadness, come, far away:
Give me your hand. See, where the lost years
lean from the balcony in their outdated gear,
where regret, smiling, surges from the watery deeps.
Underneath some archway, the dying light
sleeps, and, like a long shroud trailing from the East,
listen, dear one, listen to the soft onset of night.

Charles Baudelaire

Cats

They are alike, prim scholar and perfervid lover:
When comes the season of decay, they both decide
Upon sweet, husky cats to be the household pride;
Cats choose, like them, to sit, and like them, shudder.

Like partisans of carnal dalliance and science,
They search for silence and the shadowings of dread;
Hell well might harness them as horses for the dead,
If it could bend their native proudness in compliance.

In reverie they emulate the noble mood
Of giant sphinxes stretched in depths of solitude
Who seem to slumber in a never-ending dream;

Within their fertile loins a sparkling magic lies;
Finer than any sand are dusts of gold that gleam,
Vague starpoints, in the mystic iris of their eyes.

Charles Baudelaire

Causerie (Conversation)

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 flétri 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!

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,
Burn these tatters which the beasts spared!

— Translated by William Aggeler

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 band 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!

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Episode

You are a lovely, rosy, lucid autumn sky!
But sadness mounts upon me like a flooding sea,
And ebbs, and ebbing, leaves my lips morose and dry,
Smarting with salty ooze, bitter with memory.

— Useless to slide your hand like that along my breast;
That which it seeks, my dear, is plundered; it is slit
By the soft paw of woman, that clawed while it caressed.
Useless to hunt my heart; the beasts have eaten it.

My heart is like a palace where the mob has spat;
There they carouse, they seize each other's hair, they kill.
— Your breast is naked... what exotic scent is that?...

O Beauty, iron flail of souls, it is your will!

So be it! Eyes of fire, bright in the darkness there,
Bum up these strips of flesh the beasts saw fit to spare.

— Translated by Edna St. Vincent Millay

Conversation

You are the loveliness, the clearness, the red of autumn skies!
But sadness climbs like a sea in me,
Leaving, in reflux, upon my bitter lip
The sharp memory of its biting slime.

— In vain your hand slips on my fainting chest;
What it seeks, my darling, is but a place pillaged
By the fang and the fierce tooth of woman.
Do not search for my heart anymore; the wild beasts have eaten it.

My heart is a palace soiled by the mob;
There they swill, and they brawl, and they kill!
— A fragrance swims around your naked breasts.

O Beauty, cruel scourge of souls, you long for it!
With your eyes that flame, brilliant as festivals,
Bum these tatters that the beasts have spared me!

—Translated by Geoffrey Wagner

Charles Baudelaire

Chanson D'Après-Midi (Afternoon Song)

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'énigme et du secret.

Sur ta chair le parfum rôde
Comme autour d'un encensoir;
Tu charmes comme le soir
Nympe 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!

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!

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Afternoon Song

O witch with sharp alluring eyes,
Although your evil eyebrows lend
Your strange ways little of the friend

And even less of angel skies,

How I adore your madcap verve,
How deeply rooted, my fell passion!
I worship you in the rapt fashion
Of priests for idols that they serve.

Your stiff dense tresses fragrantly
Conjure up wilderness and wood,
Your head assumes each attitude
Of the enigma and its key.

Perfumes cling closely to your flesh
As incense to a censer; bright
And dusky nymph, you are all Night,
Secret and passionate and fresh!

The strongest philter vies in vain
Power against your languidness,
Too well you know the sweet caress
That brings the dead to life again.

Your haunches are enamored of
Your supple back and surging breast,
And when, posed torpidly, you rest,
Your cushions taste the charms of love.

Sometimes to quell the rageful fire
Of your mysterious lust, you lavish
Obstinate kiss and bite to ravish
The throbbing prey of your desire.

You rend my body to its seams,
Dark beauty, with your mocking laughter,
Then fill my heart a moment after
With glances soft as the moon's beams.

Under your satin slippers, see,
Under your blest silk feet, I lay
The vast sum of my joys today,
My genius, my destiny,

My soul, enlivened by your spark
Your radiance and color, sweet
Explosion of fierce tropic heat
Across my chill Siberian dark!

— Translated by Jacques LeClercq

Afternoon Song

Though your wicked eyebrows call
Your nature into question
(Unangelic's their suggestion,
Witch whose eyes enthrall)

I adore you still
O foolish terrible emotion
Kneeling in devotion
As a priest to his idol will.

Your undone braids conceal
Desert, forest scents,
In your exotic countenance
Lie secrets unrevealed.

Over your flesh perfume drifts
Like incense 'round a censor,
Tantalizing dispenser
Of evening's ardent gifts.

No Philtres could compete
With your potent idleness:
You've mastered the caress
That raises dead me to their feet.

Your hips themselves are romanced
By your back and by your breasts:
By your languid dalliance.

Now and then, your appetite's
Uncontrolled, unassuaged:
Mysteriously enraged,

You kiss me and you bite.

Dark one, I am torn
By your savage ways,
Then, soft as the moon, your gaze
Sees my tortured heart reborn.

Beneath your satin shoe,
Beneath your charming silken foot.
My greatest joy I put
My genius and destiny, too.

You bring my spirit back,
Bringer of the light.
Exploding color in the night
Of my Siberia so black.

By Anonymous

Charles Baudelaire

Chant D'Automne (Song Of Autumn)

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 bélier infatigable et lourd.

II 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 coeur! 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!

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!

— Translated by William Aggeler

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 the 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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Chant d'automne

I

soon shall we plunge 'neath winter's icy pall;
farewell, bright fires of too-brief July!
even now I hear the knell funereal
of falling fire-logs in the court close by.

once more on me shall winter all unroll:
wrath, hatred, shivering dread, Toil's cursèd vise,
and like the sun in his far hell, the pole,
my heart shall be a block of crimson ice.

I wait aghast each loud impending log;
thus, criminals 'neath rising gibbets cower.
o dreadful battering-ram! my soul, agog,
quivers and totters like a crumbling tower,

till to my dream the cradling echoes drum
like hammers madly finishing a bier.
— for whom? — June yesterday; now fall is come!
mysterious dirge, who has departed here?

II

I love your long green eyes of slumberous fire,
my sweet, but now all things are gall to me,
and naught, your room, your hearth nor your desire
is worth the sunlight shimmering on the sea.

yet love me, tender heart! a mother be

even to an ingrate, or a wicked one;
mistress or sister, be as sweet to me
as some brief autumn or a setting sun.

'twill not be long! the hungering tomb awaits!
ah! let me — brow at peace upon your knees —
savour, regretful of June's parching heats,
this balmy soft October, ere it flees!

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

Autumn

Soon we will plunge ourselves into cold shadows,
And all of summer's stunning afternoons will be gone.
I already hear the dead thuds of logs below
Falling on the cobblestones and the lawn.

All of winter will return to me
derision, Hate, shuddering, horror, drudgery and vice,
And exiled, like the sun, to a polar prison,
My soul will harden into a block of red ice.

I shiver as I listen to each log crash and slam
The echoes are as dull as executioners' drums.
My mind is like a tower that slowly succumbs
To the blows of a relentless battering ram.

It seems to me, swaying to these shocks, that someone
Is nailing down a coffin in a hurry somewhere.
For whom? It was summer yesterday; now it's autumn.
Echoes of departure keep resounding in the air.

Translated by Anonymous

Charles Baudelaire

Châtiment De L'Orgueil (The Punishment Of Pride)

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.

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

The Punishment of Pride

Once in that marvelous and unremembered time
When theologic thought was flowering at its prime,
A pious metaphysician, the pundit of his day,
He who could move the hearts of murderers, so they say,
Having attained to a most fearful pitch of grace
By curious pathways he himself could scarcely trace,
For all his subtlety of logic — this austere
And venerable person (like one who climbs a sheer
Peak unperturbed, but at the top grows dizzy) cried,
Suddenly overtaken with satanic pride:
'Jesus, my little Jesus! I have exalted you
Into a very Titan — yet wielding as I do
The wand of dialectic, I could have made you shrink
To fetus-like proportions and fade away, I think!'

He thought no more, for instantly his reason cracked.
The noontide of this great intelligence was blacked
Out. Elemental chaos rolled through this serene
Temple, where so much order and opulence had been.
From its gold floor to its groined ceiling it grew dim:
Silence and utter night installed themselves in him,
As in an antique dungeon whereof the key is lost.
And from that day, through rain and snow, through sleet and frost,
Not knowing spring from winter and too mad to care,

He roamed about gesticulating, with the air
Of an old suit of underclothes hung out to dry,
And made the children laugh whenever he went by.

— Translated by George Dillon

Charles Baudelaire

Ciel Brouillé (Cloudy Sky)

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?

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?

— Translated by William Aggeler

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?

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Ciel brouillé

thine eyes are veiled with vapour opaline;
— those eyes of mystery! — (azure, grey or green?)
cruel or soft in turn as dreams devise,
reflect the languor of the pallid skies.

thou'rt like these autumn days of silver-grey
whose magic melts the soul to tears: a day
when by a secret evil inly torn
the quivering nerves laugh drowsy wits to scorn.

thou art as fair as distant dales, where suns
of misty seasons leave their benisons...
how dazzling rich the dewy woodlands lie
flaming in sunlight from a ruffled sky!

o fateful woman! sky that lures and lours!
and shall I love thy snow, its frosty hours,
and learn to clutch from winter's iron gyves
new pleasure keen as cloven ice or knives?

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

Charles Baudelaire

Composure

(The speaker addresses himself)

Lighten up, you bitch, stop being so bitter.
You lobbied for night. It falls. Right here.
The air, a haziness, wimples the town.
Peace for some, for the others the jitters.

With cranked-up hope, the plodding herd, most of us,
sapped silly by desire, that ruthlessness,
we bend in the traces and ask mortgage on remorse.
Dear, dear, glum thing, let's hold hands. Come 'ere.

Let's get away. Look up. There the gone years slouch
in second-hand robes on the balcony of the sky—
over the abyss Regret breaks water, smirking.

The dead sun's gonna pass out under the bridge.
And like a mummy's long bandage, off to the west,
listen, sweets, listen, the double-soft dark is coming on.

Charles Baudelaire

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
Éclose 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 confiance horrible chuchotée
Au confessionnal du coeur.

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

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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Charles Baudelaire

Correspondences

Nature is a temple whose living colonnades
Breathe forth a mystic speech in fitful sighs;
Man wanders among symbols in those glades
Where all things watch him with familiar eyes.

Like dwindling echoes gathered far away
Into a deep and thronging unison
Huge as the night or as the light of day,
All scents and sounds and colors meet as one.

Perfumes there are as sweet as the oboe's sound,
Green as the prairies, fresh as a child's caress,
- And there are others, rich, corrupt, profound

And of an infinite pervasiveness,
Like myrrh, or musk, or amber, the excite
The ecstasies of sense, the soul's delight.

Charles Baudelaire

Crowds

It is not given to every man to take a bath of multitude; enjoying a crowd is an art; and only he can relish a debauch of vitality at the expense of the human species, on whom, in his cradle, a fairy has bestowed the love of masks and masquerading, the hate of home, and the passion for roaming.

Multitude, solitude: identical terms, and interchangeable by the active and fertile poet. The man who is unable to people his solitude is equally unable to be alone in a bustling crowd.

The poet enjoys the incomparable privilege of being able to be himself of someone else, as he chooses. Like those wandering souls who go looking for a body, he enters as he likes into each man's personality. For him alone everything is vacant; and if certain places seem closed to him, it is only because in his eyes they are not worth visiting.

The solitary and thoughtful stroller finds a singular intoxication in this universal communion. The man who loves to lose himself in a crowd enjoys feverish delights that the egoist locked up in himself as in a box, and the slothful man like a mollusk in his shell, will be eternally deprived of. He adopts as his own all the occupations, all the joys and all the sorrows that chance offers.

What men call love is a very small, restricted, feeble thing compared with this ineffable orgy, this divine prostitution of the soul giving itself entire, all its poetry and all its charity, to the unexpected as it comes along, to the stranger as he passes.

It is a good thing sometimes to teach the fortunate of this world, if only to humble for an instant their foolish pride, that there are higher joys than theirs, finer and more uncircumscribed. The founders of colonies, shepherds of peoples, missionary priests exiled to the ends of the earth, doubtlessly know something of this mysterious drunkenness; and in the midst of the vast family created by their genius, they must often laugh at those who pity them because of their troubled fortunes and chaste lives.

Charles Baudelaire

De Profundis Clamavi

Have pity, You alone whom I adore
From down this black pit where my heart is sped,
A sombre universe ringed round with lead
Where fear and curses the long night explore.

Six months a cold sun hovers overhead;
The other six is night upon this land.
No beast; no stream; no wood; no leaves expand.
The desert Pole is not a waste so dead.

Now in the whole world there's no horror quite
so cold and cruel as this glacial sun,
So like old Chaos as this boundless night;

I envy the least animals that run,
Which can find respite in brute slumber drowned,
So slowly is the skein of time unwound.

Charles Baudelaire

Destruction

At my side the Demon writhes forever,
Swimming around me like impalpable air;
As I breathe, he burns my lungs like fever
And fills me with an eternal guilty desire.

Knowing my love of Art, he snares my senses,
Appearing in woman's most seductive forms,
And, under the sneak's plausible pretenses,
Lips grow accustomed to his lewd love-charms.

He leads me thus, far from the sight of God,
Panting and broken with fatigue into
The wilderness of Ennui, deserted and broad,

And into my bewildered eyes he throws
Visions of festering wounds and filthy clothes,
And all Destruction's bloody retinue.

Translated by C. F. Macintyre

Charles Baudelaire

Don Juan Aux Enfers (Don Juan In Hell)

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 raila 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.

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Don Juan in Hades

He found the wide bark rocking in the Stygian breeze
And came aboard, having first paid Charon what he owed.
A beggar, somber and haughty as Antisthenes,
Seized the long oars with a revengeful gesture and rowed.

Writhing and tearing open their garments while he crossed,
A crowd of disappointed females, herded there
Along the bank like victims for a holocaust,
Filled with a soft and bestial moaning the dark air.

Sganarelle laughed triumphantly, demanding his wage;
Don Luis, still wrathful, pointed with a palsied hand
To the unruly son who mocked him in his old age,
Calling to witness the dead throngs upon that strand.

She whom he wed in church and loved a little while,
Elvira, thin and trembling in her black robes of grief,
Seemed to implore of her betrayer a last smile
In memory of his first ardor, noble and brief.

The knight he murdered and whose ghost he had rebuked
Stood now, a tall and cuirassed helmsman, at the stem;
But the calm hero, leaning upon his rapier, looked
Absently into the water, ignoring all of them.

— Translated by George Dillon

Don Juan in Hades

When the hidalgo reached the subterranean seas,
And, with an obol, paid Charon's accustomed score,
A gloomy beggarman, proud as Antisthenes,
With strong revengeful hands seized either trailing oar.

With sagging breasts and gray unfastened gowns, a crowd
Of women writhed in woe under a leaden sky,
In their grim wake a groan trailed, mournfully and loud,
Like flocks of sacrificial victims trudging by.

Sganarelle, grinning, claimed his wages; dour and lank,
Don Luis, with trembling finger, pointed at the prow,
To show the phantoms wandering on the river bank
That impious son who mocked his father's snow-white brow.

Elvira, chaste and gaunt, shuddered in sorrow, while
Beside her traitorous spouse (her lover, once) she seemed
To crave the favor of an ultimate bright smile,
Sweet as his first-made vows and as the dream she dreamed.

Erect in coat-of-mail, a tall man, hewn of stone,
Stood at the helm, cleaving the flood. But in mute pride,
Leaning upon his sword, impassive and alone,
The hero watched the wave nor deigned to look aside.

— Translated by Jacques LeClercq

Charles Baudelaire

Duellum (The Duel)

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!

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 puling 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!

— Translated by William Aggeler

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!

— Translated by Roy Campbell

The Duel

Two warriors dueled upon the battle ground,
Their arms scattering bright sparks and blood; above
This sport, the clash of steel gave forth the sound
Of youth fallen a prey to puling love.

The blades are broken, darling, like the moon
Of our sweet youth! but teeth and fingernails
Avenge the sword and traitorous dagger soon.
Old hearts that love's old bitterness assails!

In the ravine where lynx and panther ramble,
Our heroes bite the dust in fierce embrace,
Their skin shall bring new bloom to the dry bramble.
This pit is hell, our friends' choice dwelling place!

Let us roll there, O cruel Amazon,
So our fierce hatred may live on and on!

— Translated by Jacques LeClercq

Charles Baudelaire

Elevation

Above the ponds, beyond the valleys,
The woods, the mountains, the clouds, the seas,
Farther than the sun, the distant breeze,
The spheres that wilt to infinity

My spirit, you move with agility
And, like a good swimmer who swoons in the wave
You groove the depths immensity gave,
The inexpressible and male ecstasy.

>From this miasma of waste,
You will be purified in superior air
And drink a pure and divine liqueur,
A clear fire to replace the limpid space

Behind this boredom and fatigue, this vast chagrin
Whose weight moves the mists of existence,
Happy is he who vigorously fans the senses
Toward serene and luminous fields—wincing!

The one whose thoughts are like skylarks taken wing
Across the heavens mornings in full flight
—Who hovers over life, understanding without effort
The language of flowers and mute things.

Translated by William A. Sigler

Submitted by Ryan McGuire

Charles Baudelaire

Epilogue

With quiet heart, I climbed the hill,
from which one can see, the city, complete,
hospitals, brothels, purgatory, hell,
prison, where every sin flowers, at our feet.
You know well, Satan, patron of my distress,
I did not trudge up there to vainly weep,
but like an old man with an old mistress,
I longed to intoxicate myself, with the infernal delight
of the vast procuress, who can always make things fresh.
Whether you still sleep in the morning light,
heavy, dark, rheumatic, or whether your hands
flutter, in your pure, gold-edged veils of night,
I love you, infamous capital! Courtesans
and pimps, you often offer pleasures
the vulgar mob will never understand.

Charles Baudelaire

Even When She Walks

Even when she walks she seems to dance!
Her garments writhe and glisten like long snakes
obedient to the rhythm of the wands
by which a fakir wakens them to grace.

Like both the desert and the desert sky
insensible to human suffering,
and like the ocean's endless labyrinth
she shows her body with indifference.

Precious minerals are her polished eyes,
and in her strange symbolic nature
angel and sphinx unite,
where diamonds, gold, and steel dissolve into one light,
shining forever, useless as a star,
the sterile woman's icy majesty.

Charles Baudelaire

Evening Harmony

The hour has come at last when, trembling to and fro,
Each flower is a censer sifting its perfume;
The scent and sounds all swirl in evening's gentle fume;
A melancholy waltz, a languid vertigo!

Each flower is a censer sifting its perfume;
A violin's vibrato wounds the heart of woe;
A melancholy waltz, a languid vertigo!
The sky, a lofty altar, lovely in the gloom,

A violin's vibrato wounds the heart of woe,
A tender heart detests the black of nullity,
The sky, a lofty altar, lovely in the gloom;
The sun is drowning in the evening's blood-red glow.

A tender heart detests the black of nullity,
And lovingly preserves each trace of long ago!
The sun is drowning in the evening's blood-red glow ...
Your memory shines through me like an ostensory!

Charles Baudelaire

Evening Twilight

Here's the criminal's friend, delightful evening:
come like an accomplice, with a wolf's loping:
slowly the sky's vast vault hides each feature,
and restless man becomes a savage creature.
Evening, sweet evening, desired by him who can say
without his arms proving him a liar: 'Today
we've worked!' – It refreshes, this evening hour,
those spirits that savage miseries devour,
the dedicated scholar with heavy head,
the bowed workman stumbling home to bed.
Yet now unhealthy demons rise again
clumsily, in the air, like busy men,
beat against sheds and arches in their flight.
And among the wind-tormented gas-lights
Prostitution switches on through the streets
opening her passageways like an ant-heap:
weaving her secret tunnels everywhere,
like an enemy planning a coup, she's there
burrowing into the wombs of the city's mires,
like a worm stealing from Man what it desires.
Here, there, you catch the kitchens' whistles,
the orchestras' droning, the theatres' yells,
low dives where gambling's all the pleasure,
filling with whores, and crooks, their partners,
and the thieves who show no respite or mercy,
will soon be setting to work, as they tenderly,
they too, toil at forcing safes and doorways,
to live, clothe their girls, for a few more days.
Collect yourself, my soul, at this grave hour,
and close your ears to the rising howl.
It's now that the pains of the sick increase!
Dark Night clasps them by the throat: they reach
their journey's end, the common pit's abandon:
the hospital fills with their sighs. – Many a one,
will never return to their warm soup by the fire,
by the hearth, at evening, next to their heart's desire.
And besides the majority have never known
never having lived, the gentleness of home!

Far Away From Here

This is the sanctuary
where the prettified young lady,
calm, and always ready,
fans her breasts, aglow,
elbow on the pillow,
hears the fountain's flow:
it's the room of Dorothea.
- The breeze and water distantly
sing their song, mingled here
with sobs to soothe the spoiled child's fear.
From tip to toe, most thoroughly,
her delicate surfaces appear,
oiled with sweet perfumery.
- the flowers nearby swoon gracefully.

Charles Baudelaire

Femmes Damnées

Like pensive cattle, lying on the sands,
they turn their eyes towards the sea's far hills,
and, feet searching each other's, touching hands,
know sweet languor and the bitterest thrills.
Some, where the stream babbles, deep in the woods,
their hearts enamoured of long intimacies,
go spelling out the loves of their own girlhoods,
and carving the green bark of young trees.
Others, like Sisters, walk, gravely and slow,
among the rocks, full of apparitions,
where Saint Anthony saw, like lava flows,
the bared crimson breasts of his temptations.
There are those, in the melting candle's glimmer,
who in mute hollows of caves still pagan,
call on you to relieve their groaning fever,
O Bacchus, to soothe the remorse of the ancients!
And others, whose throats love scapularies,
who, hiding whips under their long vestment,
in the sombre groves of the night, solitaries,
blend the sweats of joy with the tears of torment.
O virgins, o demons, o monsters, o martyrs,
great spirits, despisers of reality,
now full of cries, now full of tears,
pious and lustful, seeking infinity,
you, whom my soul has pursued to your hell,
poor sisters, I adore you as much as I weep,
for your dismal sufferings, thirsts that swell,
and the vessels of love, where your great hearts steep!

Charles Baudelaire

For Madame Sabatier

What will you say tonight, poor soul in solitude,
what will you say my heart, withered till now,
to the so beautiful, so sweet, so dear one,
whose divine gaze recreated the flower?

- We will set Pride now to singing her praises:
Nothing outdoes her sweet air of authority.
Her spiritual flesh has the perfume of angels,
and her eye surrounds us in robes of infinity.

Whether in the night, and alone, and in solitude,
Whether in the street, and among the multitude,
her phantom dances in air, like a flame.

Sometimes it speaks and it says `I am beautiful.
You, for the love of me, must love beauty alone:
for I am your Madonna, Muse, Guardian Angel.

Charles Baudelaire

Franciscae Meae Laudes (Praises Of My Francesca)

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 tempegtas
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 tinctoria seraphica;

Patera gemmis corusca,
Panis salsus, mollis esca,
Divinum vinum, Francisca!

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

Praises of My Francesca

(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!

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Francescae Meae Laudes

I shall sing new chords, O hind,
As you gambol unconfined
Through my solitary mind.

Rest, adorned with wreaths of flowers,
Comely woman whose vast powers
Wash away these sins of ours

As from Lethe's stream I shall
Drink your kisses, one and all,
Magnet-like and magical.

When our vices stormily
Swept down every path with glee,
You approved, O Deity!

Like the bright star of salvation

Amid shipwreck's desolation —
Take my heart in rapt oblation.

Source of every good and store
Of eternal youth, restore
Song to my mute lips once more.

What was foul you calcinated
What was rough you Ievigated,
What was weak you stimulated.

In my hunger, you the inn,
In my dark, the lamp; and in
Your pale hands, an end to sin.

Add your strength to mine, new-sent,
Sweet bath ever redolent
Of the suaver perfumes blent.

From my loins, gleam radiantly
O cuirass of chastity
Steeped in balm seraphically.

Cup with precious gems ashine,
Savory bread, celestial wine,
Blessed food, Francesca mine!

— Translated by Jacques LeClercq

Charles Baudelaire

Get Drunk

Always be drunk.
That's it!
The great imperative!
In order not to feel
Time's horrid fardel
bruise your shoulders,
grinding you into the earth,
Get drunk and stay that way.
On what?
On wine, poetry, virtue, whatever.
But get drunk.
And if you sometimes happen to wake up
on the porches of a palace,
in the green grass of a ditch,
in the dismal loneliness of your own room,
your drunkenness gone or disappearing,
ask the wind,
the wave,
the star,
the bird,
the clock,
ask everything that flees,
everything that groans
or rolls
or sings,
everything that speaks,
ask what time it is;
and the wind,
the wave,
the star,
the bird,
the clock
will answer you:
"Time to get drunk!
Don't be martyred slaves of Time,
Get drunk!
Stay drunk!
On wine, virtue, poetry, whatever!"

Gloomy Madrigal

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! '

Charles Baudelaire

Her Hair

O fleece, that down the neck waves to the nape!
O curls! O perfume nonchalant and rare!
O ecstasy! To fill this alcove shape
With memories that in these tresses sleep,
I would shake them like penions in the air!

Languorous Asia, burning Africa,
And a far world, defunct almost, absent,
Within your aromatic forest stay!
As other souls on music drift away,
Mine, O my love! still floats upon your scent.

I shall go there where, full of sap, both tree
And man swoon in the heat of the southern climates;
Strong tresses be the swell that carries me!
I dream upon your sea of amber
Of dazzling sails, of oarsmen, masts, and flames:

A sun-drenched and reverberating port,
Where I imbibe colour and sound and scent;
Where vessels, gliding through the gold and moiré,
Open their vast arms as they leave the shore
To clasp the pure and shimmering firmament.

I'll plunge my head, enamored of its pleasure,
In this black ocean where the other hides;
My subtle spirit then will know a measure
Of fertile idleness and fragrant leisure,
Lulled by the infinite rhythm of its tides!

Pavilion, of autumn-shadowed tresses spun,
You give me back the azure from afar;
And where the twisted locks are fringed with down
Lurk mingled odors I grow drunk upon
Of oil of coconut, of musk, and tar.

A long time! always! my hand in your hair
Will sow the stars of sapphire, pearl, ruby,
That you be never deaf to my desire,

My oasis and my gourd whence I aspire
To drink deep of the wine of memory.

Charles Baudelaire

Horreur Sympathique (Sympathetic Horror)

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

— Insatiablement avide
De l'obscur et de l'incertain,
Je ne geindrai pas comme Ovide
Chassé du paradis latin.

Cieux déchirés comme des grèves
En vous se mire mon orgueil;
Vos vastes nuages en deuil

Sont les corbillards de mes rêves,
Et vos lueurs sont le reflet
De l'Enfer où mon coeur se plaît.

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 hearses of my dreams,
And your gleams are the reflection
Of the Hell which delights my heart.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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 hearses of my dreams,
And your red rays reflect the hell,
In which my heart is pleased to dwell.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Charles Baudelaire

Hymn

To the too-dear, to the too-beautiful,
who fills my heart with clarity,
to the angel, to the immortal idol,
All hail, in immortality!
She flows through my reality,
air, mixed with the salt sea-swell:
into my soul's ecstasy,
pours the essence of the eternal;
Ever-fresh sachet, that scents
the dear corner's atmospheric light,
hidden smoke, of the burning censer,
in the secret paths of night.
How, incorruptible love,
to express your endless verities?
Grain of musk, unseen, above,
in the depths of my infinities!
To the too-dear, to the too-beautiful,
who is my joy and sanity,
to the angel, to the immortal idol,
All hail in immortality!

Charles Baudelaire

Hymne À La Beauté (Hymn To Beauty)

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, ingénu!
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?

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?

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Hymn to Beauty

Did you fall from high heaven or surge from the abyss,
O Beauty? Your bright gaze, infernal and divine,
Confusedly pours out courage and cowardice,
Or love and crime. Therefore men liken you to wine.

Your eyes hold all the sunset and the dawn, you are

As rich in fragrances as a tempestuous night,
Your kisses are a philtre and your mouth a jar
Filling the child with valor and the man with fright.

Did the stars mould you or the pit's obscurity?
You bring at random Paradise or Juggernaut.
Fate sniffs your skirts with a charmed dog's servility,
You govern all and yet are answerable for naught.

Beauty, you walk on corpses of dead men you mock.
Among your store of gems, Horror is not the least;
Murder, amid the dearest trinkets of your stock,
Dances on your proud belly like a ruttish beast.

Candle, the transient moth flies dazzled to your light,
Crackles and flames and says: 'Blessèd this fiery doom!'
The panting lover with his mistress in the night
Looks like a dying man caressing his own tomb.

Are you from heaven or hell, Beauty that we adore?
Who cares? A dreadful, huge, ingenuous monster, you!
So but your glance, your smile, your foot open a door
Upon an Infinite I love but never knew.

From Satan or from God? Who cares? Fierce or serene,
Who cares? Sister to sirens or to seraphim?
So but, dark fey, you shed your perfume, rhythm and sheen
To make the world less hideous and Time less grim.

— Translated by Jacques LeClercq

Charles Baudelaire

Il Aimait À La Voir

It was in her white skirts that he loved to see
her run straight through the branches and leaves, gracefully,
but still gauche, and hiding her leg from the light,
when she tore her dress, on the briars, in her flight.

Charles Baudelaire

Ill-Starred

To bear a weight that cannot be borne,
Sisyphus, even you aren't that strong,
Although your heart cannot be torn
Time is short and Art is long.
Far from celebrated sepulchers
Toward a solitary graveyard
My heart, like a drum muffled hard
Beats a funeral march for the ill-starred.

—Many jewels are buried or shrouded
In darkness and oblivion's clouds,
Far from any pick or drill bit,

Many a flower unburdens with regret
Its perfume sweet like a secret;
In profoundly empty solitude to sit.

Translated by William A. Sigler

Submitted by Ryan McGuire

Charles Baudelaire

Incompatibility

Higher there, higher, far from the ways,
from the farms and the valleys, beyond the trees,
beyond the hills and the grasses' haze,
far from the herd-trampled tapestries,
you discover a sombre pool in the deep
that a few bare snow-covered mountains form.
The lake, in light's, and night's, sublime sleep,
is never disturbed in its silent storm.
In that mournful waste, to the unsure ear,
come faint drawn-out sounds, more dead than the bell,
of some far-off cow, the echoes unclear,
as it grazes the slope, of a distant dell.
On those hills where the wind effaces all signs,
on those glaciers, fired by the sun's pure light,
on those rocks, where dizziness threatens the mind,
in that lake's vermilion presage of night,
under my feet, and above my head,
silence, that makes you wish to escape;
that eternal silence, of the mountainous bed
of motionless air, where everything waits.
You would say that the sky, in its loneliness,
gazed at itself in the glass, and, up there,
the mountains listened, in grave watchfulness
to the mystery nothing that's human can hear.
And when, by chance, a wandering cloud
darkens the silent lake, moving by,
you might think that you saw some spirit's robe,
or else its clear shadow, travelling, over the sky.

Charles Baudelaire

Invitation To The Voyage

Imagine, ma petite,
Dear sister mine, how sweet
Were we to go and take our pleasure
Leisurely, you and I—
To lie, to love, to die
Off in that land made to your measure!
A land whose suns' moist rays,
Through the skies' misty haze,
Hold quite the same dark charms for me
As do your scheming eyes
When they, in their like wise,
Shine through your tears, perfidiously.

There all is order, naught amiss:
Comfort and beauty, calm and bliss.

Treasure galore—ornate,
Time-glossed—would decorate
Our chamber, where the rarest blooms
Would blend their lavish scent,
Heady and opulent,
With wisps of amber-like perfumes;
Where all the Orient's
Splendid, rich ornaments—
Deep mirrors, ceilings fine—would each,
In confidential tone,
Speak to the soul alone
In its own sweet and secret speech.

There all is order, naught amiss:
Comfort and beauty, calm and bliss.

See how the ships, asleep—
They who would ply the deep!—
Line the canals: to satisfy
Your merest whim they come
From far-flung heathendom
And skim the seven seas. —On high,
The sunset's rays enfold

In hyacinth and gold,
Field and canal; and, with the night,
As shadows gently fall,
Behold! Life sleeps, and all
Lies bathed in warmth and evening light.

There all is order, naught amiss:
Comfort and beauty, calm and bliss.

Charles Baudelaire

J'Aime Le Souvenir De Ces Époques Nues (I Love The Naked Ages Long Ago)

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 coeur 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 monstruosité 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 malades

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, insouciant
Comme l'azur du ciel, les oiseaux et les fleurs,
Ses parfums, ses chansons et ses douces chaleurs!

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!

— Translated by William Aggeler

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 clouts '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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell,

I Love The Naked Ages Long Ago

I love the naked ages long ago
When statues were gilded by Apollo,
When men and women of agility
Could play without lies and anxiety,
And the sky lovingly caressed their spines,
As it exercised its noble machine.
Fertile Cybele, mother of nature, then,
Would not place on her daughters a burden,
But, she-wolf sharing her heart with the people,
Would feed creation from her brown nipples.
Men, elegant and strong, would have the right
To be proud to have beauty named their king;
Virgin fruit free of blemish and cracking,
Whose flesh smooth and firm would summon a bite!
The Poet today, when he would convey

This native grandeur, would not be swept away
By man free and woman natural,
But would feel darkness envelop his soul
Before this black tableau full of loathing.
O malformed monsters crying for clothing!
O ludicrous heads! Torsos needing disguise!
O poor writhing bodies of every wrong size,
Children that the god of the Useful swaths
In the language of bronze and brass!
And women, alas! You shadow your heredity,
You gnaw nourishment from debauchery,
A virgin holds maternal lechery
And all the horrors of fecundity!

We have, it is true, corrupt nations,
Beauty unknown to the radiant ancients:
Faces that gnaw through the heart's cankers,
And talk with the cool beauty of languor;
But these inventions of our backward muses
Are never hindered in their morbid uses
Of the old for profound homage to youth,
—To the young saint, the sweet air, the simple truth,
To the eye as limpid as the water current,
To spread out over all, insouciant
Like the blue sky, the birds and the flowers,
Its perfumes, its songs and its sweet fervors.

Translated by William A. Sigler

Charles Baudelaire

Je N'Ai Pas Oublié, Voisine De La Ville (I'Ve Not Forgotten, Near The Town)

I've not forgotten, near to the town,
our white house, small but alone:
its Pomona of plaster, its Venus of old
hiding nude limbs in the meagre grove,
and the sun, superb, at evening, streaming,
behind the glass, where its sheaves were bursting,
a huge eye in a curious heaven, present
to gaze at our meal, lengthy and silent,
spreading its beautiful candle glimmer
on the frugal cloth and the rough curtain.

Charles Baudelaire

Je T'Adore À L'Égal De La Voûte Nocturne (More Than Night's Vault, It's You That I Adore)

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 chœur de vermisseaux,
Et je chéris, ô bête implacable et cruelle!
Jusqu'à cette froideur par où tu m'es plus belle!

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

I Worship You

I worship you, O proud and taciturn,
As I do night's high vault; O sorrow's urn,
I love you all the more because you flee
And seem, gem of my nights, ironically
To multiply the weary leagues that sunder
My arms from all infinity's blue wonder.

I skirmish and I climb to the attack,
I, a worms' chorus on a corpse's back,
O fierce cruel beast, I cherish to the full
The very chill that makes you beautiful.

— Translated by Jacques LeClercq

Charles Baudelaire

Je Te Donne Ces Vers Afin Que Si Mon Nom (I Give You These Verses So That If My Name)

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!

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 abysm
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!

— Translated by William Aggeler

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 abysm) 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 browed with brass!

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Je te donne ces vers afin que si mon nom

these lines to thee, that if my name should come
to some far harbour, on a favouring main,
and ride the gale to Time's Elysium,
with all its freight of dreams to fret the brain,

that thy report, like legends vague and vain,
may tire my reader as a mighty drum,
and linked in mystic union, may become
a symbol married to my haughty strain;

— accursèd one, to whom, from deepest skies
down to the Pit, naught, save my heart, replies!
— o thou who like a ghost impalpable

tramplest upon, serenely as a bonze
the stupid mortals who denied thy spell
— cold jet-eyed statue, angel cast in bronze!

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

Charles Baudelaire

L' Étranger

-Qui aimes-tu le mieux, homme énigmatique, dis? ton père, ta mère, ta sœur ou ton frère?

—Je n'ai ni père, ni mère, ni sœur, ni frère.

—Tes amis?

—Vous vous servez là d'une parole dont le sens m'est resté jusqu'à ce jour inconnu.

—Ta patrie?

—J'ignore sous quelle latitude elle est située.

—La beauté?

—Je l'aimerais volontiers, déesse et immortelle.

—L'or?

—Je le hais comme vous haïssez Dieu.

—Eh! qu'aimes-tu donc, extraordinaire étranger?

—J'aime les nuages... les nuages qui passent... là-bas... là-bas... les merveilleux nuages!

Charles Baudelaire

La Chevelure (Her Hair)

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 là-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 bercements 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?

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?

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

The Fleece

O shadowy fleece that falls and curls upon those bare
Lithe shoulders! O rich perfume of forgetfulness!
O ecstasy! To loose upon the midnight air
The memories asleep in this tumultuous hair,
I long to rake it in my fingers, tress by tress!

Asia the languorous, the burning solitude
Of Africa — a whole world, distant, all but dead —
Survives in thy profundities, O odorous wood!
My soul, as other souls put forth on the deep flood
Of music, sails away upon thy scent instead.

There where the sap of life mounts hot in man and tree,
And lush desire untamed swoons in the torrid zone,
Undulant tresses, wild strong waves, oh, carry me!
Dream, like a dazzling sun, from out this ebony sea
Rises; and sails and banks of rowers propel me on.

All the confusion, all the mingled colors, cries,
Smells of a busy port, upon my senses beat;
Where smoothly on the golden streakèd ripples flies
The barque, its arms outspread to gather in the skies,
Against whose glory trembles the unabating heat.

In this black ocean where the primal ocean roars,
Drunken, in love with drunkenness, I plunge and drown;

Over my dubious spirit the rolling tide outpours
Its peace — oh, fruitful indolence, upon thy shores,
Cradled in languor, let me drift and lay me down!

Blue hair, darkness made palpable, like the big tent
Of desert sky all glittering with many a star
Thou coverest me — oh, I am drugged as with the blent
Effluvia of a sleeping caravan, the scent
Of coco oil impregnated with musk and tar.

Fear not! Upon this savage mane for ever thy lord
Will sow pearls, sapphires, rubies, every stone that gleams,
To keep thee faithful! Art not thou the sycamored
Oasis whither my thoughts journey, and the dark gourd
Whereof I drink in long slow draughts the wine of dreams?

— Translated by George Dillon

Of Her Hair

O fleece, billowing on her neck! O ecstasy!
O curls, O perfume rich with nonchalance, O rare!.
Tonight to fill the alcove's warm obscurity,
To make that hair evoke each dormant memory,
I long to wave it like a kerchief in the air.

Africa smoldering and Asia languorous,
A whole far distant world, absent and almost spent,
Dwells in your forest depths, mystic and odorous!
As others lose themselves in the harmonious,
So, love, my heart floats lost upon your haunting scent.

I shall go where both man and tree, albeit strong,
Swoon deep beneath the rays of sunlight's blazing fires.
Thick tresses, be the waves to bear my dreams along!
Ebony sea, your dazzling dream contains a throng
Of sails, of wafts, of oarsmen, and of masts like spires.

A noisy harbor where my thirsty soul may drain
Hues, sounds and fragrances, in draughts heavy and sweet,

Where vessels gliding down a moiré-and-gold sea lane
Open their vast arms wide to clutch at the domain
Of a pure sky ashimmer with eternal beat.

Deep shall I plunge my head, avid of drunkenness,
In this black sea wherein the other sea lies captured,
And my soul buoyant at its undulant caress
Shall find you once again, O fruitful idleness,
O long lullings of ease, soft, honeyed and enraptured.

O blue-black hair, pennon with sheen and shadow fraught,
You give me back the vast blue skies of dawn and dusk,
As on the downy edges of your tresses, caught
In your soft curls, I grow drunken and hot, distraught
By mingled scents of cocoanut and tar and musk.

Sapphires, rubies, pearls — my hand shall never tire
Of strewing these through your thick mane — how lavishly! —
Lest Life should ever turn you deaf to my desire!
You are the last oasis where I dream, afire,
The gourd whence deep I quaff the wine of memory.

— Translated by Jacques LeClercq

The Head of Hair

O Fleece, foaming to the neck!
O curls! O scent of laziness!
Ecstasy! This evening, to people the dark comers
Of memories that are sleeping in these locks,
I would wave them in the air like a handkerchief!

Languorous Asia and burning Africa,
A whole world, distant, absent, almost extinct,
Lives in the depths of your perfumed jungle;
As other souls sail along on music,
So mine, O my love, swims on your scent.

I shall go over there where trees and men, full of sap,
Faint away slowly in the passionate climate;
O strong locks, be the sea-swell that transports me!

You keep, O sea of ebony, a dazzling dream
Of sails and sailormen, flames and masts:

A resounding haven where in great waves
My soul can drink the scent, the sound and color;
Where ships, sliding in gold and watered silk,
Part their vast arms to embrace the glory
Of the pure sky shuddering with eternal heat

I shall plunge my head, adoring drunkenness,
Into this black ocean where the other is imprisoned;
And my subtle spirit caressed by the sway
Will know how to find you, O pregnant idleness!
In an infinite cradle of scented leisure!

Blue hair, house of taut darkness,
You make the blue of the sky seem huge and round for me;
On the downy edges of your twisted locks
I hungrily get drunk on the muddled fragrances
Of coconut oil, of musk and tar

For a long time! For ever! Amongst your heavy mane
My hand will strew the ruby, pearl and sapphire
To make you never deaf to my desire!
For are you not the oasis where I dream, the gourd
Where in great draughts I gulp the wine of memory?

— Translated by Geoffrey Wagner

O fleece, that down the neck waves to the nape!
O curls! O perfume nonchalant and rare!
O ecstasy! To fill this alcove shape
With memories that in these tresses sleep,
I would shake them like penions in the air!

Languorous Asia, burning Africa,
And a far world, defunct almost, absent,
Within your aromatic forest stay!
As other souls on music drift away,
Mine, O my love! still floats upon your scent.

I shall go there where, full of sap, both tree
And man swoon in the heat of the southern climates;
Strong tresses be the swell that carries me!
I dream upon your sea of amber
Of dazzling sails, of oarsmen, masts, and flames:

A sun-drenched and reverberating port,
Where I imbibe colour and sound and scent;
Where vessels, gliding through the gold and moiré,
Open their vast arms as they leave the shore
To clasp the pure and shimmering firmament.

I'll plunge my head, enamored of its pleasure,
In this black ocean where the other hides;
My subtle spirit then will know a measure
Of fertile idleness and fragrant leisure,
Lulled by the infinite rhythm of its tides!

Pavilion, of autumn-shadowed tresses spun,
You give me back the azure from afar;
And where the twisted locks are fringed with down
Lurk mingled odors I grow drunk upon
Of oil of coconut, of musk, and tar.

A long time! always! my hand in your hair
Will sow the stars of sapphire, pearl, ruby,
That you be never deaf to my desire,
My oasis and my gourd whence I aspire
To drink deep of the wine of memory.

Translated by Anonymous

Charles Baudelaire

La Béatrice

Dans des terrains cendreaux, calcinés, sans verdure,
Comme je me plaignais un jour à la nature,
Et que de ma pensée, en vaguant au hasard,
J'aiguissais lentement sur mon cœur 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.
A 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 :

—«Contempons 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 cœur au regard non pareil,
Qui riait avec eux de ma sombre détresse
Et leur versait parfois quelque sale caresse.

Charles Baudelaire

La Beauté (Beauty)

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 coeur 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!

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!

— Translated by William Aggeler

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!

— Translated by Roy Campbell

La Beauté

fair as a dream in stone I loom afar
— mortals! — with dazzling breast where, bruised in turn
all poets fall in silence, doomed to burn
with love eternal as the atoms are.

white as a swan I throne with heart of snow
in azure space, a sphynx that none divine,
no hateful motion mars my lovely line,
nor tears nor laughter shall I ever know.

and poets, lured by this magnificence
— this grandeur proud as Parian monuments —
toil all their days like martyrs in a spell;

lovers bewitched are they, for I possess
pure mirrors harbouring worlds of loveliness:
my wide, wide eyes where fires eternal dwell!

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

Beauty

Conceive me as a dream of stone:
my breast, where mortals come to grief,
is made to prompt all poets' love,
mute and noble as matter itself.

With snow for flesh, with ice for heart,
I sit on high, an unguessed sphinx
begrudging acts that alter forms;
I never laugh, I never weep.

In studious awe the poets brood
before my monumental pose
aped from the proudest pedestal,
and to bind these docile lovers fast
I freeze the world in a perfect mirror:
The timeless light of my wide eyes.

William A. Sigler

Charles Baudelaire

La Cloche Fêlée (The Cracked Bell)

Il est amer et doux, pendant les nuits d'hiver,
D'écouter, près du feu qui palpète 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.

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

The Cracked Bell

Bitter and sweet it is on these long winter nights
To sit before the fire and watch the smoking log
Beat like a heart; and hear our lost, our mute delights
Call with the carillons that ring out in the fog.

What certitude, what health, sounds from that brazen throat,
In spite of age and rust, alert! O happy bell,
Sending into the dark your clear religious note,
Like an old soldier crying through the night, 'All's well!'

I am not thus; my soul is cracked across by care;
Its voice, that once could clang upon this icy air,
Has lost the power, it seems, — comes faintly forth, instead,

As from the rattling throat of a hurt man who lies

Beside a lake of blood, under a heap of dead,
And cannot stir, and in prodigious struggling dies.

— Translated by Edna St. Vincent Millay

La Cloche fêlée

'tis bitter joy, as winter evenings wear
before a smoking hearth which flames aghast,
to hear slow memories mounting from the past,
while church-bells pierce the pall of misty air.

blessèd the flawless bell, of metal rare,
the full-toned bourdon, void of rift and rust,
which like a guardsman faithful to his trust
hurls forth unfailingly its call to prayer!

my soul's a riven bell, that timidly
would fill the frozen night with melody,
but oft it falters, whisperingly weak

as, echoing over lakes of blood, a shriek
muffled by mounds of dead, from one who lies
moveless as they, though struggling till he dies.

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

The Cracked Bell

It is bitter and sweet, during winter nights,
To listen, beside the throbbing, smoking fife,
To distant memories slowly ascending
In the sound of the chimes chanting through the fog.

Blessed the bell with the vigorous gullet
Which, despite old age, watchful and healthy,
Throws out faithfully its pious tones,
Like an old soldier in vigil under his tent!

Ah, my soul is cracked, and when in sorrows

It wishes to people the cold air of the night with its songs,
Often it happens that its feeble voice

Seems like the thick death-rattle of one wounded, forgotten
By the side of a lake of blood, under a great weight of dead,
Who dies, without moving, amongst enormous efforts.

— Translated by Geoffrey Wagner

Charles Baudelaire

La Géante (The Giantess)

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 coeur 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.

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

The Giantess

In times of old when Nature in her glad excess
Brought forth such living marvels as no more are seen,
I should have loved to dwell with a young giantess,
Like a voluptuous cat about the feet of a queen;

To run and laugh beside her in her terrible games,
And see her grow each day to a more fearful size,
And see the flowering of her soul, and the first flames
Of passionate longing in the misty depths of her eyes;

To scale the slopes of her huge knees, explore at will
The hollows and the heights of her — and when, oppressed
By the long afternoons of summer, cloudless and still,

She would stretch out across the countryside to rest,

I should have loved to sleep in the shadow of her breast,
Quietly as a village nestling under a hill.

— Translated by George Dillon

The Giantess

In times when Nature, lusty to excess,
Bred monstrous children, would that I had been
Living beside a youthful giantess,
Like a voluptuous cat beside a queen;
To see her soul and body gain full size
Blossoming freely in her fearsome games,
And by the damp mists swimming in her eyes
To watch her heart nursing what somber flames!

To roam her mighty form at my sweet ease,
To crawl along the slopes of her vast knees,
And, summers, when the sun's unhealthy heats
Made her sprawl, tired, across the countryside
To sleep at leisure, shaded by her teats,
Like a calm hamlet by the mountainside.

— Translated by Jacques LeClercq

Giantess

When Nature once in lustful hot undress
Conceived gargantuan offspring, then would I
Have loved to live near a young giantess,
Like a voluptuous cat at a queen's feet.

To see her body flower with her desire
And freely spread out in its dreadful play,
Guess if her heart concealed some heavy fire
Whose humid smokes would swim upon her eye.

To feel at leisure her stupendous shapes,
Crawl on the cliffs of her enormous knees,
And, when in summer the unhealthy suns

Have stretched her out across the plains, fatigued,
Sleep in the shadows of her breasts at ease
Like a small hamlet at a mountain's base.

— Translated by Karl Shapiro

La Géante

From the time when Nature in her furious fancy
Conceived each day monstrosities obscene,
I had loved to live near a young Giantess of Necromancy,
Like a voluptuous cat before the knees of a Queen.

I had loved to see her body mix with her Soul's shame
And greaten in these terrible games of Vice,
And to divine if in her heart brooded a somber flame,
Before the moist sea-mists which swarm in her great eyes;

To wander over her huge forms — nature deforms us —
And to crawl over the slopes of her knees enormous,
And in summer when the unwholesome suns from the West's

Winds, weary, made her slumber hard by a fountain,
To sleep listlessly in the shadow of her superb breasts,
Like an hamlet that slumbers at the foot of a mountain.

— Translated by Arthur Symons

The Giantess

In those times when Nature in powerful zest
Conceived each day monstrous children,
I would have loved to live near a young giantess,
A voluptuous cat at the feet of a queen.

I would have loved to see her body flower with her soul,
To grow up freely in her prodigious play;
To find if her heart bred some dark flame
Amongst the humid mists swimming in her eyes;

To run leisurely over her marvelous lines;
To creep along the slopes of her enormous knees,
And sometimes in summer, when impure suns

Made her wearily stretch out across the countryside,
To sleep carelessly in the shadow of her breasts,
Like a peaceful village at the foot of a mountain.

--Translated by Geoffrey Wagner

Charles Baudelaire

La Muse Malade (The Sick Muse)

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 despotique 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.

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

La Muse malade

poor Muse, alas! what ails thee now? for thy
great hollow eyes with sights nocturnal burn,
and in thy changing pallor I descry
madness and frozen horror, turn by turn.

did rosy sprites or pale green succubi
pour love or panic from their dream-filled urn?
did the mad fist of despot nightmare try
to drown thee where the fiends of hell sojourn?

I would that thou wert always filled with health

and manly thoughts undaunted; that a wealth
of Christian blood were thine, which always flowed

in calm broad rhythms like a Grecian ode,
now echoing forth Apollo's golden strain,
and now great Pan, the lord of ripening grain.

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

The Sick Mused

My impoverished muse, alas! What have you for me this morning?
Your empty eyes are stocked with nocturnal visions,
In your cheek's cold and taciturn reflection,
I see insanity and horror forming.
The green succubus and the red urchin,
Have they poured you fear and love from their urns?
The nightmare of a mutinous fist that despotically turns,
Does it drown you at the bottom of a loch beyond searching?

I wish that your breast exhaled the scent of sanity,
That your womb of thought was not a tomb more frequently
And that your Christian blood flowed around a buoy that was rhythmical,

Like the numberless sounds of antique syllables,
Where reigns in turn the father of songs,
Phoebus, and the great Pan, the harvest sovereign.

Translated by William A. Sigler

Charles Baudelaire

La Muse Vénale (The Venal Muse)

Ô muse de mon cœur, 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
Récouteras-tu l'or des voûtes azurées?

II te faut, pour gagner ton pain de chaque soir,
Comme un enfant de chœur, 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.

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

The Venal Muse

Lover of palaces, Muse of my heart, O sweet,
When hailstones fly from January's frosty sling,
On snowy nights amid black ennui, who shall bring
A cheery log to thaw your violet chill feet?
Shall you warm your wan mottled shoulder with the wing
Of bleak nocturnal beams that soar from the dank street?
Knowing you have no coin in purse nor bread to eat,
Shall you rake gold from blue arched skies for harvesting?

To earn your daily bread as the dense nights grow denser,
Shall you play acolyte and blithely swing your censer,
Chanting faithless Te Deums; or a moment after,

A famished mountebank, sell the charmed mysteries
Of laughter bathed in tears that no man ever sees
To rouse the rabble herd to fits of obscene laughter?

— Translated by Jacques LeClercq

The Mercenary Muse

Muse of my heart, so fond of palaces, reply:
When January sends those blizzards wild and white,
Shall you have any fire at all to huddle by,
Chafing your violet feet in the black snowy night?

Think: when the moon shines through the window, shall you try
To thaw your marble shoulders in her square of light?
Think: when your purse is empty and your palate dry,
Can you from the starred heaven snatch all the gold in sight?

No, no; if you would earn your bread, you have no choice
But to become a choir-boy, and chant in a loud voice
Te Deums you have no faith in, and swing your censer high;

Or be a mountebank, employing all your art —
Yes, on an empty stomach and with an anguished heart —
To chase the boredom of the liverish gallery.

— Translated by Edna St. Vincent Millay

La Muse vénale

o Muse I love, whom palaces delight,
when 'round thy door the blasts of winter cry,
wilt have, while snowy eves in boredom die,
one ember left for feet all freezing white?

wilt warm thy cold blue shoulders in the light
the stars impart through shutters left awry?
— or climb, with hungry mouth and purse, the sky

to glean the gold from azure vaults of night?

thou must, to earn thy daily bread, employ
a well-swung censer, like a choir-boy,
and chant Te Deum from a heart unstirred,

or, starving clown, lay bare thy loveliness
and laugh through tears thou darest not confess,
to rouse the bilious humour of the herd.

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

The Venal Muse

O muse of my heart, lover of palaces,
Will you bring, when January lets loose its sleet
And its black evenings without solace,
An ember to warm my violet feet?
What will revive your bruised shoulders,
The nocturnal rays that pierce the shutters?
When you cannot feel your palace, just your empty billfold,
How will you harvest the gold of azure vaults and gutters?

You should, to earn your bread today
Like a choir boy with a censer to wave,
Sings hymns with feeling but without belief.

Or, a starving rip-off artist, selling your charm
And your laughter shades the tears so no one sees the harm
In bringing to bloom an ordinary rat, a vulgar thief.

Translated by William A. Sigler

The Mercenary Muse

O Muse of my heart, votary of palaces,
Shall you, when January looses its boreal winds,
Have any firebrand to warm your violet feet
In the black boredoms of snowy evenings?

Shall you revive your marble shoulders
By the gleams of night that stab the shutters?
And, feeling your purse as empty as your palace,
Will you reap the gold of azure skies?

To win your evening bread you need,
Like a choir-boy, to play with the censer,
To chant the Te Deums you scarcely believe in,

Or, famished vagabond, expose your charms
And your laughter soaked in crying that is not seen,
In order to dispel the spleen of the people.

— Translated by Geoffrey Wagner

Charles Baudelaire

La Pipe (The 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 coeur et guérit
De ses fatigues son esprit.

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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 he 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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

A Poet's Pipe

A poet's pipe am I,
And my Abyssinian tint
Is an unmistakable hint
That he lays me not often by.
When his soul is with grief o'erworn
I smoke like the cottage where
They are cooking the evening fare
For the laborer's return.

I enfold and cradle his soul
In the vapors moving and blue
That mount from my fiery mouth;
And there is power in my bowl
To charm his spirit and soothe,
And heal his weariness too.

Translated by Richard Herne Shepherd

The Pipe

I am an author's pipe;
From examining my Abyssinian
Or Kaffir countenance, one sees
That my master is a great smoker.

When he is laden with sorrow,
I smoke like a cottage
When the cooking is being prepared
Against the laborer's return

I entwine and I cradle his soul
In the drifting, blue film
That climbs from my fiery mouth,

And I turn a powerful balm
Which charms his heart and heals
His spirit of fatigues.

— Translated by Geoffrey Wagner

Charles Baudelaire

La Serpent Qui Danse (The Dancing Serpent)

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!

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!

— Translated by William Aggeler

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 Iaves
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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Dancing Serpent

Indolent love, with what delight
I watch the tawny flesh
Of your sweet body shimmer bright
As a bright silken mesh.

On your thick tresses, love, you wear
Sharp perfumes for a crown,
A venturesome sweet sea, your hair,
With billows blue and brown.

Your eyes never betray by sign
What grief or joy they hold,
They are cold jewels that combine
Strong iron and rare gold.

Even as a vessel that awakes
When morning breezes rise,

So my dream-laden spirit takes
Off for strange distant skies.

Your sinuous cadenced walk enhancing
Your slim proud gait, a frond
Swaying, you are, or a snake dancing
Atop a fakir's wand.

Under a laziness like lead
Your childlike head aslant
Sways soft and gentle as the head
Of a young elephant,

Your body like a slender ship
In tense or bowing motion
Rolls, slow, from side to side to dip
Its yards deep in the ocean.

Ice thawed by currents from the south
Swell the swift streams beneath,
So when the water of your mouth
Rises against your teeth,

I seem to drink Bohemian wine
Victorious and tart,
A liquid sky that strews benign
Stars in my peaceful heart.

— Translated by Jacques LeClercq

The Dancing Serpent

How I love to watch, dear indolent creature,
The skin of your so
Beautiful body glisten, like some
Quivering material!

On your deep coiffure
Bitter scented,
Scented, restless sea,
With the blue and brown waves,

Like a ship waking
To the wind of morning,
My dreamy soul prepares
For skies far away.

Your eyes, where nothing is revealed
Of sweet or sour,
Are two cold gems whose gold
Is mixed with iron.

Seeing your harmonious walk,
Abandoned beauty,
One would say a snake was dancing
At the end of a stick.

Under the weight of your sloth
Your infant head
Is balanced with the indolence
Of a young elephant,

And your body bends and stretches
Like a delicate ship
Pitching from side to side and sinking
Its spars in the water.

Like a wave swelled by the melting
Of a groaning glacier,
When your saliva rises
To the edges of your teeth,

I feel I drink some Bohemian wine,
Bitter, victor,
A liquid sky that scatters
Stars in my heart!

— Translated by Geoffrey Wagner

Charles Baudelaire

La Servante Au Grand Coeur Dont Vous Étiez Jalouse (The Great-Hearted Servant Of Whom You Were Jealous)

The great-hearted servant of whom you were jealous,
sleeping her sleep in the humble grass,
shouldn't we take her a few flowers?
The dead, the poor dead, have griefs like ours,
and when October sighs, clipper of trees,
round their marble tombs, with its mournful breeze,
they must find the living, ungratefully, wed,
snug in sleep, to the warmth of their bed,
while they, devoured by dark reflection,
without bedfellow, or sweet conversation,
old skeletons riddled with worms, deep frozen,
feel the winter snows trickling round them,
and the years flow by without kin or friend
to replace the wreaths at their railing's end.
If some night, when the logs whistle and flare,
seeing her sitting calm, in that chair,
if on a December night, cold and blue,
I might find her there placed in the room,
solemn, and come from her bed, eternal,
to guard the grown child with her eye, maternal,
what could I answer that pious spirit,
seeing tears under her hollow eyelid?

Charles Baudelaire

La Vie Antérieure (My Earlier Life)

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.

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

My Former Life

I can remember a country of long, high colonnades
Which mirrored in their pale marble the prismatic light
Cast from the bright sea billows in a thousand shades,
And which resembled a cave of fluted basalt by night.

The ocean, strewn with sliding images of the sky,
Would mingle in a mysterious and solemn way,
Under the wild brief sunsets, its tremendous cry
With the reflected colors of the ruined day.

There did I dwell in quiet luxury apart,
Amid the slowly changing hues of clouds and waves;
And there I was attended by two naked slaves

Who sometimes fanned me with great fronds on either side,

And whose sole task was to let sink into my heart
The dolorous and beautiful secret of which I died.

— Translated by George Dillon

La Vie antérieure

aeons I dwelt beneath vast porticoes
stained by the sun and sea with fiery dye,
whose lordly pillars, stark against the sky,
like caverned cliffs in evening's gold arose.

the rolling surges and their mirror skies
blent in a grave mysterious organ-air
the chords all-powerful of their music rare
with sunset's colours in my glowing eyes.

'twas there I lived before, 'mid azure waves,
blue skies and splendours, in voluptuous calm,
while, steeped in every fragrance, naked slaves

made cool my brow with waving fronds of palm:
— their only care to drive the secret dart
of my dull sorrow, deeper in my heart.

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

My Earlier Life

I've been home a long time among the vast porticos,
Which the mariner sun has tinged with a million fires,
Whose grandest pillars, upright, majestic and cold
Render them the same, this evening, as caves with basalt spires.

The swells' overwhelming accords of rich music,
Heaving images of heaven to the skies,
Mingle in a way solemn and mystic
With the colors of the horizon reflected by my eyes.

It was here I was true to the voluptuous calm,

The milieu of azure, the waves, the splendors,
And the nude slaves, all impregnated with odors,

Who refreshed my brow with waving palms
My only care to bring to meaning from anguish
The sad secret in which I languish.

Translated by William A. Sigler

Previous Existence

For a long time I lived under vast colonnades,
Stained with a thousand fires by ocean suns,
Whose vast pillars, straight and majestic,
Made them seem in the evening like grottos of basalt.

The sea-swells, in swaying the pictures of the skies,
Mingled solemnly and mystically
The all-powerful harmonies of their rich music
With the colors of the setting sun reflected by my eyes.

It is there that I have lived in calm voluptuousness,
In the center of the blue, amidst the waves and splendors
And the nude slaves, heavy with perfumes,

Who refreshed my forehead with palm-leaves,
Their only care was to fathom
The dolorous secret that made me languish.

— Translated by Geoffrey Wagner

Charles Baudelaire

L'Albatros (The Albatross)

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'infirmes 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.

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

The Albatross

Sometimes, to entertain themselves, the men of the crew
Lure upon deck an unlucky albatross, one of those vast
Birds of the sea that follow unwearied the voyage through,
Flying in slow and elegant circles above the mast.

No sooner have they disentangled him from their nets
Than this aerial colossus, shorn of his pride,

Goes hobbling pitiably across the planks and lets
His great wings hang like heavy, useless oars at his side.

How droll is the poor floundering creature, how limp and weak —
He, but a moment past so lordly, flying in state!
They tease him: One of them tries to stick a pipe in his beak;
Another mimics with laughter his odd lurching gait.

The Poet is like that wild inheritor of the cloud,
A rider of storms, above the range of arrows and slings;
Exiled on earth, at bay amid the jeering crowd,
He cannot walk for his unmanageable wings.

— Translated by George Dillon

Albatrosses

Often our sailors, for an hour of fun,
Catch albatrosses on the after breeze
Through which these trail the ship from sun to sun
As it skims down the deep and briny seas.

Scarce have these birds been set upon the poop,
Than, awkward now, they, the sky's emperors,
Piteous and shamed, let their great white wings droop
Beside them like a pair of idle oars.

These wingèd voyagers, how gauche their gait!
Once noble, now how ludicrous to view!
One sailor bums them with his pipe, his mate
Limps, mimicking these cripples who once flew.

Poets are like these lords of sky and cloud,
Who ride the storm and mock the bow's taut strings,
Exiled on earth amid a jeering crowd,
Prisoned and palsied by their giant wings.

— Translated by Jacques LeClercq

The Albatross

Often, to amuse themselves, the men of the crew
Catch those great birds of the seas, the albatrosses,
lazy companions of the voyage, who follow
The ship that slips through bitter gulfs.

Hardly have they put them on the deck,
Than these kings of the skies, awkward and ashamed,
Piteously let their great white wings
Draggle like oars beside them.

This winged traveler, how weak he becomes and slack!
He who of late was so beautiful, how comical and ugly!
Someone teases his beak with a branding iron,
Another mimics, limping, the crippled flyer!

The Poet is like the prince of the clouds,
Haunting the tempest and laughing at the archer;
Exiled on earth amongst the shouting people,
His giant's wings hinder him from walking.

— Translated by Geoffrey Wagner

Charles Baudelaire

Lament Of An Icarus

Lovers of whores don't care,
happy, calm and replete:
But my arms are incomplete,
grasping the empty air.
Thanks to stars, incomparable ones,
that blaze in the depths of the skies,
all my destroyed eyes
see, are the memories of suns.
I look, in vain, for beginning and end
of the heavens' slow revolve:
Under an unknown eye of fire, I ascend
feeling my wings dissolve.
And, scorched by desire for the beautiful,
I will not know the bliss,
of giving my name to that abyss,
that knows my tomb and funeral.

Charles Baudelaire

Landscape

In order to write my chaste verses I'll lie
like an astrologer near to the sky
and, by the bell-towers, listen in dream
to their solemn hymns on the air-stream.
Hands on chin, from my attic's height
I'll see the workshops of song and light,
the gutters, the belfries those masts of the city,
the vast skies that yield dreams of eternity
It is sweet to see stars being born in the blue,
through the mists, the lamps at the windows, too,
the rivers of smoke climbing the firmament,
and the moon pouring out her pale enchantment.
I'll see the springs, summers, autumns' glow,
and when winter brings the monotonous snow
I'll close all my doors and shutters tight
and build palaces of faery in the night.
Then I'll dream of blue-wet horizons,
weeping fountains of alabaster, gardens,
kisses, birdsong at morning or twilight,
all in the Idyll that is most childlike.
The mob that are beating in vain on the glass,
won't make me raise my head as they pass.
Since I'll be plunged deep in the thrill
of evoking the springtime through my own will,
raising the sun out of my own heart,
making sweet air from my burning thought.

Charles Baudelaire

L'Aube Spirituelle (Spiritual Dawn)

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'attirance 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!

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!

— Translated by William Aggeler

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!

— Translated by Roy Campbell

L'Aube spirituelle

when to the drunkard's room the flushing East
comes with her comrade sharply-clawed, the Dream,
she wakens, by a dark avenging scheme,
an angel in the dull besotted beast.

deep vaults of inaccessible azure there,
before the dreamer sick with many a phasm,
open, abysmal as a beckoning chasm.
thus, deity, all pure clear light and air,

over the stupid orgy's reeking track
— brighter and lovelier yet, thine image flies
in fluttering rays before my widening eyes.

the sun has turned the candles' flame to black;

even so, victorious always, thou art one
— resplendent spirit! — with the eternal sun!

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

Charles Baudelaire

Le Balcon (The Balcony)

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 illumines 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!

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!

— Translated by William Aggeler

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 eyes 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 eyes 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?

— Translated by Roy Campbell

The Balcony

Inspirer of my youth, mistress beyond compare,
You who were all my pleasures, all my hopes and dreams!
Do you recall our cheerful room — our evenings there,
Quiet and passionate? Like yesterday, it seems,
Inspirer of my youth, mistress beyond compare!

The evenings lighted by the hushed flame of the coal,
The warm rose-misted twilights in the early springs,
The balcony! How I adored you, body and soul!
And, darling, we have said imperishable things
The evenings lighted by the hushed flame of the coal.

How splendid were the long slow summer sunsets, too!
How large the world appeared to us! How strong and good
Life ran then in our veins! When I leaned close to you
I thought that I could breathe the perfume of your blood.
How splendid were the long slow summer sunsets, too!

The night would close around us like a dim blue wall,
And your eyes flashed within the darkness, and the sweet
Drug of your breath came over me. Do you recall
How I would love to lie for hours holding your feet?
The night would close around us like a dim blue wall.

I can relive the ecstasy that Time has slain;
At moments I can feel myself between your thighs.
What use to hope for anything like that again
With someone else? What use to seek in any wise?
I can relive the ecstasy that Time has slain.

Those cries, those long embraces, that remembered scent:
Can they be lost for ever? Will they not come round
Like stars, like suns, to blaze upon the firmament
Of future worlds, from the abyss we cannot sound?
— O cries! O long embraces! O remembered scent!

— Translated by George Dillon

The Balcony

Mistress of mistresses, mother of memories,
O you my every pleasure, you my every duty!
You shall recall our blandishments and ecstasies,
The warm peace of our hearth, the evening's placid beauty.
Mistress of mistresses, mother of memories!

Evenings illumined by the glow of coals afire
Or on the balcony, veiled in a rosy mist.
How soft your breast, how kind your heart to my desire!
We said imperishable things the while we kissed,
Evenings illumined by the glow of coals afire.

How glorious the sunset on warm summer nights!
How deep space is! the human heart how competent!
As I bent over you, queen of my soul's delight,
I thought I breathed your blood with its suave acrid scent.
How glorious the sunset on warm summer nights!

The night grew dense, forming a wall to compass us,
Across the dark your eyes bound mine with golden bands,
I drank your breath in deep, O sweet, O poisonous!
Your slender feet slept softly in my gentle hands.
The night grew dense, forming a wall to compass us.

The resurrection of glad moments is an art
I know: I live anew, my head pressed to your knees,
For where, if not in your loved flesh and tender heart,
Can I seek out the wonder of your languidness?
The resurrection of glad moments is an art.

These vows, these fragrant scents, these kisses without end,
Shall they be born again out of infinity?
As suns rejuvenated in the skies ascend,
Having been laved in the unfathomable sea?
— O vows! O fragrant scents! — O kisses without end!

— Translated by Jacques LeClercq

Le Balcon

mother of memories, mistress of mistresses
— thou, all my pleasure, thou, my fealties all!
thou shalt recall each kiss how soft it is,
how warm our hearth, the night how magical,
mother of memories, mistress of mistresses!

long hours illumined by the glowing fire
long balcony-hours veiled with misty rose;
soft pillowing breast! heart warm to my desire!
and all the imperishable things we whispered, those
long hours illumined by the glowing fire

how softly shone the golden, shimmering sun!
how deep the skyey space! how rich love's power!
for bending toward thee, most belovèd one,
I seemed to breathe thy pulses like a flower.
how softly shone the golden, shimmering sun!

Night with her thickening wall imprisoned us,
eyes groped for widening eyes the black withheld,
I drank thy breath, o sweet, o poisonous!
thy feet slept in my hands fraternal held;
Night with her thickening wall imprisoned us.

my magic art evoked a rapture perished,
for in thy clasp I saw my youth afresh,
could others yield the languorous charm I cherished,
thy gentle heart, thy dear and lovely flesh?
my magic art evoked a rapture perished!

but — vows and fragrance, infinite desire —
shall they arise from gulfs too deep to plumb,
as morn by morn new suns of rosier fire
mount, laved in some dark sea Elysium?
o vows! o fragrance! infinite desire!

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

Charles Baudelaire

Le Chat (The Cat)

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.

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

The Cat

My beautiful cat, come onto my heart full of love;
Hold back the claws of your paw,
And let me plunge into your adorable eyes
Mixed with metal and agate.

When my fingers lazily fondle
Your head and your elastic back,
And my hand gets drunk with the pleasure
Of feeling your electric body,

I see in spirit my personal lady. Her glance,
Like yours, dear creature,
Deep and cold, slits and splits like a dart,

And from her feet to her head,
A subtle atmosphere, a dangerous perfume,
Swim around her brown body.

— Translated by Geoffrey Wagner

Charles Baudelaire

Le Cygne (The Swan)

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 Simois 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 coeur d'un mortel);

Je ne vois qu'en esprit tout ce camp de baraques,
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 coeur 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 têtent 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!

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!

— Translated by William Aggeler

The Swan

To Victor Hugo

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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Le Cygne

I

Andromache, of thee I think! and of
the dreary streamlet where, through exiled years,
shone the vast grandeur of thy widow's love,
that false Simois brimmed with royal tears

poured like the Nile across my memory strange,
as past the Louvre new I strolled, apart.
— Old Paris is no more (for cities change
— alas! — more quickly than a mortal's heart);

only my memory sees the capitals,
the shafts unfinished once, in pools of rain,
the slimy marble blocks, weeds, market-stalls
with old brass gleaming through each dusty pane.

that corner houses a whole menagerie once;
and here one day I saw, when 'neath the fair

cold heavens, Toil awoke, and over the stones
the storm of traffic rent the silent air,

a swan which from its cage had made escape
patting the torrid blocks with webby feet,
trailing great plumes of snow, while beak agape
fumbled for water in the parching street;

wildly it plunged its wings in dust again,
mourning its native lake, and seemed to shrill:
'lightning, when comest thou? and when, the rain?'
strange symbol! wretched bird, I see it still,

up to the sky, like Ovid's fool accurst,
up to the cruelly blue ironic sky
raising its neck convulsed and beak athirst,
as though reproaching God in each mad cry.

II

towns change... but in my melancholy naught
has moved at all! new portals, ladders, blocks,
old alleys — all become symbolic thought,
in me, loved memories turn to moveless rocks.

so, crushing me, the Louvre gates recall
my huge white swan, insane with agony,
comic, sublime, like exiles one and all
by truceless cravings torn! I think of thee

Andromache, a slave apportioned, whom
proud Pyrrhus took from hands more glorious,
in ecstasy bent o'er an empty tomb;
great Hector's widow, wed to Helenus!

I think of thee, consumptive Nubian,
wading the mire, wan-eyed girl, agog
to find the absent palms of proud Soudan
behind the boundless rampart of the fog;

I think of all who lose the boons we find

no more! no more! who feed on tears and cling
to the good she-wolf Grief, whose tears are kind!
— of orphans gaunt like flowers withering!

thus, in the jungle of my soul's exile,
old memories wind a horn I've heard before!
I think of sailors wrecked on some lost isle,
of prisoners, captives!... and many more!

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

Charles Baudelaire

Le Flacon (The Perfume Flask)

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;

Il 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!

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!

— Translated by William Aggeler

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 fief 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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

The Perfume Flask

All matter becomes porous to certain scents; they pass
Through everything; it seems they even go through glass.
When opening some old trunk brought home from the far east,
That scolds, feeling the key turned and the lid released —

Some wardrobe, in a house long uninhabited,

Full of the powdery odors of moments that are dead —
At times, distinct as ever, an old flask will emit
Its perfume; and a soul comes back to live in it.

Dormant as chrysalides, a thousand thoughts that lie
In the thick shadows, pulsing imperceptibly,
Now stir, now struggle forth; now their cramped wings unfold,
Tinted with azure, lusted with rose, sheeted with gold!

Oh, memories, how you rise and soar, and hover there!
The eyes close; dizziness, in the moth-darkened air,
Seizes the drunken soul, and thrusts it toward the verge —
Where mistily all human miasmas float and merge —

Of a primeval gulf; and drops it to the ground,
There, where, like Lazarus rising, his grave-clothes half unwound,
And odorous, a cadaver from its sleep has stirred:
An old and rancid love, charming and long-interred.

Thus, when I shall be lost from sight, thus when all men
Forget me, in the dark and dusty corner then
Of that most sinister cupboard where the living pile
The dead — when, an old flask, cracked, sticky, abject, vile,

I lie at length — still, still, sweet pestilence of my heart,
As to what power thou hast, how virulent thou art,
I shall bear witness; safe shall thy dear poison be!
Thou vitriol of the gods I thou death and life of me!

— Translated by Edna St. Vincent Millay

Le Flacon

so keen some fragrances, they freely pass
all barriers. they would pierce a wall of glass.
unlatch a coffer from the Orient
whose creaking hinge will scarcely grant consent,

or cupboard in an empty house, where murk,
sharp smells and cobwebs of a century lurk,
thou'lt find perhaps a flask that holds a host

of memories, free perchance a living ghost.

crushed in the gloom a thousand keepsakes lay
like confined larvae there, which, quivering, grey,
released at last arise on soaring wing,
rose-flushed or azure, golden, glittering,

and swirling memories mount, to thrill and tease
our closing eyes; we reel in murk, as these
grapple amain and hurl the quailing soul
down to a Pit where human odours roll

and fell it on the brink that waits for all,
where, bursting, Lazarus-like, its rotted pall,
stirs and awakes the spectral visage of
a charming, fusty, weird, forgotten love.

so when Oblivion blots my memory dim,
and in a corner of a cupboard grim
I like cast off, a sorry flask and old,
crackled and dusty, viscous, green with mould,

I'll be thy coffin, lovely pestilence!
I'll prove thy power and thy virulence,
dear poison brewed by angels! dulcet fire
I've drunk, my life, my death, my heart's desire!

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

Charles Baudelaire

Le Flambeau Vivant (The Living Torch)

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!

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!

— Translated by William Aggeler

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!

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Le Flambeau vivant

they march before me, filled with light divine
— those eyes turned magnets by some angel wise;
they lead, my Heavenly Twins, good brothers mine,
whose jewelled fires hold my gazing eyes.

they guard from every sin and error grave,
they show my feet the path to Beauty's porch;
they are my servitors and I their slave,
wholly obedient to their heavenly torch.

enchanted eyes, ye have the mystic ray
of tapers lit at noon: the fire of day
reddens, but quenches not their eery glow: —

'tis Death they sing, while ye extol the Morn;

ye point the way and chant a soul reborn
— stars that no sun can pale nor overthrow!

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

Charles Baudelaire

Le Gout 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 bute.
Résigne-toi, mon coeur; dors ton sommeil de brute.

Esprit vaincu, fourbu! Pour toi, vieux maraudeur,
L'amour n'a plus de gout, non plus que la dispute;
Adieu donc, chants du cuivre et soupirs de la flûte!
Plaisirs, ne tentez plus un coeur 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

Le Guignon (Ill-Starred)

Pour soulever un poids si lourd,
Sisyphé, 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.

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

Ill 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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Ill-Starred

A man would needs be brave and strong
As Sisyphus, for such a task!
It is not greater zeal I ask —
But life is brief, and art is long.

To a forsaken mound of clay
Where no admirers ever come,
My heart, like an invisible drum,
Goes beating a dead march all day.

Many a jewel of untold worth
Lies slumbering at the core of earth,
In darkness and oblivion drowned;

Many a flower has bloomed and spent
The secret of its passionate scent
Upon the wilderness profound.

— Translated by George Dillon

Ill-Starred

To bear a weight that cannot be borne,
Sisyphus, even you aren't that strong,
Although your heart cannot be torn
Time is short and Art is long.
Far from celebrated sepulchers
Toward a solitary graveyard
My heart, like a drum muffled hard
Beats a funeral march for the ill-starred.

—Many jewels are buried or shrouded
In darkness and oblivion's clouds,
Far from any pick or drill bit,

Many a flower unburdens with regret
Its perfume sweet like a secret;
In profoundly empty solitude to sit.

Translated by William A. Sigler

Charles Baudelaire

Le Léthé (Lethe)

Viens sur mon coeur, 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 sucerais, pour noyer ma rancoeur,
Le népenthès et la bonne ciguë
Aux bouts charmants de cette gorge aiguë
Qui n'a jamais emprisonné de coeur.

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Lethe

Come to my arms, cruel and sullen thing;
Indolent beast, come to my arms again,
For I would plunge my fingers in your mane
And be a long time unremembering —

And bury myself in you, and breathe your wild
Perfume remorselessly for one more hour:
And breathe again, as of a ruined flower,
The fragrance of the love you have defiled.

I long to sleep; I think that from a stark
Slumber like death I could awake the same
As I was once, and lavish without shame
Caresses upon your body, glowing and dark.

To drown my sorrow there is no abyss,
However deep, that can compare with your bed.
Forgetfulness has made its country your red
Mouth, and the flowing of Lethe is in your kiss.

My doom, henceforward, is my sole desire:

As martyrs, being demented in their zeal,
Shake with delightful spasms upon the wheel,
Implore the whip, or puff upon the fire,

So I implore you, fervently resigned!
Come; I would drink nepenthe and long rest
At the sweet points of this entrancing breast
Wherein no heart has ever been confined.

— Translated by George Dillon

Lethe

Tigress adored, indolent fiend, lie there,
There on my heart now, merciless and strong,
I wish to run my trembling fingers long
Through the black tangles of your heavy hair,
To plunge my aching head amorous of
Your skirts as into secret, perfumed bowers,
To breathe your scent as from pale withered flowers
The after-flavor of my defunct love.

I wish to sleep rather than live, alas!
In slumber deep and sweet as death, O lover,
As my fierce and remorseless kisses cover
Your lovely body, bright as burnished brass,
To bury my stilled sobs in the abysses
Of your anodyne bed, to feast upon
Your lips that shed potent oblivion,
To drink the Lethe flowing in your kisses.

I shall delight in following my fate,
Obeying it gladly as a man contemned,
O docile martyr, innocent condemned
To tortures that his fervors aggravate.
With suckling lips to quell my spleen and rancor,
Nepenthe I shall drain, and hemlock's sweets,
Out of the magic tips of pointed teats
That never served a human heart for anchor.

— Translated by Jacques LeClercq

Le Léthé

come to my heart, cold viper-soul malign,
beloved tiger, hydra indolent;
long will I drag my hands incontinent
and quivering, through this vast loosed mane of thine;

long will I bury throbbing brow and head
among thy skirts all redolent of thee,
and breathe — a blighted flower of perfidy —
the fading odour of my passion dead.

I'll sleep, not live! I'll lose myself in sleep!
in slumber soft as Death's uncertain shore,
I'll sleep and sow my drowsy kisses o'er
thy polished coppery arms and bosom deep.

to drown my sobs and still my spirit — o!
no boon but thine abysmal bed avails;
poppied oblivion from thy mouth exhales
and through thy kisses floods of Lethe flow.

so to my doom, henceforward my desire,
I shall submit as one predestinate;
and like a martyr, calm, immaculate,
whose fervour prods again his flickering pyre,

I'll suck, to drown my hate's eternal smart,
Nepenthe, and good bitter hemlock brew,
from the sharp rose-buds of thy breast, anew,
thy breast that never did contain a heart.

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

Lethe

Come on my heart, cruel and insensible soul,
My darling tiger, beast with indolent airs;
I want to plunge for hours my trembling fingers

In your thick and heavy mane;

In your petticoats filled with your perfume
To bury my aching head,
And breathe, like a faded flower,
The sweet taste of my dead love.

I want to sleep, to sleep and not to live,
In a sleep as soft as death,
I shall cover with remorseless kisses
Your body beautifully polished as copper.

To swallow my appeased sobbing
I need only the abyss of your bed;
A powerful oblivion lives on your lips,
And all Lethe flows in your kisses.

I shall obey, as though predestined,
My destiny, that is now my delight;
Submissive martyr, innocent damned one,
My ardor inflames my torture,

And I shall suck, to drown my bitterness
The nepenthe and the good hemlock,
On the lovely tips of those jutting breasts
Which have never imprisoned love.

— TRanslated by Geoffrey Wagner

Lethe

Come to my heart, cruel, insensible one,
Adored tiger, monster with the indolent air;
I would for a long time plunge my trembling fingers
Into the heavy tresses of your hair;

And in your garments that exhale your perfume
I would bury my aching head,
And breathe, like a withered flower,
The sweet, stale reek of my love that is dead.

I want to sleep! sleep rather than live!
And in a slumber, dubious as the tomb's,
I would lavish my kisses without remorse
Upon the burnished copper of your limbs.

To swallow my abated sobs
Nothing equals your bed's abyss;
Forgetfulness dwells in your mouth,
And Lethe flows from your kiss.

My destiny, henceforth my pleasure,
I shall obey, predestined instrument,
Docile martyr, condemned innocent,
Whose fervour but augments his torment.

I shall suck, to drown my rancour,
Nepenthe, hemlock, an opiate,
At the charming tips of this pointed breast
That has never imprisoned a heart.

Translated by Anonymous

Charles Baudelaire

Le Masque (The Mask)

Statue allégorique dans le goût de la Renaissance

Contemplons ce trésor de grâces florentines;
Dans l'ondulation de ce corps musculeux
L'Élégance 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 coeur 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!

The Mask

Allegorical Statue in the Style of the Renaissance

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!

— Translated by William Aggeler

The Mask

(An allegoric statue in Renaissance style)

vStudy 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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

The Mask

An Allegorical Statue in Renaissance Style

Behold this prize of beauties wholly Florentine,
See in this muscled body, lithe and sinuous,
Divine concinnity married to strength divine.
This woman sculpted by hands that wrought, miraculous.
So strangely strong, and so strangely slim in scope,
She was born to throne on beds made rich and sumptuous
To charm the happy leisure of a Prince or Pope.

Behold these smiling lips, suave and voluptuous,
Whose ecstasies of arrant self-love give us pause;
The mocking pawkishness of that long languid stare,
Those dainty features framed in luminous light gauze,
Whose every facet says with an all-conquering air:

'Lo, Pleasure calls and Love crowns my triumphant head!
On this proud creature vested with such stateliness,
See what exciting charms her daintiness has shed.
Let us draw close and walk around her. O excess,
O blasphemy of Art! O treachery unique!
That body filled with promise, rapturous and rare,
Turns at the top into a double-headed freak!

No, this is but a mask, a decorative snare,
Poor visage lighted by a delicate grimace!
And look! contracted here, in raw and hideous troubles,
The genuine head and the authentic, candid face
Are overturned and darkened by their lying doubles.
Poor noble beauty, the magnificent broad river
Of your sad tears flows through my heart; your lie of lies
Intoxicates me, and my thirsty soul aquiver
Is slaked by the salt flood Pain dredges from your eyes.

But why is it she weeps, whose loveliness outranks
All others, and who binds all humans by her laws?
What hushed mysterious ill gnaws at her athlete flanks?
She weeps because, O madman, she has lived, because
She must live on. But her most pitiful misgiving —
What chills her very knees and turns her tremulous —
Is that alas! tomorrow she must go on living —
Tomorrow and tomorrow — evermore — like us!

— Translated by Jacques LeClercq

Charles Baudelaire

Le Mauvais Moine (The Bad Monk)

Les cloîtres anciens sur leurs grandes murailles
Étalaien 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 semailles,
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?

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?

— Translated by William Aggeler

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?

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Le Mauvais Moine

the wide cold walls of cloisters, long ago
set forth God's Holy Truth for all to see,
and gazing friars there, with hearts aglow,
rejoiced despite their chill austerity.

then, when the seed of Christ would always grow,
illustrious monks, now lost to memory,
would choose the burial-plot for studio
to chant Death's glory, unaffectedly.

my soul's a tomb, which — wretched friar! — I
have paced since Time began, and occupy;
bare-walled and hateful still my cloister stands.

o slothful monk! when shall I learn to find
in the stark drama of this living mind
joy for mine eyes and work to fit my hands?

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

The Bad Monk

On the great walls of ancient cloisters were nailed
Murals displaying Truth the saint,
Whose effect, reheating the pious entrails
Brought to an austere chill a warming paint.

In the times when Christ was seeded around,
More than one illustrious monk, today unknown
Took for a studio the funeral grounds
And glorified Death as the one way shown.

—My soul is a tomb, an empty confine
Since eternity I scour and I reside;
Nothing hangs on the walls of this hideous sty.

O lazy monk! When will I see
The living spectacle of my misery,
The work of my hands and the love of my eyes?

Translated by William A. Sigler

Charles Baudelaire

Le Mort Joyeux (The Joyful Corpse)

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!

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!

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

The Happy Dead Man

Slowly, luxuriously, I will hollow a deep grave,
With my own hands, in rich black snail-frequented soil,
And lay me down, forspent with that voluptuous toil,
And go to sleep, as happy as a shark in the wave.

No funeral for me, no sepulcher, no hymns;
Rather than beg for pity when alive, God knows,
I have lain sick and shelterless, and let the crows
Stab to their hearts' content at my lean festering limbs.

O worms! my small black comrades without ears or eyes,
Taste now for once a mortal who lies down in bliss.
O blithe materialists! O vermin of my last bed!

Come, march remorselessly through me. Come, and devise
Some curious new torment, if you can, for this
Old body without soul and deader than the dead.

— Translated by George Dillon

Joyful Corpse

In a rich fertile loam where snails recess,
I wish to dig my own deep roomy grave,
There to stretch out my old bones, motionless,
Snug in death's sleep as sharks are in the wave.
Men's testaments and tombs spell queasiness,
The world's laments are not a boon I crave,
Sooner, while yet I live, let the crows press
My carrion blood from out my skull and nave.
O worms, black comrades without eyes or ears,
Behold, a dead man, glad and free, appears!
Lecher philosophers, spawn of decay,
Rummage remorseless through my crumbling head
To tell what torture may remain today
For this my soulless body which is dead.

— Translated by Jacques LeClercq

Charles Baudelaire

Le Poison (The 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!

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Le Poison

wine clothes the sordid walls of hovels old
with pomp no palace knows,
evokes long peristyles in pillared rows
from vaporous red and gold;
like sunset with her cloud-built porticoes.

and opium widens all that has no bourn
in its unbounded sea;
moments grow hours, pleasures cease to be
in souls that, overworn,
drown in its black abyss of lethargy.

dread poisons, but more dread the poisoned well
of thy green eyes accurst;
tarns where I watch my trembling soul, reversed
my dreams innumerable
throng to those bitter gulfs to slake their thirst.

dread magic, but thy mouth more dread than these:
its wine and hellebore
burn, floods of Lethe, in my bosom's core,
till winds of madness seize
and dash me swooning on Death's barren shore!

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

Charles Baudelaire

Le Possédé (The Possessed)

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 pavaner 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;
II n'est pas une fibre en tout mon corps tremblant
Qui ne crie: Ô mon cher Belzébuth, je t'adore!

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!'

— Translated by William Aggeler

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!'

— Translated by Roy Campbell

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 ennui 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!'

Translated by Anonymous

Charles Baudelaire

Le Revenant (The Ghost)

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.

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

The Revenant

Like angels with bright savage eyes
I will come treading phantom-wise
Hither where thou art wont to sleep,
Amid the shadows hollow and deep.

And I will give thee, my dark one,
Kisses as icy as the moon,
Caresses as of snakes that crawl
In circles round a cistern's wall.

When morning shows its livid face
There will be no-one in my place,
And a strange cold will settle here

Others, not knowing what thou art,
May think to reign upon thy heart
With tenderness; I trust to fear.

— Translated by George Dillon

The Ghost

Like angels that have monster eyes,
Over your bedside I shall rise,
Gliding towards you silently
Across night's black immensity.
O darksome beauty, you shall swoon
At kisses colder than the moon
And fondlings like a snake's who coils Sinuous round the grave he soils.

When livid morning breaks apace,
You shall find but an empty place,
Cold until night, and bleak, and drear:
As others do by tenderness,
So would I rule your youthfulness
By harsh immensities of fear.

— Translated by Jacques LeClercq

Charles Baudelaire

Le Tonneau De La Haine (The Cask Of Hate)

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 fuiraient 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.

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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 abyssms
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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Charles Baudelaire

Le Vampire (The 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 têtue,
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!»

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!'

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.'

— Translated by Roy Campbell

The Vampire

Thou who abruptly as a knife
Didst come into my heart; thou who,
A demon horde into my life,
Didst enter, wildly dancing, through

The doorways of my sense unlatched
To make my spirit thy domain —
Harlot to whom I am attached
As convicts to the ball and chain,

As gamblers to the wheel's bright spell,
As drunkards to their raging thirst,
As corpses to their worms — accurst
Be thou! Oh, be thou damned to hell!

I have entreated the swift sword
To strike, that I at once be freed;
The poisoned phial I have implored
To plot with me a ruthless deed.

Alas! the phial and the blade
Do cry aloud and laugh at me:
'Thou art not worthy of our aid;
Thou art not worthy to be free.

'Though one of us should be the tool
To save thee from thy wretched fate,
Thy kisses would resuscitate
The body of thy vampire, fool!'

— Translated by George Dillon

The Vampire

Thou, sharper than a dagger thrust
Sinking into my plaintive heart,
Thou, frenzied and arrayed in lust,
Strong as a demon host whose art

Possessed my humbled soul at last,
Made it thy bed and thy domain,
Strumpet, to whom I am bound fast
As is the convict to his chain,

The stubborn gambler to his dice,
The rabid drunkard to his bowl,
The carcass to its vermin lice —
O thrice-accursèd be thy soul!

I called on the swift sword to smite
One blow to free my life of this,
I begged perfidious aconite
For succor in my cowardice.
But sword and poison in my need
Heaped scorn upon my craven mood,
Saying: 'Unworthy to be freed,
From thine accursed servitude,

O fool, if through our efforts, Fate
Absolved thee from thy sorry plight,
Thy kisses would resuscitate

Thy vampire's corpse for thy delight.'

— Translated by Jacques LeClercq

The Vampire

You who, keen as a carving blade,
Into my plaintive heart has plunged,
You who, strong as a wild array
Of crazed and costumed cacodaemons,

Storming into my helpless soul
To make your bed and your domain;
— Tainted jade to whom I'm joined
Like a convict to his chain,

Like a gambler to his game,
Like a drunkard to his bottle,
Like maggot-worms to their cadaver,
Damn you, oh damn you I say!

I pleaded with the speedy sword
To win me back my liberty;
And finally, a desperate coward,
I turned to poison's perfidy.

Alas, but poison and the sword
Had only scorn to offer me:
'You're not worthy to be free
Of your wretched slavery,

You imbecile! — For if our means
Should release you from her reign,
You with your kisses would only breathe
New life into the vampire slain!

— Translated by Atti Viragh

The Vampire

You that, like a dagger's thrust,
Have entered my complaining heart,
You that, stronger than a host
Of demons, came, wild yet prepared;

Within my mind's humility
You made your bed and your domain;
- Infamous one who's bound to me
Like any felon by his chain,

Like a gambler by his games,
Like the bottle and the sot,
Like the worms in one's remains,
- Damn you! Damnation be your lot!

I've begged the merciful, swift sword
To overcome my liberty -
To poison I have said the word:
Save me from poltroonery.

Alas the sword! Alas the poison!
Contemptuous, they spoke to me:
'You never can deserve remission
Of your accursed slavery,

'Imbecile! - If our deadly empire
Freed you from your present fate,
Your kiss would soon resuscitate
The cold cadaver of your vampire!'

Charles Baudelaire

L'Ennemi (The Enemy)

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 cœur
Du sang que nous perdons croît et se fortifie!

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!

— Translated by William Aggeler

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!

— Translated by Roy Campbell

The Ruined Garden

My childhood was only a menacing shower,
cut now and ten by hours of brilliant heat.
All the top soil was killed by rain and sleet,
my garden hardly bore a standing flower.

From now on, my mind's autumn! I must take
the field and dress my beds with spade and rake
and restore order to my flooded grounds.
There the rain raised mountains like burial mounds.

I throw fresh seeds out. Who knows what survives?
What elements will give us life and food?
This soil is irrigated by the tides.

Time and nature sluice away our lives.
A virus eats the heart out of our sides,
digs in and multiplies on our lost blood.

— Translated by Robert Lowell

The Enemy

I think of my gone youth as of a stormy sky
Infrequently transpierced by a benignant sun;
Tempest and hail have done their work; and what have I? —
How many fruits in my torn garden? — scarcely one.

And now that I approach the autumn of my mind,
And must reclaim once more the inundated earth —
Washed into stony trenches deep as graves I find
I wield the rake and hoe, asking, 'What is it worth?'

Who can assure me, these new flowers for which I toil
Will find in the disturbed and reconstructed soil
That mystic aliment on which alone they thrive?

Oh, anguish, anguish! Time eats up all things alive;
And that unseen, dark Enemy, upon the spilled
Bright blood we could not spare, battens, and is fulfilled.

— Translated by Edna St. Vincent Millay

L'Ennemi

my youth was all a murky hurricane;
not oft did the suns of splendour burst the gloom;
so wild the lightning raged, so fierce the rain,
few crimson fruits my garden-close illumine.

now I have touched the autumn of the mind,
I must repair and smooth the earth, to save
my little seed-plot, torn and undermined,
guttered and gaping like an open grave.

and will the flowers all my dreams implore
draw from this garden wasted like a shore
some rich mysterious power the storm imparts?

— o grief! o grief! time eats away our lives,
and the dark Enemy gnawing at our hearts
sucks from our blood the strength whereon he thrives!

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

The Enemy

My youth was nothing but a black storm
Crossed now and then by brilliant suns.
The thunder and the rain so ravage the shores
Nothing's left of the fruit my garden held once.

I should employ the rake and the plow,
Having reached the autumn of ideas,
To restore this inundated ground
Where the deep grooves of water form tombs in the lees.

And who knows if the new flowers you dreamed
Will find in a soil stripped and cleaned
The mystic nourishment that fortifies?

—O Sorrow—O Sorrow—Time consumes Life,
And the obscure enemy that gnaws at my heart
Uses the blood that I lose to play my part.

Translated by William A. Sigler

Charles Baudelaire

Les Bijoux (The Jewels)

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!

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!

— Translated by William Aggeler

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 tamed 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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

The Jewels

The lovely one was naked and, knowing well my prayer,
She wore her loud bright armory of jewels. They
Evoked in her the savage and victorious air
Of Moorish concubines upon a holiday.

When it gives forth, being shaken, its gay mocking noise,
This world of metal and of stone, aflare in the night,
Excites me monstrously, for chiefest of my joys
Is the luxurious commingling of sound and light.

Relaxed among the pillows, she looked down at me
And let herself be gazed upon at leisure — as if
Lulled by my wordless adoration, like the sea
Washing perpetually about the foot of a cliff.

Slowly, regarding me like a trained leopardess,
She slouched into successive poses. A certain ease,
A certain candor coupled with lasciviousness,
Lent a new charm to the old metamorphoses.

The whole lithe harmony of loins, hips, buttocks, thighs,
Tawny and sleek, and undulant as the neck of a swan,
Began to move hypnotically before my eyes:
And her large breasts, those fruits I have grown lean upon,

I saw float toward me, tempting as the angels of hell,
To win my soul in thralldom to their dark caprice
Once more, and lure it down from the high citadel
Where, calm and solitary, it thought to have found peace.

She stretched and reared, and made herself all belly. In truth,
It was as if some playful artist had joined the stout
Hips of Antiope to the torso of a youth!...

The room grew dark, the lamp having flickered and gone out,

And now the whispering fire that had begun to die,
Falling in lucent embers, was all the light therein —
And when it heaved at moments a flamboyant sigh
It inundated as with blood her amber skin.

— Translated by George Dillon

The Jewels

Naked was my dark love, and, knowing my heart,
Adorned in but her most sonorous gems,
Their high pomp decked her with the conquering art
Of Moorish slave girls crowned with diadems.

Dancing for me with lively, mocking sound,
This world of stone and metal, brittle and bright,
Fills me with rapture who have always found
Excess of joy where hue and tone unite.

Naked she lay, suffered love pleasurably
To mould her, smiled on my desire as if,
Profound and gentle as the rising sea,
It rode the tide toward its appointed cliff.

A tiger, tamed, her eyes on mine, intent
On lust, she sought all strange ways to please:
Her air, half-candid, half-lascivious, lent
A new charm to her metamorphoses.

In turn, her arms and limbs, her veins, her thighs,
Polished as nard, undulant as a swan,
Passed under my serene clairvoyant eyes
As belly and breasts, grapes of my vine, moved on.

Skilled in more spells than evil angels muster
To break the solace which possessed my heart,
Smashing the crystal rock upon whose luster
My quietude sat on its own, apart,

Her waist, awrithe, her belly enormously
Out-thrust, formed strange designs unknown to us,
As if the haunches of Antiope
Flowed from a body not yet Ephebus.

Slowly the lamplight sank, resigned to die.
Firelight pierced darkness, stud on glowing stud,
Each time it heaved a sharply flaming sigh
It steeped her amber flesh in pools of blood.

— Translated by Jacques LeClercq

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 luster 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 tamed 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,
Swanned themselves, undulating in their sheen;
Her breasts and belly, of my vine and 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.

Translated by Anonymous

Charles Baudelaire

Les Chats (Cats)

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'Erèbe 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.

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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 hearses, 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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Cats

No one but indefatigable lovers and old
Chilly philosophers can understand the true
Charm of these animals serene and potent, who
Likewise are sedentary and suffer from the cold.

They are the friends of learning and of sexual bliss;
Silence they love, and darkness, where temptation breeds.
Erebus would have made them his funereal steeds,
Save that their proud free nature would not stoop to this.

Like those great sphinxes lounging through eternity
In noble attitudes upon the desert sand,
They gaze incuriously at nothing, calm and wise.

Their fecund loins give forth electric flashes, and

Thousands of golden particles drift ceaselessly,
Like galaxies of stars, in their mysterious eyes.

— Translated by George Dillon

Cats

Fevered lovers and austere thinkers
Love equally, in their ripe season
Cats powerful and gentle, pride of the house
Like them they feel the cold, like them are sedentary

Friends of science and sensuality
They seek the silence and the horror of the shadows
Erebus had taken them for its funeral coursers
Could they to servitude incline their pride.

Dreaming, they take on noble postures
Great sphinxes stretched out in the depths of emptiness
Seeming to fall asleep into an endless dream.

Their fertile loins are full of magic sparks
And nuggets of gold like fine sand
Vaguely bestar their mystic pupils.

Translated by Anonymous

Charles Baudelaire

Les Phares (The Beacons)

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'agite 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!

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

The Beacons

Rubens, the grove of ease, 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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Les Phares

Rubens, great river of oblivion,
garden of ease, cool flesh no lovers crave,
but where the floods of life unceasing run,
like wind on wind or wave on ocean wave;

Da Vinci — deep and sombre looking-glass
enchancing angels haunt, with subtle smile
all mystery-charged, while shadows dark amass
and pines and ice-cliffs bound their prison-isle;

Rembrandt — a piteous murmuring hospital
where ordure streams in tears and orisons,
stripped to the crucifix on one bare wall
illumed by one chill dart from wintry suns;

vast desert void, — o Michael Angelo!
— where Titans mix with Christs, and twilight clouds
where mighty spectres rise up stark and slow
— whose opening fingers rend their mouldered shrouds;

the rage of boxers and the satyrs' lust
— thou who hast found a grace in toiling knaves,
great heart, in a poor bilious body thrust
— Puget, the gloomy king of galley-slaves;

Watteau — bright carnival, where courtly pairs,
like butterflies in satin, flit about;
flaming in misty groves 'neath resin-flares
which pour their madness on the whirling rout;

Goya, who in a nightmare-horde unfurls
hags boiling foetuses in witches' milk,
beldames before the glass and naked girls
for demon-lovers tightening hose of silk;

and Delacroix — dark lake of blood forlorn
'mid fadeless firs, where evil angels fare,
a sullen sky wherefrom a faery horn
floats, faint as Oberon's horn through muffling air;

these curses, blasphemies and these laments,
these ecstasies, cries, tears, hossanas from
a thousand caverns, form one echo, whence
— death-doomed, we draw a heavenly opium!

theirs is a blast a thousand sentinels
pass on with their trumpets in a thousand moods;
a torch upon a thousand citadels,
a hail from hunters lost in pathless woods!

for truly, 'tis the mightiest voice our souls
command, o Lord, to prove their worth to Thee:
this ardent sob which down the ages rolls
and dies against Thy verge, Eternity!

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

The Beacons

Reubens, river of forgetfulness, garden of sloth,
Pillow of wet flesh that one cannot love,
But where life throngs and seethes without cease
Like the air in the sky and the water in the sea.

Leonardo da Vinci, sinister mirror,
Where these charming angels with sweet smiles
Charged with mystery, appear in shadows
Of glaciers and pines that close off the country.

Rembrandt, sad hospital full of murmurs

Decorated only with a crucifix,
Where tearful prayers arise from filth
And a ray of winter light crosses brusquely.

Michelangelo, a wasteland where one sees Hercules
Mingling with Christ, and rising in a straight line
Powerful phantoms that in the twilight
Tear their shrouds with stretching fingers.

Rage of a boxer, impudence of a faun,
You who gather together the beauty of the boor,
Your big heart swelling with pride at man defective and yellow,
Puget, melancholy emperor of the poor.

Watteau, this carnival of illustrious hearts
Like butterflies, errant and flamboyant,
In the cool decor, with delicate lightning in the chandeliers
Crossing the madness of the twirling ball.

Goya, nightmare of unknown things,
Fetuses roasting on the spit,
Harridans in the mirror and naked children
Tempting demons by loosening their stockings.

Delacroix, haunted lake of blood and evil angels,
Shaded by evergreen forests of dark firs,
Where, under a grieving sky, strange fanfares
Pass, like a gasping breath of Weber.

These curses, these blasphemies, these moans,
These ecstasies, these tears, these cries of 'Te Deum'
Are an echo reiterated in a thousand mazes;
It is for mortal hearts a divine opium!

It is a cry repeated by a thousand sentinels,
An order returned by a thousand megaphones,
A beacon lighting a thousand citadels
A summons to hunters lost in the wide woods.

For truly, O Lord, what better testimony
Can we give to our dignity
Than this burning sob that rolls from age to age

And comes to die on the shore of Your eternity?

Translated by William A. Sigler

Charles Baudelaire

Lethe

Come to my heart, cruel, insensible one,
Adored tiger, monster with the indolent air;
I would for a long time plunge my trembling fingers
Into the heavy tresses of your hair;

And in your garments that exhale your perfume
I would bury my aching head,
And breathe, like a withered flower,
The sweet, stale reek of my love that is dead.

I want to sleep! sleep rather than live!
And in a slumber, dubious as the tomb's,
I would lavish my kisses without remorse
Upon the burnished copper of your limbs.

To swallow my abated sobs
Nothing equals your bed's abyss;
Forgetfulness dwells in your mouth,
And Lethe flows from your kiss.

My destiny, henceforth my pleasure,
I shall obey, predestined instrument,
Docile martyr, condemned innocent,
Whose fervour but augments his torment.

I shall suck, to drown my rancour,
Nepenthe, hemlock, an opiate,
At the charming tips of this pointed breast
That has never imprisoned a heart.

Charles Baudelaire

Letter To Sainte-Beuve

On the old oak benches, more shiny and polished
than links of a chain that were, each day, burnished
rubbed by our human flesh, we, still un-bearded,
trailed our ennui, hunched, round-shouldered,
under the four-square heaven of solitude,
where a child drinks study's tart ten-year brew.
It was in those days, outstanding and memorable,
when the teachers, forced to loosen our classical
fettters, yet all still hostile to your rhyming,
succumbed to the pressure of our mad duelling,
and allowed a triumphant, mutinous, pupil
to make Triboulet howl in Latin, at will.
Which of us in those days of pale adolescence
didn't share the weary torpor of confinement,
- eyes lost in the dreary blue of a summer sky
or the snowfall's whiteness, we were dazzled by,
ears pricked, eager, waiting – a pack of hounds
drinking some book's far echo, a riot's sound?
Most of all in summer, that melted the leads,
the walls, high, blackened, filled with dread,
with the scorching heat, or when autumn haze
lit the sky with its one monotonous blaze
and made the screeching falcons fall asleep,
white pigeons' terrors, in their slender keep:
the season of reverie when the Muse clings
through the endless day to some bell that rings:
when Melancholy at noon when all is drowsing
at the corridor's end, chin in hand, dragging –
eyes bluer and darker than Diderot's Nun,
that sad, obscene tale known to everyone,
– her feet weighed down by premature ennui,
her brow from night's moist languor un-free.
– and unhealthy evenings, then, feverish nights,
that make young girls love their bodies outright,
and, sterile pleasure, gaze in their mirrors to see
the ripening fruits of their own nubility: –
Italian evenings of thoughtless lethargy,
when knowledge of false delights is revealed
when sombre Venus, on her high black balcony,

out of cool censers, waves of musk sets free.
In this war of enervating circumstances,
matured by your sonnets, prepared by your stanzas,
one evening, having sensed the soul of your art,
I transported Amaury's story into my heart.
Every mystical void is but two steps away
from doubt. – The potion, drop by drop, day by day,
filtering through me, I ,drawn to the abyss since I
was fifteen, who swiftly deciphered René's sigh,
I parched by some strange thirst for the unknown,
within the smallest of arteries, made its home.
I absorbed it all, the perfumes, the miasmas,
the long-vanished memories' sweetest whispers,
the drawn-out tangle of phrases, their symbols,
the rosaries murmuring in mystical madrigals,
– a voluptuous book, if ever one was brewed.
Now, whether I'm deep in some leafy refuge,
or in the sun of a second hemispheres' days,
the eternal swell swaying the ocean waves,
the view of endless horizons always re-born,
draw my heart to the dream divine, once more,
be it in heavy languor of burning summer,
or shivering idleness of early December,
beneath tobacco-smoke clouds, hiding the ceiling,
through the book's subtle mystery, always leafing,
a book so dear to those numb souls whose destiny
has, one and all, stamped them, with that same malady,
in front of the mirror, I've perfected the cruelty
of the art that, at birth, some demon granted me,
– art of that pain that creates true voluptuousness, –
scratching the wound, to draw blood from my distress.
Poet, is it an insult, or a well-turned compliment?
For regarding you I'm like a lover, to all intent,
faced with a ghost whose gestures are caresses,
with hand, eye of unknown charms, who blesses,
in order to drain one's strength. – All loved beings
are cups of venom one drinks with eyes unseeing,
and the heart that's once transfixed, seduced by pain,
finds death, while still blessing the arrow, every day.

Charles Baudelaire

L'Héautontimorouménos (The Man Who Tortures Himself)

L'Héautontimorouménos
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 coeur qu'ils souleront
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 coeur le vampire,
— Un de ces grands abandonnés
Au rire éternel condamnés
Et qui ne peuvent plus sourire!

The Man Who Tortures Himself

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!

— Translated by William Aggeler

Heautontimoroumenos

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.

I 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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Heauton Timoroumenos

I mean to strike you without hate,
As butchers do; as Moses did
The rock. From under either lid
Your tears will flow to inundate

This huge Sahara which is I.
My heart, insensible with pain,
Caught in that flood will live again:
Will care whether it live or die —

Will strive as in the salty sea,
Drunken with brine and all but drowned,
Yet driven onward by the sound
Of your wild sobbing endlessly!

For look — I am at war, my dear,
With the whole universe. I know
There is no medicine for my woe.
Believe me, it is called Despair.

It runs in all my veins. I pray:
It cries in all my words. I am
The very glass where what I damn
Leers and admires itself all day.

I am the wound — I am the knife
The deep wound scabbards; the outdrawn
Rack, and the writhing thereupon;
The lifeless, and the taker of life.

I murder what I most adore,
Laughing: I am indeed of those
Condemned for ever without repose
To laugh — but who can smile no more.

— Translated by George Dillon

Heautontimoroumenos
The Man Who Tortures Himself

I shall cleave without scrape or shock,
And, like a butcher, without hate,
Like Moses, when he struck the rock.
From your eyes I shall generate

Waters of woe throughout the years
To quench my fierce Sahara fires,
Swollen with vast hope, my desires
Shall float upon your bitter tears
Like a proud vessel, sailing large;
And in my heart, drunk at the sound,
Your cherished sobbing shall resound
Like drums beating the long lost charge.

Am I not a discordant note
In the celestial symphony,
Thanks to voracious Irony
Who shakes and bites me at the throat?
She's in my voice, the scold; her black
Poison is all my blood, alas!
I am the direful looking glass
Which flashes her reflection back.
I am the wound, the knives that strike,
The blows that crush, the head that reels,
I am wrenched limbs and grinding wheels,
Victim and hangman, as you like!

Vampire of my own heart, meanwhile,
A derelict, I am of those
Doomed to eternal laughter's throes,
Yet powerless to frame a smile!

— Translated by Jacques LeClercq

L'Héautontimouroménos

I'll strike thee without enmity
nor wrath, like butchers at the block,
like Moses when he smote the rock!
I'll make those eyelids gush for me

with springs of suffering, whose flow
shall slake the desert of my thirst;
— a salt flood, where my lust accurst,
with Hope to plump her sail, shall go

as from the port a pitching barge,
and in my heart they satiate
thy sobs I love shall fulminate
loud as a drum that beats a charge!

for am I not a clashing chord
in all Thy heavenly symphony,
thanks to this vulture Irony
that shakes and bites me always, Lord?

she's in my voice, the screaming elf!
my poisoned blood came all from her!
I am the mirror sinister
in which the vixen sees herself!

I am the wound and I the knife!
I am the blow I give, and feel!
I am the broken limbs, the wheel,
the hangman and the strangled life!

I am my heart's own vampire, for
God has forsaken me, and men,
these lips can never smile again,
but laugh they must, and evermore!

— Lewis Piaget Shanks, *Flowers of Evil* (New York: Ives Washburn, 1931)

Charles Baudelaire

L'Homme Et La Mer (Man And The Sea)

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!

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!

— Translated by William Aggeler

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 tameless 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!

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Man and the Sea

Free man, you shall forever cherish the vast sea,
The sea, that image where you contemplate your soul
As everlastingly its mighty waves unroll.
Your mind a yawning gulf seasoned as bitterly.

You love to plunge into your image to the core,
Embracing it with eyes and arms; your very heart
Sometimes finds a distraction from its urgent smart

In the wild sea's untamable and plaintive roar.

Both of you live in darkness and in mystery:
Man, who has ever plumbed the far depths of your being?
O Sea, who knows your private hidden riches, seeing
How strange the secrets you preserve so jealously?

And yet for countless ages you have fought each other
With hands unsparing and with unforbearing breath,
Each an eternal foe to his relentless brother,
So avid are you both of slaughter and of death.

— Translated by Jacques LeClercq

L'Homme et le Mer

love Ocean always, Man: ye both are free!
the Sea, thy mirror: thou canst find thy soul
in the unfurling billows' surging roll,
they mind's abyss is bitter as the sea.

thou doest rejoice thy mirrored face to pierce,
plunging, and clasp with eyes and arms; thy heart
at its own mutter oft forgets to start,
lulled by that plaint indomitably fierce.

discreet ye both are; both are taciturn:
Man, none has measured all thy dark abyss,
none, Sea, knows where thy hoarded treasure is,
so jealously your secrets ye inurn!

and yet for countless ages, trucelessly,
— o ruthless warriors! — ye have fought and striven:
brothers by lust for death and carnage driven,
twin wrestlers, gripped for all eternity!

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

L'Horloge (The Clock)

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 fuira 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!»

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!

— Translated by William Aggeler

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 I 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!'

— Translated by Roy Campbell

The Clock

Terrible Clock! God without mercy; mighty Power!
Saying all day, 'Remember! Remember and beware:
There is no arrow of pain but in a tiny hour
Will make thy heart its target, and stick and vibrate there.

'Toward the horizon all too soon and out of sight
Vaporous Pleasure, like a sylphide, floats away;
Each instant swallows up one crumb of that delight
Accorded to each man for all his mortal day.'

The Second says, three thousand six hundred times an hour,
'Remember! Look, the wingèd insect Now doth sit
Upon thy vein, and shrilleth, 'I am Nevermore,
And I have sucked thy blood; I am flying away with it!'

'Remember! Souviens-toi! Esto memor! — no tongue
My metal larynx does not speak — O frivolous man,
These minutes, rich in gold, slide past; thou art not young;
Remember! and wash well the gravel in the pan!

'Remember! Time, the player that need not cheat to win,

Makes a strong adversary. Is thy game begun?
Thy game is lost! Day wanes; night waxes. Look within
The gulf, — it still is thirsty. The sands are all but run.

'Soon, soon, the hour will strike, when Hazard, he that showed
A god-like face, when Virtue — thy bride, but still intact —
When even Repentance (oh, last inn along the road!)
Will say to thee, 'Die, coward. It is too late to act.'

— Translated by Edna St. Vincent Millay

Charles Baudelaire

L'Idéal (The Ideal)

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 coeur 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 coeur 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!

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!

— Translated by William Aggeler

The Ideal

It's not with smirking beauties of vignettes,
The shopsoiled products of a worthless age,
With buskined 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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

The Ideal

No beauties such as figure in vignettes,
Monsters of a vain era's lame design,
With feet for buskins, hands for castanets,
Can ever satisfy a heart like mine.
I leave to Gavarni's chlorotic Muse
These sickly prattling nymphs, however real;
Not one of these pale roses would I choose
To match the flowers of my red ideal.

What my heart, deep as an abyss, demands,
Lady Macbeth, is your brave bloody hands,
And, Aeschylus, your dreams of rage and fright,
Or you, vast Night, daughter of Angelo's,
Who peacefully twist into a strange pose
Charms fashioned for a Titan's mouth to bite.

— Translated by Jacques LeClercq

L'Idéal

'twill be no lovely girls of our vignettes
— spoiled fruits our worthless epoch deems divine —
slim slippered feet, hands made for castagnettes,
that shall content this questing heart of mine.

I leave to great Gavarni, bard of blight,
his prattling beauties with their frail appeal.
I cannot find among his roses white
the flaming flower of my red ideal.

I crave, to fill my heart's abyss of death,
thy passion, fair and merciless Macbeth,
whom Aeschylus might not have dreamed in boreal snows;

or thine, great Night, in Bunarroti's South,
tranquilly turning in a monstrous pose
thy bosom fashioned by a Titan's mouth!

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

Charles Baudelaire

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.

Charles Baudelaire

L'Irrémédiable (The Irremediable)

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 futiles
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!

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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 eddyng 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!

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Charles Baudelaire

Lover's Wine

Today Space is fine!
Like a horse mount this wine,
without bridle, spurs, bit,
for a heaven divine!
We, two angels they torture
with merciless fever,
will this mirage pursue
in the day's crystal blue!
Sweetly balanced, fly higher
through the whirlwind's wise air
in our mirrored desire,
my sister, swim there
without rest or respite
to my dream paradise!

Charles Baudelaire

Mist And Rain

Late autumns, winters, spring-times steeped in mud,
anaesthetizing seasons! You I praise, and love
for so enveloping my heart and brain
in vaporous shrouds, in sepulchres of rain.

In this vast landscape where chill south winds play,
where long nights hoarsen the shrill weather-vane,
it opens wide its raven's wings, my soul,
freer than in times of mild renewal.

Nothing's sweeter to my heart, full of sorrows,
on which the hoar-frost fell in some past time,
O pallid seasons, queens of our clime,
than the changeless look of your pale shadows,
- except, two by two, to lay our grief to rest
in some moonless night, on a perilous bed.

Charles Baudelaire

Moesta Et Errabunda (Grieving And Wandering)

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?

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?

— Translated by William Aggeler

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 remorse, 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?

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Moesta Et Errabunda

Agatha, tell me, thy heart — does it sometimes fly away,
Far from the vast dark ocean of the mournful town,
Toward one still vaster, mirroring the blue, blue day,

Mindless and deep: a flood wherein all sorrows drown?
Agatha, tell me, thy heart — does it sometimes fly away?

The sea, the enormous sea has rest for our desires:
By what demoniac irony can that fierce thing,
That raucous howler to the winds' untuneful choirs,
Assuage our deepest woe with its wild clarnouring?
The sea, the enormous sea has rest for our desires.

Carry me off, loud trains! Abstract me, silent ships,
Far, far! Here even the earth is miry with our tears!
Is it not true that sometimes Agatha's sweet lips
Murmur: 'Far from regrets, from griefs, from cruel fears,
Carry me off, loud trains! Abstract me, silent ships!'

How far, how far away, that paradise above,
Where all our ills supposedly are put to rest,
Where everything we love is worthy of our love,
And the unburdened heart lies weightless in the breast□
How far, how far away, that paradise above!

But the green, earthly paradise of childhood, even,
The songs, the furtive kisses, the dances, the bouquets,
The picnics on the hillside — that unpretentious heaven
Of summer twilights where a distant music plays:
But the green, earthly paradise of childhood, even,

Where all our cares are mended in small secret joys —
Is it already farther than Shanghai or Ceylon?
Or has the heart some kingdom no suffering destroys,
Where those young voices laugh, where those old tunes play on
Where all our cares are mended in small secret joys?

— Translated by George Dillon

Moesta et errabunda

say, Agatha, dost thou in dreams delight
— far, far from Paris, black and miry sea —
to rove where other oceans burst in light,
blue, deep, and crystal-clear as chastity?

say, Agatha, dost thou in dreams delight?

the vast, vast ocean is our comforter!
what demon gave the hoarse resounding sea
— and the gruff winds' great organ made for her —
that siren voice to soothe our misery?
the vast, vast ocean is our comforter!

bear me away, swift car and frigate smart!
afar! — afar! this mire is made of tears!
— Agatha, truly does thy mournful heart
cry out: afar from sin, remorse and fears,
bear me away, swift car and frigate smart!

how far from us that fragrant Eden lies,
where all is azure clear and love and joy,
where all we loved was worthy in love's eyes,
where hearts were drowned in bliss without alloy!
how far from us that fragrant Eden lies!

but the green Eden of our earliest loves
— songs, roses, races, with a kiss to win,
the jugs of wine at dusk in shadowy groves
where died, afar, a quivering violin,
— but the green Eden of our earliest loves,

our Eden of pure tremulous joy and bliss
— is it now farther than the Asian shore?
can tears or cries recall each magic kiss,
or prayers or silvery words some eve restore
our Eden of pure tremulous joy and bliss?

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

Charles Baudelaire

Morning Twilight

Reveille was sounding on barrack-squares,
and the wind of dawn blew on lighted stairs.
It was the hour when a swarm of evil visions
torments swarthy adolescents, when pillows hum:
when, a bloodshot eye, throbbing and quivering,
the lamp makes a reddened stain on the morning:
when the soul, by dull sour body, bowed down,
enacts the struggle between lamp and dawn.
Like a tearful face that the breeze wipes dry,
the air's filled with the frisson of things that fly,
and man is tired of writing, woman with loving.
The chimneys, here and there, began smoking.
The women of pleasure, with their bleary eyes,
and gaping mouths, were sleeping stupefied:
poor old women, with chilled and meagre breasts,
blew the embers, then fingers, roused from rest.
It was the hour, when frozen, with money scarcer,
the pains of women in childbirth grew fiercer:
and like a sob cut short by a surge of blood
a cock-crow far away broke through the fog:
a sea of mist bathed the buildings, dying men,
in the depths of the workhouse, groaned again
emitting their death-rattles in ragged breaths.
Debauchees, tired by their efforts, headed for rest.
Shivering dawn in a robe of pink and green
made her way slowly along the deserted Seine,
and sombre Paris, eyes rubbed and watering,
groped for its tools, an old man, labouring.

Charles Baudelaire

Music

Music, like an ocean, often carries me away!
Through the ether far,
or under a canopy of mist, I set sail
for my pale star.
Breasting the waves, my lungs swollen
like a ship's canvas,
night veils from me the long rollers,
I ride their backs:
I sense all a suffering vessel's passions
vibrating within me:
while fair winds or the storm's convulsions
on the immense deep
cradle me. Or else flat calm, vast mirror there
of my despair!

Charles Baudelaire

My Earlier Life

I've been home a long time among the vast porticos,
Which the mariner sun has tinged with a million fires,
Whose grandest pillars, upright, majestic and cold
Render them the same, this evening, as caves with basalt spires.

The swells' overwhelming accords of rich music,
Heaving images of heaven to the skies,
Mingle in a way solemn and mystic
With the colors of the horizon reflected by my eyes.

It was here I was true to the voluptuous calm,
The milieu of azure, the waves, the splendors,
And the nude slaves, all impregnated with odors,

Who refreshed my brow with waving palms
My only care to bring to meaning from anguish
The sad secret in which I languish.

Translated by William A. Sigler

Submitted by Ryan McGuire

Charles Baudelaire

N'Est Ce Pas Qu'Il Est Doux-In (Is It Not Pleasant)

Is it not pleasant, now we are tired,
and tarnished, like other men, to search for those fires
in the furthest East, where, again, we might see
morning's new dawn, and, in mad history,
hear the echoes, that vanish behind us, the sighs
of the young loves, God gives, at the start of our lives?

Charles Baudelaire

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 énorme 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.

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.

— Translation by Roy Campbell

Charles Baudelaire

On Tasso In Prison (Eugène Delacroix's Painting)

The poet in his cell, unkempt and sick,
who crushes underfoot a manuscript,
measures, with a gaze that horror has inflamed,
the stair of madness where his soul was maimed.
The intoxicating laughter that fills his prison
with the absurd and the strange, swamps his reason.
Doubt surrounds him, and ridiculous fear,
hideous and multiform, circles near.
That genius pent up in a foul sty,
those spectres, those grimaces, the cries,
whirling, in a swarm, about his hair,
that dreamer, whom his lodging's terrors bare,
such are your emblems, Soul, singer of songs obscure,
whom Reality suffocates behind four walls!

Charles Baudelaire

One O'Clock In The Morning

At last! I am alone! Nothing can be heard but the rumbling of a few belated and weary cabs. For a few hours at least silence will be ours, if not sleep. At last! The tyranny of the human face has disappeared, and now there will be no one but myself to make me suffer.

At last! I am allowed to relax in a bath of darkness! First a double turn of the key in the lock. This turn of the key will, it seems to me, increase my solitude and strengthen the barricades that, for the moment, separate me from the world.

Horrible life! Horrible city! Let us glance back over the events of the day: saw several writers, one of them asking me if you could go to Russia by land (he thought Russia was an island, I suppose); disagreed liberally with the editor of a review who to all my objections kept saying: "Here we are on the side of respectability," implying that all the other periodicals were run by rascals; bowed to twenty or more persons of whom fifteen were unknown to me; distributed hand shakes in about the same proportion without having first taken the precaution of buying gloves; to kill time during a shower, dropped in on a dance who asked me to design her a costume of Venustre; went to pay court to a theatrical director who in dismissing me said; "Perhaps you would do well to see Z....; he is the dullest, stupidest and most celebrated of our authors; with him you might get somewhere. Consult him and then we'll see": boasted (why?) of several ugly things I never did, and cravenly denied some other misdeeds that I had accomplished with the greatest delight; offense of fanfaronnade, crime against human dignity; refused a slight favor to a friend and gave a written recommendation to a perfect rogue; Lord! let's hope that's all!

Dissatisfied with everything, dissatisfied with myself, I long to redeem myself and to restore my pride in the silence and solitude of the night. Souls of those whom I have loved, souls of those whom I have sung, strengthen me, sustain me, keep me from the vanities of the world and its contaminating fumes; and You, dear God! grant me grace to produce a few beautiful verses to prove to myself that I am not the lowest of men, that I am not inferior to those whom I despise.

Charles Baudelaire

Overcast

Are they blue, gray or green? Mysterious eyes
(as if in fact you were looking through a mist)
in alternation tender, dreamy, grim
to match the shiftless pallor of the sky.

That's what you're like- these warm white afternoons
which make the ravished heart dissolve in tears,
the nerves, inexplicably overwrought,
outrage the dozing mind.

Not always, though-sometimes
you're like the horizon when the sun
ignites our cloudy autumn-how you glow!
A sodden countryside in sudden rout,
turned incandescent by a changing wind.

Dangerous woman-demoralizing days!
Will I adore your killing frost as much,
and in that implacable winter, when it comes,
discover pleasures sharper than iron and ice?

Charles Baudelaire

Parfum Exotique (Exotic Perfume)

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.

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Exotic Perfume

On autumn nights, eyes closed, when, sensuous,
I breathe the scent of your warm breasts, my sight
Is peopled by far shores, happy and bright,
Under a sun, warm and monotonous.
A lazy isle which nature, generous,
Stocks with weird trees and fruits of strange delight,
Men with lithe bodies, powerful but slight,
Women whose candid eyes flash luminous.

Urged by your scent to such charmed lands at last,
I see a port with many a sail and mast
Still weary from the ocean's frenzied roll,
While the green tamarinds exhale their savor
To please my nostrils with a dulcet flavor,

Mingled with sailor chanteys in my soul.

— Translation by Jacques LeClercq

Parfum exotique

when with closed eyes I drink the halcyon
warm autumn evening, on thy burning breast,
I see unfurl the atolls of the blest,
blazing in flame from an unchanging sun;

an isle of rest, where Nature's benison
breeds trees unique and fruits of savoury zest;
tall men who stride in vigour manifest;
women whose eyes of candour startle one.

I drift, thy fragrance bearing me afar,
into a port where every sail and spar
sway, wearied by the sea's beleaguering,

— where tamarinds bloom and draughts of perfume winging
through widening nostrils, blend in me to bring
the wind-blown chanteys mariners are singing.

— TRanslated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

The Exotic Perfume

When, with both eyes shut, on a close autumn evening,
I breathe the perfume of your heated breast,
I see happy shores unfold themselves
Dazzling in the flames of a monotonous sun;

A lay island where Nature bestows
Peculiar trees and savory fruit;
Men with bodies slim and virile,
Women with eyes of astonishing candor.

Led by your odor to climates of charm,
I see a harbor full of sails and masts
Still tired by the waves of the sea,

Whilst the perfume of green tamarind-trees
Circles the air and fills my nostrils,
Meets in my soul with the song of the seamen.

— Translated by Geoffrey Wagner

Charles Baudelaire

Parisian Dream

Á Constantine Guys

I

The vague and distant image
of this landscape, so terrifying,
on which no mortal's gazed
thrilled me again this morning.
Sleep is full of miracles!
By a singular caprice
from that unfolding spectacle
I'd banned all shapeless leaf,
a painter proud of my artistry
I savoured in my picture
the enchanting monotony
of metal, marble, water.
Babel of stairs and arcades,
it was an infinite palace
full of pools and cascades,
falling gold, burnt, or lustreless:
and heavy cataracts there
like curtains of crystal,
dazzling, hung in air
from walls of metal.
Not trees, but colonnades
circled the sleeping pools
where colossal naiads gazed
at themselves, as women do.
Between banks of rose and green,
the blue water stretched,
for millions of leagues
to the universe's edge:
there were un-heard of stones,
and magic waves: there were,
dazzled by everything shown,
enormous quivering mirrors!
Impassive and taciturn,
Ganges, in the firmament,
poured treasures from the urn
into abysses of diamond.
Architect of this spell,

I made a tame ocean swell
entirely at my will,
through a jewelled tunnel:
and all, seemed glossy, clear
iridescent: even the shades
of black, liquid glory there
in light's crystallised rays.
Not a single star, no trace
of a sun even, low in the sky,
to illuminate this wondrous place
that shone with intrinsic fire!
And over these shifting wonders
hovered (oh dreadful novelty!
All for the eye, none for the ear!)
the silence of eternity.

II

Opening eyes filled with flame
I saw the horrors of my hovel,
and felt the barbs of shameful
care, re-entering my soul:
brutally with gloomy blows
the clock struck mid-day,
and the sky poured shadows
on a world, benumbed and grey.

Charles Baudelaire

Que Diras-Tu Ce Soir, Pauvre Âme Solitaire (What Will You Say Tonight, Poor Solitary Soul)

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

— 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.»

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.'

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.'

— Translated by Roy Campbell

What Shall You Say Tonight?

What shall you say tonight, poor soul so full of care,
What shall you say, my heart, heart hitherto so sad,
To the most kind, to the most dear, to the most fair,
Whose pure serene regard has made you proud and glad?

— We shall set all our pride to sing her holy praise!
What sweetness to be hers! To live beneath her sight!
Half spirit is her flesh, angelic all her ways;
Her glance alone invests us in a robe of light!

Whether in solitude and deep obscurity,
Whether by day among the moving crowd it be,
Her phantom like a torch in air will dance and run;

It speaks: 'Beauty is mine; Authority is mine;
Love only, for my sake, the noble and the fine:
I am thine Angel, Muse, Madonna, all in one.'

— Translated by Edna St. Vincent Millay

Charles Baudelaire

Remords Posthume (Posthumous Remorse)

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 coeur 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.

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Posthumous Remorse

When, O sweet dusky beauty, you shall rest
Deep under a bleak marble monument,
When for last manor yours the tenement
Of rainswept vault or hollow ditch at best,
When the long stone weighs down your frightened breast
And flanks — so supple now and indolent —
Choking your heart's beat and your feet's intent
To race again on their adventurous quest,

The tomb, confidant of my endless dreams, shall keep
Vigil through those long nights that know not sleep,
(Poet and tomb were friends since Time began)
Saying: 'What use, imperfect courtesan,
Not to make known what dead men mourn perforce?'
While the worm gnaws you sharply as remorse.

— Translated by Jacques LeClercq

Remorse Too Late

My dark and lovely thing, when you at length lie dead,
And sleep beneath a slab of marble black as pitch;
And have, for perfumed alcove and seductive bed,
Only a rainy cavern and a hollow ditch;

When the oppressive stone upon your frightened breast
Lets settle all its weight, and on your supple thighs;
Restrains your heart from beating, flattens it to rest;
Bends down and binds your feet, so roving, so unwise;

The tomb, that knows me well and reads my dream aright,
(What poet but confides his secret to the tomb?)
Will say to you some day during that endless night,

'They fare but ill, vain courtesan, in this cold room,
Who bring here no warm memories of true love to keep!'
— And like remorse the worm will gnaw you in your sleep.

— Translated by Edna St. Vincent Millay

Remords posthume

when thou wilt sleep, dark girl of shadowy gaze,
down in the cold black marble of a tomb,
a dripping vault thine only tiring-room,
thine only bed a grave where all decays,

when rock shall press thy paling breast and graze
thy limbs now languorous-lovely in the gloom
— shall crush thy faltering heart, thy will consume
and halt thy feet in their adventurous ways,

the Grave, that knows what infinite dreams I keep,
(o Grave, the poet's friend forever, thou!)
all through the night bereft of exiled sleep,

shall ask: 'art sorry, wretched wanton, now,
not to have learned why dead men weep, perforce?'
— and worms shall gnaw thy breast like sharp remorse.

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

Charles Baudelaire

Réversibilité (Reversability)

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 avides!
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!

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!

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

The Angelic One

Spirit of happiness, hast thou heard tell of woe?
Hast thou heard tell of anguish, and remorse, and care —
Of those long nights when in the black fist of Despair
The heart is crumpled up like paper? Dost thou know,
Spirit of happiness? Hast thou heard tell of woe?

Spirit of kindness, hast thou heard tell of hate,
The clenched hands in the darkness, the silent bitter tears,
With Vengeance beating in the arteries of our ears
Its dogged tom-tom, irresistible as fate?
Spirit of kindness, hast thou heard tell of hate?

Spirit of health, hast thou heard whisper of Disease,
Whose pallid children, in the courtyard gray with soot
Of the bleak hospital, go dragging a slow foot
To find a patch of sunlight? Hast thou heard of these?
Spirit of health, hast thou heard whisper of Disease?

Spirit of beauty, hast thou heard of ugliness,
Of the long secret torment of growing old — above
All else, the pain of reading in the eyes we love

A wordless horror, even while the lips say 'yes?'
Spirit of beauty, hast thou heard of ugliness?

Spirit of joy, spirit of beauty, spirit of light,
David, grown old, would have thought nothing to implore
Thy healing touch, thy warm young presence in the night;
But, spirit, I only ask of thee thy prayers, no more —
Spirit of joy, spirit of beauty, spirit of light!

— Translated by George Dillon

Reversibility

Angel, teeming with gaiety, do you know grief,
Anguish, remorse and shame, their ravages and blights,
And the vague terrors of those panic-stricken nights
Which squeeze the heartstrings dry as a sere crumpled leaf?
Angel, teeming with gaiety, do you know grief?

Angel, teeming with kindness, do you know hate,
Fists tight-clenched in the shadows, scalding tears of gall,
When Vengeance roars with his infernal battle-call,
Making himself the captain of our acts and fate?
Angel, teeming with kindness, do you know hate?

Angel, teeming with healthfulness, do you know Fever
Who like an exile lopes with dragging step towards
The wan stark walls of hospitals and public wards,
Mumbling, seeking rare sunlight for a brace or lever?
Angel, teeming with healthfulness, do you know Fever?

Angel, teeming with loveliness, do you know wrinkles,
The fear of growing old, and, like a poisoned potion,
The dread of seeing love turn into fond devotion
In eyes adored, once blue and pure as periwinkles?
Angel, teeming with loveliness, do you know wrinkles?

Angel, teeming with happy, blithe, luminous airs,
David upon his deathbed would have craved for power
From the suave emanations of your body's flower,

But I, angel, beseech of you only your prayers,
Angel, teeming with happy, blithe, luminous airs!

— Translated by Jacques LeClercq

Charles Baudelaire

Sed Non Satiata (Unslakeable Lust)

Bizarre déité, brune comme les nuits,
Au parfum mélangé de musc et de havane,
Oeuvre de quelque obi, le Faust de la savane,
Sorcière au flanc d'ébène, enfant des noirs minuits,

Je préfère au constance, à l'opium, au 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!

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!

— Translated by William Aggeler

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 respire,
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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Sed Non Satiata

Dusky as tropic nights, O bizarre deity,
Redolent of havana, musk and cordovan,
What obeah man or Faust of the Caribbean,
Wrought you, child-witch of night, with flanks of ebony?
Better than opium or Constanta. Wine or Nuits,
Your nectar mouth where Love swoons in a slow pavane,
When my desires set forth, a serried caravan,
Your eyes are the twin wells where I can slake ennui.

From out these wide black eyes which are your spirit's vent,
Heap fires less fierce upon me. O impenitent,
I am no tireless Styx to gird you nine times nine,
I am no lustful Fury to exhaust your lust,
To break your vigor or to make you bite the dust
Or in your bed's hell turn into a Proserpine.

— Translated by Jacques LeClercq

Sed Non Satiata

Strange deity, brown as nights,
Whose perfume is mixed with musk and Havanah,
Magical creation, Faust of the savanna,
Sorceress with the ebony thighs, child of black midnights,

I prefer to African wines, to opium, to burgundy,
The elixir of your mouth where love parades itself;
When my desires leave in caravan for you,
Your eyes are the reservoir where my cares drink.

From those two great black eyes, chimneys of our spirit,
O pitiless demon, throw out less flame at me;
I am no Styx to clasp you nine times,

Nor can I, alas, dissolute shrew,
To break your courage, bring you to bay,
Become any Proserpine in the hell of your bed!

— Translated by Geoffrey Wagner

Charles Baudelaire

Semper Eadem (Ever The Same)

«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 coeur s'enivrer d'un mensonge,
Plonger dans vos beaux yeux comme dans un beau songe
Et sommeiller longtemps à l'ombre de vos cils!

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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!

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Semper Eadem

'What in the world,' you said, 'has brought on this black mood,
Climbing you as the sea climbs up a naked reef?'
— When once the heart has made its harvest (understood
By all men, this) why, just to be alive is grief:

A pain quite simple, nothing mysterious at all,
And like that joy of yours, patent to all we meet;
Stop asking questions, then, I beg of you, and fall
Silent a while, fair prober, though your voice be sweet.

Ah, yes, be silent, ignorant girl, always so gay,
Mouth with the childlike laughter! More than Life, I say,
Death has the power to hold us by most subtle ties.

My one fictitious comfort, kindly, let me keep:

To plunge as into dreams into your lovely eyes,
And in the shadow of your lashes fall asleep.

— Translated by Edna St. Vincent Millay

Semper eadam

you asked: 'what floods of gloom engulf you — strange
as creeping tides against a bare black wall?'
— when hearts once crush their grapes and close the grange,
life is an evil. secret known to all,

'tis but the common grief each man betrays
to all, as you your joy, in eyes or brow
so veil, my fair one, your inquiring gaze
and though your voice is low, be silent now!

be silent, simple soul! mouth always gay
with girlish laughter! more than Life, today,
Death binds our hearts with tenuous webs of doom;

let mine be drunken with the wine of lies,
o let me delve for dreams in those deep eyes
and slumber long beneath your eyebrows' gloom!

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

Charles Baudelaire

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.

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.

Translated by Roy Campbell

Charles Baudelaire

Sonnet Of Autumn

HEY say to me, thy clear and crystal eyes:
'Why dost thou love me so, strange lover mine?'
Be sweet, be still! My heart and soul despise
All save that antique brute-like faith of thine;

And will not bare the secret of their shame
To thee whose hand soothes me to slumbers long,
Nor their black legend write for thee in flame!
Passion I hate, a spirit does me wrong.

Let us love gently. Love, from his retreat,
Ambushed and shadowy, bends his fatal bow,
And I too well his ancient arrows know:

Crime, horror, folly. O pale marguerite,
Thou art as I, a bright sun fallen low,
O my so white, my so cold Marguerite.

Charles Baudelaire

Sorrows Of The Moon

Tonight the moon dreams in a deeper languidness,
And, like a beauty on her cushions, lies at rest;
While drifting off to sleep, a tentative caress
Seeks, with a gentle hand, the contour of her breast;

As on a crest above her silken avalanche,
Dying, she yields herself to an unending swoon,
And sees a pallid vision everywhere she'd glance,
In the azure sky where blossoms have been strewn.

When sometime, in her weariness, upon her sphere
She might permit herself to shed a furtive tear,
A poet of great piety, a foe of sleep,

Catches in the hollow of his hand that tear,
An opal fragment, iridescent as a star;
Within his heart, far from the sun, it's buried deep.

Charles Baudelaire

Spleen

I'm like the king of a rain-country, rich
but sterile, young but with an old wolf's itch,
one who escapes Fénelon's apologues,
and kills the day in boredom with his dogs;
nothing cheers him, darts, tennis, falconry,
his people dying by the balcony;
the bawdry of the pet hermaphrodite
no longer gets him through a single night;
his bed of fleur-de-lys becomes a tomb;
even the ladies of the court, for whom
all kings are beautiful, cannot put on
shameful enough dresses for this skeleton;
the scholar who makes his gold cannot invent
washes to cleanse the poisoned element;
even in baths of blood, Rome's legacy,
our tyrants' solace in senility,
we cannot warm up his shot corpse, whose food
is syrup-green Lethean ooze, not blood.

Charles Baudelaire

Spleen (I)

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.

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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 snuffle-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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Late January

Pluiose, hating all that lives, and loathing me,
Distills his cold and gloomy rain and slops it down
Upon the pallid lodgers in the cemetery
Next door, and on the people shopping in the town.

My cat, for sheer discomfort, waves a sparsely-furred
And shabby tail incessantly on the tiled floor;
And, wandering sadly in the rain-spout, can be heard
The voice of some dead poet who had these rooms before.

The log is wet, and smokes; its hissing high lament
Mounts to the bronchial clock on the cracked mantel there;
While (heaven knows whose they were — some dropsical old maid's)

In a soiled pack of cards that reeks of dirty scent,
The handsome jack of hearts and the worn queen of spades
Talk in suggestive tones of their old love-affair.

— Translated by Edna St. Vincent Millay

Spleen

November, vexed with all the capital,
whelms in a death-chill from her gloomy urn
the cold pale dead beneath the graveyard wall,
the death-doomed who in dripping houses yearn.

Grimalkin prowls, a gaunt and scurvy ghoul,
seeking a softer lair for her sojourn;
along the eaves an ancient poet's soul
shivers and wails, a ghost no eyes discern.

the whining church-bell and the log a-sputter
repeat the rheumy clock's falsetto mutter;
while in a pack of cards, scent-filled and vile,

grim relic of a dropsical old maid,
the queen of spades and knave of hearts parade
their dead amours, with many an evil smile.

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

Charles Baudelaire

Spleen (Ii)

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.

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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 remorse, 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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Spleen

Were I ten centuries old, could I remember more?

A weighty chest of drawers, crammed with a random store
Of poems, billets-doux, writs, songs, balance sheets,
And heavy skeins of hair rolled up in old receipts,
Hides fewer secrets, surely, than my sorry brain,
A pyramid and vault, whose corridors contain
More corpses than the potter's field, or late or soon.
A graveyard, I, abominated by the moon,
Where, like a viscous worm, remorse thrusts out his head
To strike forever at my most beloved dead.
I am an ancient boudoir filled with faded roses
In which a ruck of long-outmoded gowns reposes,
Where pastels all too sad and Bouchers all too pale
Alone breathe in the scents that uncorked flasks exhale.

Nothing can be so long as days, limping and drear,
Under the heavy flakes of year on snowy year,
When ennui, fruit of dismal incuriosity,
Assumes the fearful scope of immortality.
— Henceforth you are no more, O mind, O living matter!
Than a cold granite block which unknown terrors spatter,
Dozing deep in the wastes of a Saharan daze,
An ancient Sphinx unknown of our indifferent days,
Omitted from all maps, a lonely savage one

Who can sing only at the setting of the sun.

— Translated by Jacques LeClercq

The Sphinx

I swear to you that if I lived a thousand years
I could not be more crammed with dubious souvenirs.

There's no old chest of drawers bulging with deeds and bills,
Love-letters, locks of hair, novels, bad verses, wills,
That hides so many secrets as my wretched head; —
It's like a mausoleum, like a pyramid,
Holding more heaped unpleasant bones than Potter's Field;
I am a graveyard hated by the moon; revealed
Never by her blue light are those long worms that force
Into my dearest dead their blunt snouts of remorse.
— am an old boudoir, where roses dried and brown
Have given their dusty odor to the faded gown,
To the ridiculous hat, doubtless in other days
So fine, among the wan pastels and pale Bouchers.

Time has gone lame, and limps; and under a thick pall
Of snow the endless years efface and muffle all;
Till boredom, fruit of the mind's inert, incurious tree,
Assumes the shape and size of immortality.

Henceforth, O living matter, you are nothing more
Than the fixed heart of chaos, soft horror's granite core,
Than a forgotten Sphinx that in some desert stands,
Drowsing beneath the heat, half-hidden by the sands,
Unmarked on any map, — whose rude and sullen frown
Lights up a moment only when the sun goes down.

— Translated by Edna St. Vincent Millay

Spleen

I hold more memories than a thousand years.

a chest of drawers crammed full of souvenirs,
accounts and love-notes, warrants, verses — where
from bills of sale fall coiling locks of hair —
guards not more secrets than my heart of woe,
a burial-vault whose coffins lie arow,
a potters' field that death has filled too soon.
— I am a graveyard hated by the moon,
where creeping worms trail slowly as remorse,
fiercely destroyed each beloved corpse.

I am a room where faded roses lie
and gowns of perished fashions multiply,
with none but ladies in pastel to share
the musk from some old jar forgotten there.

no days so lame as all the days I know
while, crushed by years of ever-falling snow,
boredom, dull fruitage of my apathy,
waxes as vast as immortality.

henceforth, o living cells, ye sleep, a womb
faint shudders pierce, a cold grey cliff of doom
lost in a misty desert far away,
— a drowsy sphynx, forgot by all today,
uncharted avatar, whose tameless heart
sounds only when the day's last fires depart.

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

Charles Baudelaire

Spleen (Iii)

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

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Spleen

I'm like the king of a rain-country, rich
but sterile, young but with an old wolf's itch,
one who escapes his tutor's monologues,
and kills the day in boredom with his dogs;
nothing cheers him, darts, tennis, falconry,
his people dying by the balcony;
the bawdry of the pet hermaphrodite
no longer gets him through a single night;

his bed of fleur-de-lys becomes a tomb;
even the ladies of the court, for whom
all kings are beautiful, cannot put on
shameful enough dresses for this skeleton;
the scholar who makes his gold cannot invent
washes to cleanse the poisoned element;
even in baths of blood, Rome's legacy,
our tyrants' solace in senility,
he cannot warm up his shot corpse, whose food
is syrup-green Lethean ooze, not blood.

— Translated by Robert Lowell

The King of the Rainy Country

A rainy country this, that I am monarch of, —
A rich but powerless king, worn-out while yet a boy;
For whom in vain the falcon falls upon the dove;
Not even his starving people's groans can give him joy;
Scorning his tutors, loathing his spaniels, finding stale
His favorite jester's quips, yawning at the droll tale.
His bed, for all its fleurs de lis, looks like a tomb;
The ladies of the court, attending him, to whom
He, being a prince, is handsome, see him lying there
Cold as a corpse, and lift their shoulders in despair:
No garment they take off, no garter they leave on
Excites the gloomy eye of this young skeleton.
The royal alchemist, who makes him gold from lead,
The baser element from out the royal head
Cannot extract; nor can those Roman baths of blood,
For some so efficacious, cure the hebetude
Of him, along whose veins, where flows no blood at all,
For ever the slow waters of green Lethe crawl.

— Translated by Edna St. Vincent Millay

Spleen

I'm like a king of rainy lands and cold
— wealthy, but impotent: still young, but old —
who, scornful of his tutors' bows, prefers
his hounds and boredom to such grovellers.
nor stag nor falcon rouse his apathy,
nor starving subjects 'neath his balcony.
his favourite jester's wildest ballads now
no longer clear his cruel, sickened brow;
his royal bed's a coffin drowned in care,
and court-ladies, to whom all kings are fair,
— seeking a smile from that young skeleton —
no longer find one shameless robe to don.
nor can the sage who makes him gold succeed
in purging him of Death's corruptive seed,
nor in the baths of blood the Romans knew,
wherein the agèd rich their strength renew,
learn how to warm that cold numb corpse, through whose
dull veins, for blood, green Lethe's waters ooze.

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

Spleen

I am like the king of a rainy country,
Rich, and yet powerless, young and yet most old,
Who, distrustful of the bows his tutors make,
Sits bored among his dogs as with his other beasts.
Nothing can lift his spirits: neither hawk nor game;
The dying subjects gathered to his balcony;
The grotesque ballad of his best-loved fool
--No more distracts him in this sickness cruel.
His liliated bed is changed into a tomb;
The ladies of his court all lords might love,
And yet they can no longer find shameless attire
To draw a smile from their young, wasted sire.
The alchemist who made him gold could not
Purge from his soul this corrupt element,
And in a blood bath, as in ancient Rome,
Remembered by the mighty in their latter days,
Knew not to warm this dazzled corpse
Where flows not blood but Lethe's waters green.

Translated by Anonymous

Charles Baudelaire

Spleen (Iv)

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 hearses
Pass by slowly in my soul; Hope, vanquished,
Weeps, and atrocious, despotic Anguish
On my bowed skull plants her black flag.

— William Aggeler, *The Flowers of Evil* (Fresno, CA: Academy Library Guild, 1954)

Charles Baudelaire

The Albatross

Often to pass the time on board, the crew
will catch an albatross, one of those big birds
which nonchalantly chaperone a ship
across the bitter fathoms of the sea.

Tied to the deck, this sovereign of space,
as if embarrassed by its clumsiness,
pitiably lets its great white wings
drag at its sides like a pair of unshipped oars.

How weak and awkward, even comical
this traveller but lately so adroit -
one deckhand sticks a pipestem in its beak,
another mocks the cripple that once flew!

The Poet is like this monarch of the clouds
riding the storm above the marksman's range;
exiled on the ground, hooted and jeered,
he cannot walk because of his great wings.

Charles Baudelaire

The Bad Monk

On the great walls of ancient cloisters were nailed
Murals displaying Truth the saint,
Whose effect, reheating the pious entrails
Brought to an austere chill a warming paint.

In the times when Christ was seeded around,
More than one illustrious monk, today unknown
Took for a studio the funeral grounds
And glorified Death as the one way shown.

—My soul is a tomb, an empty confine
Since eternity I scour and I reside;
Nothing hangs on the walls of this hideous sty.

O lazy monk! When will I see
The living spectacle of my misery,
The work of my hands and the love of my eyes?

Translated by William A. Sigler

Submitted by Ryan McGuire

Charles Baudelaire

The Balcony

Mother of memories, mistress of mistresses,
O you, all my pleasures! O you, all my learning!
You will remember the joy of caresses,
the sweetness of home and the beauty of evening,
Mother of memories, mistress of mistresses!

On evenings lit by the glow of the ashes
and on the balcony, veiled, rose-coloured, misted,
how gentle your breast was, how good your heart to me!
We have said things meant for eternity,
on evenings lit by the glow of the ashes.

How lovely the light is on sultry evenings!
How deep the void grows! How powerful the heart is!
As I leaned towards you, queen of adored ones
I thought I breathed perfume from your blood's kiss.
How lovely the light is on sultry evenings!

The night it was thickening and closing around us,
and my eyes in the dark were divining your glance,
and I drank your nectar. Oh sweetness! Oh poison!
your feet held, here, in these fraternal hands.
The night it was thickening and closing around us.

I know how to summon up happiest moments,
and relive my past, there, curled, touching your knees.
What good to search for your languorous beauties
but in your dear body, and your heart so sweet?
I know how to summon up happiest moments!

Those vows, those perfumes, those infinite kisses,
will they be reborn, from gulfs beyond soundings,
as the suns that are young again climb in the sky,
after they've passed through the deepest of drownings?
-O vows! O perfumes! O infinite kisses

Charles Baudelaire

The Blessing

When, by a decree of the sovereign power,
The poet makes his appearance in a bored world,
With fists clenched at the horror, his outraged mother
Calls on a pitying God, at whom these curses are hurled:
"Why was I not made to litter a brood of vipers
Rather than conceive this human mockery?
My curses on that night whose ephemeral pleasures
Filled my womb with this avenging treachery!

Since I must be chosen among all women that are
To bear the lifetime's grudge of a sullen husband,
And since I cannot get rid of this caricature,
--Fling it away like old letters to be burned,

On what you have devised for my punishment
I will let all your hate of me rebound,
I will torture this stunted growth until its bent

Branches let fall every blighted bud to the ground!"
And so she prepares herself in
Hell's pit. A place on the pyre made for a mother's crimes,
Blind, in the fury of her foaming hatred,
To the meaning and purpose of the eternal designs.
Meanwhile, under the care of an unseen angel,
The disinherited Child revels in the sun's
Bright force; all that he eats and drinks can fill
Him with memories of the food that was heaven's.
The wind his plaything, any cloud a friend,
The Spirit watching can only weep to see
How in childhood his way of the cross is lightened

With the wild bird-song of his innocent gaiety.
Those he would love look at him with suspicion
Or else, emboldened by his calm, experiment
With various possible methods of exciting derision
By trying out their cruelty on his complaint.
They mix ashes or unspeakable filth with the bread
And the wine of his daily communion, drop
Whatever he may have touched with affected dread,

And studiously avoid wherever he may step.
His mistress, parading her contempt in the street,
Cries: "Since he finds my beauty a thing to worship,
I will be one of the ancient idols he talks about,
And make myself with gold out of the same workshop!
I will never have enough of his kneelings and offerings
Until I am sure that the choice foods, the wines,
The 'nard,' the 'incense,' the 'myrrh' that he brings
He brings as other men would to the Virgin's shrines.
And when I am sick to death of trying not to laugh
At the farce of my black masses,
I'll try the force Of the hand he calls 'frail,' my nails will dig a path
Like harpies', to the heart that beats for me, of course!
Like a nestling trembling and palpitating
I will pull that red heart out of his breast
And throw it down for my favorite dog's eating

--Let him do whatever he likes with the rest!"
A serene piety, lifting the poet's gaze,
Reveals heaven opening on a shining throne,
And the lower vision of the world's ravening rage
Is shut off by the sheet lightnings of his brain.
"Be blessed, oh my God, who givest suffering
As the only divine remedy for our folly,
As the highest and purest essence preparing

The strong in spirit for ecstasies most holy.
I know that among the uplifted legions
Of saints, a place awaits the
Poet's arrival, And that among the
Powers, Virtues, Dominations

He too is summoned to Heaven's festival.
I know that sorrow is the one human strength
On which neither earth nor hell can impose,
And that all the universe and all time's length

Must be wound into the mystic crown for my brows.
But all the treasury of buried Palmyra,
The earth's unknown metals, the sea's pearls,
Mounted by Thy hand, would be deemed an inferior

Glitter, to his diadem that shines without jewels.
For Thou knowest it will be made of purest light
Drawn from the holy hearth of every primal ray,
To which all human eyes, if they were one bright
Eye, are only a tarnished mirror's fading day!"

Charles Baudelaire

The Carcass

Remember that object we saw, dear soul,
In the sweetness of a summer morn:
At a bend of the path a loathsome carrion
On a bed with pebbles strewn,

With legs raised like a lustful woman,
Burning and sweating poisons,
It spread open, nonchalant and scornful,
Its belly, ripe with exhalations.

The sun shone onto the rotting heap,
As if to bring it to the boil,
And tender a hundredfold to vast Nature
All that together she had joined;

And the sky watched that superb carcass
Like a flower blossom out.
The stench was so strong that on the grass
You thought you would pass out.

Flies hummed upon the putrid belly,
Whence larvae in black battalions spread
And like a heavy liquid flowed
Along the tatters deliquescing.

All together it unfurled, and rose like a wave
And bubbling it sprang forth;
One might have believed that, with a faint breath filled,
The body, multiplying, lived.

And this world gave out a strange music
Like of running water and of wind,
Or of grain in a winnow
Rhythmically shaken and tossed.

Form was erased and all but a vision,
A sketch slow to take shape
On a forgotten canvas, which the artist finishes
From memory alone.

Behind the rocks a fretting bitch
Looked at us with fierce mien
Anxious to retrieve from the corpse
A morsel that she had dropped.

Yet to this rot you shall be like,
To this horrid corruption,
Star of my eyes, sun of desire,
You, my angel and my passion!

Yes, such you shall be, you, queen of all graces,
After the last sacraments,
When you go beneath the grass and waxy flowers,
To mold among the skeletons.

Then, oh my beauty! You must tell the vermin,
As it eats you up with kisses,
That I have preserved the form and essence divine
Of my decayed loves.

Charles Baudelaire

The Death Of Lovers

We will have beds filled with light scent, and
couches deep as a tomb,
and strange flowers in the room,
blooming for us under skies so pleasant.
Vying to exhaust their last fires
our hearts will be two vast flares,
reflecting their double glares
in our two spirits, twin mirrors.
One evening of mystic blue and rose
we'll exchange a single brief glow
like a long sob, heavy with goodbye,
and later, opening the doors, the angel who came
faithful and joyful, will revive
the lustreless mirrors, and the lifeless flame.

Charles Baudelaire

The Death Of The Poor

It is Death, alas, persuades us to keep on living:
the goal of life and the only hope we have,
like an elixir, rousing, intoxicating, giving
the strength to march on towards the grave:
through the frost and snow and storm-wind, look
it's the vibrant light on our black horizon:
the fabulous inn, written of in the book,
where one can eat, and sleep and sit oneself down:
it's an Angel, who holds in his magnetic beams,
sleep and the gift of ecstatic dreams,
who makes the bed where the poor and naked lie:
it's the glory of the Gods, the mystic granary,
it's the poor man's purse, his ancient country,
it's the doorway opening on an unknown sky!

Charles Baudelaire

The Digging Skeleton

I

In the anatomical plates
displayed on the dusty quays
where many a dry book sleeps
mummified, as in ancient days,
drawings to which the gravity
and skill of some past artist,
despite the gloomy subject
have communicated beauty,
you'll see, and it renders those
gruesome mysteries more complete,
flayed men, and skeletons posed,
farm-hands, digging the soil at their feet.

II

Peasants, dour and resigned,
convicts pressed from the grave,
what's the strange harvest, say,
for which you hack the ground,
bending your backbones there,
flexing each fleshless sinew,
what farmer's barn must you
labour to fill with such care?
Do you seek to show – by that pure,
and terrible, emblem of too hard
a fate! – that even in the bone-yard
the promised sleep's far from sure:
that even the Void's a traitor:
that even Death tells us lies,
that in some land new to our eyes,
we must, perhaps, alas, forever,
and ever, and ever, eternally,
wield there the heavy spade,
scrape the dull earth, its blade
beneath our naked, bleeding feet?

Charles Baudelaire

The End Of The Day

In all its raucous impudence
Life writhes, cavorts in pallid light,
With little cause or consequence;
And when, with darkling skies, the night

Casts over all its sensuous balm,
Quells hunger's pangs and, in like wise,
Quells shame beneath its pall of calm,
"Aha, at last!" the Poet sighs.

"My mind, my bones, yearn, clamoring
For sweet repose unburdening.
Heart full of dire, funeral thought,

I will lie out; your folds will cling
About me: veils of shadow wrought,
O darkness, cool and comforting!"

Charles Baudelaire

The Enemy

My youth was nothing but a black storm
Crossed now and then by brilliant suns.
The thunder and the rain so ravage the shores
Nothing's left of the fruit my garden held once.

I should employ the rake and the plow,
Having reached the autumn of ideas,
To restore this inundated ground
Where the deep grooves of water form tombs in the lees.

And who knows if the new flowers you dreamed
Will find in a soil stripped and cleaned
The mystic nourishment that fortifies?

—O Sorrow—O Sorrow—Time consumes Life,
And the obscure enemy that gnaws at my heart
Uses the blood that I lose to play my part.

Translated by William A. Sigler

Submitted by Ryan McGuire

Charles Baudelaire

The Eyes Of Beauty

YOU are a sky of autumn, pale and rose;
But all the sea of sadness in my blood
Surges, and ebbing, leaves my lips morose,
Salt with the memory of the bitter flood.

In vain your hand glides my faint bosom o'er,
That which you seek, beloved, is desecrate
By woman's tooth and talon; ah, no more
Seek in me for a heart which those dogs ate.

It is a ruin where the jackals rest,
And rend and tear and glut themselves and slay-
A perfume swims about your naked breast!

Beauty, hard scourge of spirits, have your way!
With flame-like eyes that at bright feasts have flared
Burn up these tatters that the beasts have spared!

Charles Baudelaire

The Fountain Of Blood

A fountain's pulsing sobs--like this my blood
Measures its flowing, so it sometimes seems.
I hear a gentle murmur as it streams;
Where the wound lies I've never understood.

Like water meadows, boulevards are flooded.
Cobblestones, crisscrossed by scarlet rills,
Are islands; creatures come and drink their fill.
Nothing in nature now remains unblooded.

I used to hope that wine could bring me ease,
Could lull asleep my deeply gnawing mind.
I was a fool: the senses clear with wine.

I looked to Love to cure my old disease.
Love led me to a thicket of IVs
Where bristling needles thirsted for each vein.

Charles Baudelaire

The Game

Old courtesans in washed-out armchairs,
pale, eyebrows blacked, eyes 'tender', 'fatal',
simpering still, and from their skinny ears
loosing their waterfalls of stone and metal:
Round the green baize, faces without lips,
lips without blood, jaws without the rest,
clawed fingers that the hellish fever grips,
fumbling an empty pocket, heaving breast:
below soiled ceilings, rows of pallid lights,
and huge candelabras shed their glimmer,
across the brooding brows of famous poets:
here it's their blood and sweat they squander:
this the dark tableau of nocturnal dream
my clairvoyant eye once watched unfold.
In an angle of that silent lair, I leaned
hard on my elbows, envious, mute, and cold,
yes, envying that crew's tenacious passion,
the graveyard gaiety of those old whores,
all bravely trafficking to my face, this one
her looks, that one his family honour,
heart scared of envying many a character
fervently rushing at the wide abyss,
drunk on their own blood, who'd still prefer
torment to death, and hell to nothingness!

Charles Baudelaire

The Inquisitive Man's Dream

Á Nadar

Do you know, as I do, delicious sadness
and make others say of you: 'Strange man!'
- I was dying. In my soul, singular illness,
desire and horror were mingled as one:
anguish and living hope, no factious bile.
The more the fatal sand ran out, the more
acute, delicious my torment: my heart entire
was tearing itself away from the world I saw.
I was like a child eager for the spectacle,
hating the curtain as one hates an obstacle...
at last the truth was chillingly revealed:
I'd died without surprise, dreadful morning
enveloped me. – Was this all there was to see?
The curtain had risen, and I was still waiting.

Charles Baudelaire

The Irreparable

Can we stifle the old, long-lived Remorse,
that lives, writhes, heaves,
feeds on us, like a worm on a corpse,
like oak-gall on the oak-trees?
Can we stifle the old, long-lived Remorse?
In what potion, in what wine, in what brew,
shall we drown this old enemy.
greedy, destructive as a prostitute,
ant-like always filled with tenacity?
In what potion? – In what wine? – In what brew?
Tell us, lovely witch, oh, tell us, if you know,
tell the spirit filled with anguish
as if dying crushed by the wounded, oh,
crumpled beneath the horses,
tell us, lovely witch, oh, tell us, if you know,
tell the one in agony the wolf's already scented
whom the raven now surveys,
tell the shattered soldier! Say, if he's intended
to despair of cross and grave:
poor soul in agony the wolf's already scented!
Can we illuminate a black and muddied sky?
can we pierce the shadowy evening,
denser than pitch, with neither day or night,
star-less, with no funereal lightning?
Can we illuminate a black and muddied sky?
The Hope that shone in the Tavern window
is quenched, is dead forever!
How to find without sunlight, without moon-glow,
for the foul road's martyrs, ah, shelter!
The Devil's quenched all in the Tavern window!
Adorable witch, do you love the damned?
Say, do you know the unforgivable?
Do you understand Remorse, its poisoned hand,
for which our heart serves as target?
Adorable witch, do you love the damned?
The Irreparable, with its accursed tooth bites
at our soul, this pitiful monument,
and often gnaws away like a termite,
below the foundations of the battlement.

The Irreparable, with its accursed tooth, bites!
- Sometimes on the boards of a cheap stage
lit up by the sonorous orchestra,
I've seen a fairy kindling miraculous day,
in the infernal sky above her:
sometimes on the boards of a cheap stage,
a being, who is nothing but light, gold, gauze,
flooring the enormous Satan:
but my heart, that no ecstasy ever saw,
is a stage where ever and again
one awaits in vain the Being with wings of gauze!

Charles Baudelaire

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 luster 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 tamed 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,
Swanned themselves, undulating in their sheen;
Her breasts and belly, of my vine and 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.

Charles Baudelaire

The Lid

Whatever place he goes, on land or sea,
under a sky on fire, or a polar sun,
servant of Jesus, follower of Cytherea,
shadowy beggar, or Croesus the glittering one,
city-dweller or rustic, traveller or sedentary,
whether his tiny brain works fast or slow,
everywhere man knows the terror of mystery,
and with a trembling eye looks high or low.
Above, the Sky! That burial vault that stifles,
a ceiling lit for a comic opera, blind walls,
where each actor treads a blood-drenched stage:
Freethinkers' fear, the hermit sets his hope on:
the Sky! The black lid of the giant cauldron,
under which we vast, invisible Beings rage.

Charles Baudelaire

The Litanies Of Satan

O you, the most knowing, and loveliest of Angels,
a god fate betrayed, deprived of praises,
O Satan, take pity on my long misery!
O, Prince of exile to whom wrong has been done,
who, vanquished, always recovers more strongly,
O Satan, take pity on my long misery!
You who know everything, king of the underworld,
the familiar healer of human distress,
O Satan, take pity on my long misery!
You who teach even lepers, accursed pariahs,
through love itself the taste for Paradise,
O Satan, take pity on my long misery!
O you who on Death, your ancient true lover,
engendered Hope – that lunatic charmer!
O Satan, take pity on my long misery!
You who grant the condemned that calm, proud look
that damns a whole people crowding the scaffold,
O Satan, take pity on my long misery!
You who know in what corners of envious countries
a jealous God hid those stones that are precious,
O Satan, take pity on my long misery!
You whose clear eye knows the deep caches
where, buried, the race of metals slumbers,
O Satan, take pity on my long misery!
You whose huge hands hide the precipice,
from the sleepwalker on the sky-scraper's cliff,
O Satan, take pity on my long misery!
You who make magically supple the bones
of the drunkard, out late, who's trampled by horses,
O Satan, take pity on my long misery!
You who taught us to mix saltpetre with sulphur
to console the frail human being who suffers,
O Satan, take pity on my long misery!
You who set your mark, o subtle accomplice,
on the forehead of Croesus, the vile and pitiless,
O Satan, take pity on my long misery!
You who set in the hearts and eyes of young girls
the cult of the wound, adoration of rags,
O Satan, take pity on my long misery!

The exile's staff, the light of invention,
confessor to those to be hanged, to conspirators,
O Satan, take pity on my long misery!
Father, adopting those whom God the Father
drove in dark anger from the earthly paradise,
O Satan, take pity on my long misery!

Charles Baudelaire

The living flame

THEY pass before me, these Eyes full of light,
Eyes made magnetic by some angel wise;
The holy brothers pass before my sight,
And cast their diamond fires in my dim eyes.

They keep me from all sin and error grave,
They set me in the path whence Beauty came;
They are my servants, and I am their slave,
And all my soul obeys the living flame.

Beautiful Eyes that gleam with mystic light
As candles lighted at full noon; the sun
Dims not your flame phantastical and bright.

You sing the dawn; they celebrate life done;
Marching you chaunt my soul's awakening hymn,
Stars that no sun has ever made grow dim!

Charles Baudelaire

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!

Charles Baudelaire

The Moon, Offended

Oh moon our fathers worshipped, their love discreet,
from the blue country's heights where the bright seraglio,
the stars in their sweet dress, go treading after you,
my ancient Cynthia, lamp of my retreat,
do you see the lovers, in their bed's happiness
showing in sleep their mouths' cool enamels,
the poet bruising his forehead on his troubles,
or the vipers coupling under the dry grasses?
Under your yellow cloak, with clandestine pacing,
do you pass as before, from twilight to morning,
to kiss Endymion's faded grace?
- 'I see your mother, Child of this impoverished century,
who, over her mirror, bends a time-worn face,
and powders the breast that fed you, skilfully.'

Charles Baudelaire

The Owls

Among the black yews, their shelter,
the owls are ranged in a row,
like alien deities, the glow,
of their red eyes pierces. They ponder.
They perch there without moving,
till that melancholy moment
when quenching the falling sun,
the shadows are growing.
Their stance teaches the wise
to fear, in this world of ours,
all tumult, and all movement:
Mankind drunk on brief shadows
always incurs a punishment
for his longing to stir, and go.

Charles Baudelaire

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 ennui 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!"

Charles Baudelaire

The Ransom

Man, with which to pay his ransom,
has two fields of deep rich earth,
which he must dig and bring to birth,
with the iron blade of reason.

To obtain the smallest rose,
to garner a few ears of wheat,
he must wet them without cease,
with briny tears from his grey brow.

One is Art: Love is the other.

- To render his propitiation,
on the day of conflagration,
when the last strict reckoning's here,
full of crops' and flowers' displays
he will have to show his barns,
with those colours and those forms
that gain the Angels' praise.

Charles Baudelaire

The Sadness Of The Moon

THE Moon more indolently dreams to-night
Than a fair woman on her couch at rest,
Caressing, with a hand distraught and light,
Before she sleeps, the contour of her breast.

Upon her silken avalanche of down,
Dying she breathes a long and swooning sigh;
And watches the white visions past her flown,
Which rise like blossoms to the azure sky.

And when, at times, wrapped in her languor deep,
Earthward she lets a furtive tear-drop flow,
Some pious poet, enemy of sleep,

Takes in his hollow hand the tear of snow
Whence gleams of iris and of opal start,
And hides it from the Sun, deep in his heart.

Charles Baudelaire

The Seven Old Men

À Victor Hugo

Ant-like city, city full of dreams,
where the passer-by, at dawn, meets the spectre!
Mysteries everywhere are the sap that streams
through the narrow veins of this great ogre.
One morning, when, on the dreary street,
the buildings all seemed heightened, cold
a swollen river's banks carved out to greet,
(their stage-set mirroring an actor's soul),
the dirty yellow fog that flooded space,
arguing with my already weary soul,
steeling my nerves like a hero, I paced
suburbs shaken by the carts' drum-roll.
Suddenly, an old man in rags, their yellow
mirroring the colour of the rain-filled sky,
whose looks alone prompted alms to flow,
except for the evil glittering of his eye,
appeared. You'd have thought his eyeballs
steeped in gall: his gaze intensified the cold,
and his long beard, as rigid as a sword,
was jutting out like Judas's of old.
He was not bent but broken, his spine
made a sharp right angle with his legs,
so that the stick, perfecting his line,
gave him the awkward shape and step
of three-legged usurer, or sick quadruped.
Wading through snow and mud he went
as if, under his feet, he crushed the dead,
hostile to the world, not just indifferent.
Then his double: beard, eyes, rags, stick, back,
no trait distinguished his centenarian twin:
they marched in step, two ghosts of the Baroque,
sprung from one hell, towards some unknown end.
Was I the butt of some infamous game,
some evil chance, aimed at humiliation?
Since minute by minute, I counted seven,
of that sinister old man's multiplication!
Whoever smiles at my anxiety,
and balks at shivering, the un-fraternal,

consider then, despite their senility,
those seven vile monsters looked eternal!
Could I have lived to see an eighth: yet one
more ironic, fatal, inexorable replication,
loathsome Phoenix, his own father and son?
- I turned my back on that hell-bent procession.
Exasperated, a drunk that sees things doubled,
I stumbled home, slammed the door, terrified,
sick, depressed, mind feverish and troubled,
wounded by mystery, the absurd, outside!
In vain my reason tried to take command,
its efforts useless in the tempest's roar,
my soul, a mastless barge, danced, and danced,
over some monstrous sea without a shore!

Charles Baudelaire

The Sick Muse

My impoverished muse, alas! What have you for me this morning?
Your empty eyes are stocked with nocturnal visions,
In your cheek's cold and taciturn reflection,
I see insanity and horror forming.
The green succubus and the red urchin,
Have they poured you fear and love from their urns?
The nightmare of a mutinous fist that despotically turns,
Does it drown you at the bottom of a loch beyond searching?

I wish that your breast exhaled the scent of sanity,
That your womb of thought was not a tomb more frequently
And that your Christian blood flowed around a buoy that was rhythmical,

Like the numberless sounds of antique syllables,
Where reigns in turn the father of songs,
Phoebus, and the great Pan, the harvest sovereign.

Translated by William A. Sigler

Submitted by Ryan McGuire

Charles Baudelaire

The sky

Where'er he be, on water or on land,
Under pale suns or climes that flames enfold;
One of Christ's own, or of Cythera's band,
Shadowy beggar or Cræsus rich with gold;

Citizen, peasant, student, tramp; whate'er
His little brain may be, alive or dead;
Man knows the fear of mystery everywhere,
And peeps, with trembling glances, overhead.

The heaven above? A strangling cavern wall;
The lighted ceiling of a music-hall
Where every actor treads a bloody soil-

The hermit's hope; the terror of the sot;
The sky: the black lid of the mighty pot
Where the vast human generations boil!

Charles Baudelaire

The Solitary's Wine

A flirtatious woman's singular gaze
as she slithers towards you, like the white rays
the vibrant moon throws on the trembling sea
where she wishes to bathe her casual beauty,
the last heap of chips in the gambler's grasp,
skinny Adeline's licentious kiss,
a fragment of music's unnerving caress,
resembling a distant human gasp,
none of these equal, O profound bottle,
the powerful balm of your fecund vessel,
kept for the pious poet's thirsting heart:
you pour out youth, and hope, and life,
and the deepest poverty's treasure – pride,
filling us with triumph, and the Gods' divine art!

Charles Baudelaire

The Soul Of Wine

One eve in the bottle sang the soul of wine:
'Man, unto thee, dear disinherited,
I sing a song of love and light divine-
Prisoned in glass beneath my seals of red.

'I know thou labourest on the hill of fire,
In sweat and pain beneath a flaming sun,
To give the life and soul my vines desire,
And I am grateful for thy labours done.

'For I find joys unnumbered when I lave
The throat of man by travail long outworn,
And his hot bosom is a sweeter grave
Of sounder sleep than my cold caves forlorn.

'Hearest thou not the echoing Sabbath sound?
The hope that whispers in my trembling breast?
Thy elbows on the table! gaze around;
Glorify me with joy and be at rest.

'To thy wife's eyes I'll bring their long-lost gleam,
I'll bring back to thy child his strength and light,
To him, life's fragile athlete I will seem
Rare oil that firms his muscles for the fight.

'I flow in man's heart as ambrosia flows;
The grain the eternal Sower casts in the sod-
From our first loves the first fair verse arose,
Flower-like aspiring to the heavens and God!'

Charles Baudelaire

The Sun

Through the streets where at windows of old houses
the persian blinds hide secret luxuries,
when the cruel sun strikes with redoubled fury
on the roofs and fields, the meadows and city,
I go alone in my crazy sword-play
scenting a chance rhyme on every road-way,
stumbling on words and over the pavement
finding verses I often dreamed might be sent.
This nurturing father, anaemia's foe
stirs, in the fields, the worm and the rose,
makes our cares evaporate into the blue,
fills the hives and our brains with honey-dew.
It is he who gives youth to the old man, the cripple,
makes them like young girls, happy and gentle,
and commands the crops to grow ripe in an hour
of the immortal heart, that so longs to flower.
When he shines on the town, a poet that sings,
he redeems the fate of the meanest things,
like a king he enters, no servants, alone,
all palaces, all hospitals where men moan.

Charles Baudelaire

The Sunset Of Romanticism

How beautiful a new sun is when it rises,
flashing out its greeting, like an explosion!
- Happy, whoever hails with sweet emotion
its descent, nobler than a dream, to our eyes!
I remember! I've seen all, flower, furrow, fountain,
swoon beneath its look, like a throbbing heart...
- Let's run quickly, it's late, towards the horizon,
to catch at least one slanting ray as it departs!
But I pursue the vanishing God in vain:
irresistible Night establishes its sway,
full of shudders, black, dismal, cold:
an odour of the tomb floats in the shadow,
at the swamp's edge, feet faltering I go,
bruising damp slugs, and unexpected toads.

Charles Baudelaire

The Vampire

You that, like a dagger's thrust,
Have entered my complaining heart,
You that, stronger than a host
Of demons, came, wild yet prepared;

Within my mind's humility
You made your bed and your domain;
- Infamous one who's bound to me
Like any felon by his chain,

Like a gambler by his games,
Like the bottle and the sot,
Like the worms in one's remains,
- Damm you! Damnation be your lot!

I've begged the merciful, swift sword
To overcome my liberty -
To poison I have said the word:
Save me from poltroonery.

Alas the sword! Alas the poison!
Contemptuous, they spoke to me:
"You never can deserve remission
Of your accursed slavery,

"Imbecile! - If our deadly empire
Freed you from your present fate,
Your kiss would soon resuscitate
The cold cadaver of your vampire!"

Charles Baudelaire

The Voice

I was the height of a folio, my bed just
backed on the bookcases' sombre Babel,
everything, Latin ashes, Greek dust
jumbled together: novel, science, fable.
Two voices spoke to me. One, firmly, slyly,
said: 'The Earth's a cake filled with sweetness:
I can give you (and your pleasure will be
endless!) an appetite of comparable vastness.'
The other said: 'Come! Come voyage in dream,
beyond the known, beyond the possible!'
And that one sang like the ocean breeze,
phantom, from who knows where, its wail
caressing the ear, and yet still frightening.
You I answered: 'Yes! Gentle voice!' My
wound and what, I'd call my fatality, begins
alas, from then. From behind the scenery
of vast existence, in voids without light,
I see the strangest worlds distinctly:
ecstatic victim of my second sight,
snakes follow me striking at my feet.
Since then, like the prophets, I greet
the desert and the sea with tenderness:
I laugh at funerals, I cry at feasts,
wine tastes smooth that's full of bitterness:
and, eyes on the sky, I fall into holes,
and frequently I take facts for lies.
But 'Keep your dreams!' the Voice consoles,
'Madmen have sweeter ones than the wise!'

Charles Baudelaire

The Void

Pascal had his Void that went with him day and night.

- Alas! It's all Abyss, - action, longing, dream,
the Word! And I feel Panic's storm-wind stream
through my hair, and make it stand upright.

Above, below, around, the desert, the deep,
the silence, the fearful compelling spaces...

With his knowing hand, in my dark, God traces
a multi-formed nightmare without release.

I fear sleep as one fears a deep hole,
full of vague terror. Where to, who knows?

I see only infinity at every window,
and my spirit haunted by vertigo's stress
envies the stillness of Nothingness.

- Ah! Never to escape from Being and Number!

Charles Baudelaire

The Voyage

À Maxime du Camp

I

For the child, in love with globe, and stamps,
the universe equals his vast appetite.
Ah! How great the world is in the light of the lamps!
In the eyes of memory, how small and slight!
One morning we set out, minds filled with fire,
travel, following the rhythm of the seas,
hearts swollen with resentment, and bitter desire,
soothing, in the finite waves, our infinities:
Some happy to leave a land of infamies,
some the horrors of childhood, others whose doom,
is to drown in a woman's eyes, their astrologies
the tyrannous Circe's dangerous perfumes.
In order not to become wild beasts, they stun
themselves, with space and light, and skies of fire:
The ice that stings them, and the scorching sun,
slowly erase the marks of their desire.
But the true voyagers are those who leave
only to move: hearts like balloons, as light,
they never swerve from their destinies,
and, without knowing why, say, always: 'Flight!'
Those whose desires take on cloud-likenesses,
who dream of vast sensualities, the same
way a conscript dreams of the guns, shifting vaguenesses,
that the human spirit cannot name.

II

We imitate, oh horror, tops and bowls,
in their leaps and bounds, and even in dreams, dumb
curiosity torments us, and we are rolled,
as if by a cruel Angel that whips the sun!
Strange fate, where the goal never stays the same,
and, belonging nowhere, perhaps it's no matter where
Man, whose hope never tires, as if insane,
rushes on, in search of rest, through the air.
Our soul, a three-master, heads for the isle, of Icarus.
A voice booms, from the bridge 'Skin your eyes!'
A voice, from aloft, eager and maddened, calls to us:
'Love... Fame... Happiness! Hell, it's a rock!' it cries.

On every island, that the lookouts sight,
destiny promises its Eldorado:
Imagination, conjuring an orgiastic rite,
finds only a barren reef in the afterglow.
O, the poor lover of chimeric sands!
Clap him in irons, toss him in the sea,
this drunken sailor, inventing New Found Lands,
whose mirage fills the abyss, with fresh misery?
Like an old tramp, trudging through the mire,
dreaming, head up, of dazzling paradise,
his gaze, bewitched, discovering Capua's fire,
wherever a candlelit hovel meets his eyes.

III

Astounding travellers! What histories
we read in your eyes, deeper than the ocean there!
Show us the treasures of your rich memories,
marvellous jewels made of stars and air.
We wish to voyage without steam or sails!
Project on our spirits, stretched out, like the sheets,
lightening the tedium of our prison tales,
your past, the horizon's furthest reach completes.
Tell us, what did you see?

IV

'We saw the sand,
and waves, we also saw the stars:
despite the shocks, disasters, the unplanned,
we were often just as bored as before.
The sunlight's glory on the violet shoals,
the cities' glory as the sunlight wanes,
kindled that restless longing in our souls,
to plunge into the sky's reflected flames.
The richest cities, the greatest scenes, we found
never contained the magnetic lures,
of those that chance fashioned, in the clouds.
Always desire rent us, on distant shores!
Enjoyment adds strength to our desire.
Desire, old tree, for whom, pleasure is the ground,
while your bark thickens, as you grow higher,
your branches long to touch the sky you sound!
Will you grow forever, mighty tree
more alive than cypress? Though, we have brought, with care,
a few specimens, for your album leaves,

brothers, who find beauty, in objects, from out there!
We have saluted gods of ivory,
thrones, jewelled with constellated gleams,
sculpted palaces, whose walls of faery,
to your bankers, would be ruinous dreams.
Clothes that, to your vision, bring drunkenness,
women with painted teeth and breasts,
juggling savants gliding snakes caress.'

V

And then, what then?

VI

'O, Childishness!

Not to forget the main thing, everywhere,
effortlessly, through this world, we've seen,
from top to bottom of the fatal stair,
the tedious spectacle of eternal sin.
Woman, vile slave, full of pride and foolishness,
adoring herself without laughing, loving without disgust:
Man, greedy tyrant, harsh, lewd, merciless,
slave of that slave, a sewer in the dust.

The torturer who plays; the martyr who sobs;
the feast, perfumed and moist, from the bloody drip;
the poison of power, corrupting the despot;
the crowd, in love with the stupefying whip:
Several religions just like our own,
all climbing heaven. Sanctity,
like an invalid, under the eiderdown,
finding in nails, and hair-shirts, ecstasy:
Drunk with its genius, chattering Humanity,
as mad today as ever, or even worse,
crying to God, in furious agony:

' O, my likeness, my master, take my curse!

And, the least stupid, harsh lovers of Delirium,
fleeing the great herd, guarded by Destiny,
taking refuge in the depths of opium!

- That is the news, from the whole world's country.'

VII

Bitter the knowledge we get from travelling!
Today, tomorrow, yesterday, the world shows what we see,
monotonous and mean, our image beckoning,
an oasis of horror, in a desert of ennui!
Shall we go, or stay? Stay, if you can stay:

Go, if you must. One runs, another crouches, to elude
Time, that vigilant, shadow enemy.
Alas! There are runners for whom nothing is any good,
like Apostles, or wandering Jews,
nothing, no vessel or railway car, they assume,
can flee this vile slave driver; others whose
minds can kill him, without leaving their room.
When, at last he places his foot on our spine, a
hope still stirs, and we can shout: 'Forward!'
Just as when we left for China,
the wind in our hair and our eyes fixed to starboard,
sailing over the Shadowy sea,
with a young traveller's joyous mind.
Do you hear those voices, sadly, seductively,
chanting: 'Over here, if you would find,
the perfumed Lotus! It's here we press
miraculous fruits on which your hopes depend:
Come and be drunk, on the strange sweetness,
of the afternoons, that never end.'
Behind a familiar tongue we see the spectre:
Our Pylades stretches his arms towards our face.
'To renew your heart, swim towards your Electra!'
she calls, whose knees we once embraced.

VIII

O Death, old captain, it is time! Weigh anchor.
This land wearies us, O Death! Take flight!
If the sky and sea are dark as ink's black rancour,
our hearts, as you must know, are filled with light!
Pour out your poison, and dissolve our fears!
Its fire so burns our minds, we yearn, it's true,
to plunge to the Void's depths, Heaven or Hell, who cares?
Into the Unknown's depths, to find the new.

Charles Baudelaire

The Warner

Every man worth the name
has a yellow snake in his soul,
seated as on a throne, saying
if he cries: 'I want to!': 'No!'
Lock eyes with the fixed gaze
of Nixies or Satyresses, says
the Tooth: 'Think of your duty!'
Make children, or plant trees,
polish verses, or marble frieze,
the Tooth says: 'Tonight, where will you be?'
Whatever he likes to consider
there's never a moment passing
a man can't hear the warning
of that insufferable Viper.

Charles Baudelaire

TO A BROWN BEGGAR-MAID

WHITE maiden with the russet hair,
Whose garments, through their holes, declare
That poverty is part of you,
And beauty too.

To me, a sorry bard and mean,
Your youthful beauty, frail and lean,
With summer freckles here and there,
Is sweet and fair.

Your sabots tread the roads of chance,
And not one queen of old romance
Carried her velvet shoes and lace
With half your grace.

In place of tatters far too short
Let the proud garments worn at Court
Fall down with rustling fold and pleat
About your feet;

In place of stockings, worn and old,
Let a keen dagger all of gold
Gleam in your garter for the eyes
Of rou?s wise;

Let ribbons carelessly untied
Reveal to us the radiant pride
Of your white bosom purer far
Than any star;

Let your white arms uncovered shine,
Polished and smooth and half divine;
And let your elfish fingers chase
With riotous grace

The purest pearls that softly glow,
The sweetest sonnets of Belleau,
Offered by gallants ere they fight
For your delight;

And many fawning rhymers who
Inscribe their first thin book to you
Will contemplate upon the stair
Your slipper fair;

And many a page who plays at cards,
And many lords and many bards,
Will watch your going forth, and burn
For your return;

And you will count before your glass
More kisses than the lily has;
And more than one Valois will sigh
When you pass by.

But meanwhile you are on the tramp,
Begging your living in the damp,
Wandering mean streets and alley's o'er,
From door to door;

And shilling bangles in a shop
Cause you with eager eyes to stop,
And I, alas, have not a sou
To give to you.

Then go, with no more ornament,
Pearl, diamond, or subtle scent,
Than your own fragile naked grace
And lovely face.

Charles Baudelaire

To A Woman Of Malabar

Your feet are as slender as hands, your hips, to me,
wide enough for the sweetest white girl's envy:
to the wise artist your body is sweet and dear,
and your great velvet eyes black without peer.
In the hot blue lands where God gave you your nature
your task is to light a pipe for your master,
to fill up the vessels with cool fragrance
and chase the mosquitoes away when they dance,
and when dawn sings in the plane-trees, afar,
fetch bananas and pineapples from the bazaar.
All day your bare feet go where they wish
as you hum old lost melodies under your breath,
and when evening's red cloak descends overhead
you lie down sweetly on a straw bed,
where humming birds fill your floating dreams,
as graceful and flowery as you it seems.
Happy child, why do you long to see France
our suffering, and over-crowded land,
and trusting your life to the sailors, your friends,
say a fond goodbye to your dear tamarinds?
Scantily dressed, in muslins, frail,
shivering under the snow and hail,
how you'd pine for your leisure, sweet and free,
body pinned in a corset's brutality,
if you'd to glean supper amongst our vile harms,
selling the scent of exotic charms,
sad pensive eyes searching our fog-bound sleaze,
for the lost ghosts of your coconut-trees!

Charles Baudelaire

To She Who Is Too Light-Hearted

Your head, your gesture, your air,
are lovely, like a lovely landscape:
laughter's alive, in your face,
a fresh breeze in a clear atmosphere.
The dour passer-by you brush past there,
is dazzled by health in flight,
flashing like a brilliant light
from your arms and shoulders.
The resounding colours
with which you sprinkle your dress,
inspire the spirits of poets
with thoughts of dancing flowers.
Those wild clothes are the emblem
of your brightly-hued mind:
madcap by whom I'm terrified,
I hate you, and love you, the same!
Sometimes in a lovely garden
where I trailed my listlessness,
I've felt the sunlight sear my breast
like some ironic weapon:
and Spring's green presence
brought such humiliation
I've levied retribution on
a flower, for Nature's insolence.
So through some night, when the hour
of sensual pleasure sounds,
I'd like to slink, mute coward, bound
for your body's treasure,
to bruise your sorry breast,
to punish your joyful flesh,
form in your startled side, a fresh
wound's yawning depth,
and – breath-taking rapture! –
through those lips, new and full
more vivid and more beautiful
infuse my venom, my sister!

Charles Baudelaire

To The Reader

Folly, depravity, greed, mortal sin
Invade our souls and rack our flesh; we feed
Our gentle guilt, gracious regrets, that breed
Like vermin glutting on foul beggars' skin.

Our sins are stubborn; our repentance, faint.
We take a handsome price for our confession,
Happy once more to wallow in transgression,
Thinking vile tears will cleanse us of all taint.

On evil's cushion poised, His Majesty,
Satan Thrice-Great, lulls our charmed soul, until
He turns to vapor what was once our will:
Rich ore, transmuted by his alchemy.

He holds the strings that move us, limb by limb!
We yield, enthralled, to things repugnant, base;
Each day, towards Hell, with slow, unhurried pace,
We sink, uncowed, through shadows, stinking, grim.

Like some lewd rake with his old worn-out whore,
Nibbling her suffering teats, we seize our sly
delight, that, like an orange—withered, dry—
We squeeze and press for juice that is no more.

Our brains teem with a race of Fiends, who frolic
thick as a million gut-worms; with each breath,
Our lungs drink deep, suck down a stream of Death—
Dim-lit—to low-moaned whimpers melancholic.

If poison, fire, blade, rape do not succeed
In sewing on that dull embroidery
Of our pathetic lives their artistry,
It's that our soul, alas, shrinks from the deed.

And yet, among the beasts and creatures all—
Panther, snake, scorpion, jackal, ape, hound, hawk—
Monsters that crawl, and shriek, and grunt, and squawk,
In our vice-filled menagerie's caterwaul,

One worse is there, fit to heap scorn upon—
More ugly, rank! Though noiseless, calm and still,
yet would he turn the earth to scraps and swill,
swallow it whole in one great, gaping yawn:

Ennui! That monster frail!—With eye wherein
A chance tear gleams, he dreams of gibbets, while
Smoking his hookah, with a dainty smile. . .
—You know him, reader,—hypocrite,—my twin!

Charles Baudelaire

Tout Entière (All Of Her)

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!»

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!

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.'

— Translated by Roy Campbell

All, All

The Devil up my attic stair
Came tiptoeing a while ago
And, trying to catch me unaware,
Said laughing, 'I should like to know,

'Of all her many charms, what springs
Most often to your mind? Of all
The rose-colored and shadowy things
Whereby her beauty may enthrall,

'Which is the sweetest?' — O my soul,
You answered the abhorrèd Guest:
'Her beauty is complete and whole.
No single part is loveliest.

'When she is near, I cannot say
What gives me such intense delight.
She dazzles like the break of day,
She comforts like the fall of night.

'My senses seem to merge in one;

The harmony that rules her being
Is all my knowledge — I have none
Of hearing, smelling, touching, seeing.

'No, no. I cannot make a choice
In this sublime bewilderment.
Perhaps the music of her scent!
Perhaps the perfume of her voice!'

— Translated by George Dillon

Tout entière

this morning, to my chamber bare
and high, the Devil came to call,
and fain to trap me in a snare,
inquired: 'I would know, of all

— of all the beauties that compose
her spell profound, her subtle sway,
— of all the bits of black or rose
that form her lovely body, say

which is the sweetest?' — o my soul,
thou didst reply to the Abhorred:
naught can be taken from the whole
for every part is a perfect chord.

when all to me is ravishing,
I know not which gives most delight.
like dawn she is a dazzling thing,
yet she consoles me like the night;

too exquisite the harmonies
that all her lovely flesh affords,
for my poor mind to analyse
and note its many rhythmic chords.

o mystic interchange, whereby
my senses all are blent in one!
her breath is like a lullaby

and through her voice rich perfumes run!

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

Charles Baudelaire

Travelling Bohemians

The prophetic tribe of the ardent eyes
Yesterday they took the road, holding their babies
On their backs, delivering to fierce appetites
The always ready treasure of pendulous breasts.

The men stick their feet out, waving their guns
Alongside the caravan where they tremble together,
Scanning the sky their eyes are weighted down
In mourning for absent chimeras.

At the bottom of his sandy retreat, a cricket
Watched passing, redoubles his song,
Cybele, who loves, adds more flower,

Makes fountains out of rock and blossoms from desert
Opening up before these travelers in a yawn—
A familiar empire, the inscrutable future.

Translated by William A. Sigler

Submitted by Ryan McGuire

Charles Baudelaire

Tristesses De La Lune (Sorrows Of The Moon)

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.

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

The Sadness of the Moon

Tonight the moon, by languorous memories obsessed,
Lies pensive and awake: a sleepless beauty amid
The tossed and multitudinous cushions of her bed,
Caressing with an abstracted hand the curve of her breast.

Surrendered to her deep sadness as to a lover, for hours
She lolls in the bright luxurious disarray of the sky —
Haggard, entranced — and watches the small clouds float by
Uncurling indolently in the blue air like flowers.

When now and then upon this planet she lets fall,
Out of her idleness and sorrow, a secret tear,
Some poet — an enemy of slumber, musing apart —

Catches in his cupped hands the unearthly tribute, all

Fiery and iridescent like an opal's sphere,
And hides it from the sun for ever in his heart.

— Translated by George Dillon

Tristesses de la lune

the moon tonight, more indolently dreaming,
as on a pillowed bed, a woman seems,
caressing with a hand distraught and gleaming,
her soft curved bosom, ere she sinks in dreams.

against a snowy satin avalanche
she lies entranced and drowned in swooning hours,
her gaze upon the visions born to blanch
those far blue depths with ever-blossoming flowers.

and when in some soft languorous interval,
earthward, she lets a stealthy tear-drop fall,
a poet, foe to slumber, toiling on,

with reverent hollow hand receives the pearl,
where shimmering opalescences unfurl,
and shields it in his heart, far from the sun.

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

Sorrows of the Moon

Tonight the moon dreams in a deeper languidness,
And, like a beauty on her cushions, lies at rest;
While drifting off to sleep, a tentative caress
Seeks, with a gentle hand, the contour of her breast;

As on a crest above her silken avalanche,
Dying, she yields herself to an unending swoon,
And sees a pallid vision everywhere she'd glance,
In the azure sky where blossoms have been strewn.

When sometime, in her weariness, upon her sphere

She might permit herself to shed a furtive tear,
A poet of great piety, a foe of sleep,

Catches in the hollow of his hand that tear,
An opal fragment, iridescent as a star;
Within his heart, far from the sun, it's buried deep.

Translated by Anonymous

Charles Baudelaire

Tu Mettrais L'Univers Entier Dans Ta Ruelle (You Would Take The Whole World To Bed With You)

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 coeur 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 cruautés 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'épouvante,
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!

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!

— Translated by William Aggeler

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!

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Tyranny of Woman

Aye, you would bed with the whole universe,
Lewd woman! Ennui makes your soul perverse;
Cruel, you whet your teeth at this weird play,
You need a fresh heart in the rack each day.

Your eyes blaze like illumined shops or lights
Of serried lamps on festive public nights,
They use a borrowed puissance haughtily
Unconscious of their beauty's tyranny.

Blind, deaf machine, geared to increase man's pain,
Tool primed to suckle blood from his last vein,
Have you no shame when every looking glass
Betrays your faded beauties as you pass,
When cunning Nature's hidden plans begin
To use you, beast! woman, vile queen of sin,
To fashion genius in carnality?

O shameless might! Sublime ignominy!

— Translated by Jacques LeClercq

You'd Take the Entire Universe to Bed with You

You'd take the entire universe to bed with you,
I think, just out of boredom, you lecherous, idle shrew!
You need, to keep your teeth sound, exercise your jaws,
Daily, for dinner, some new heart between your paws!
Your eyes, all lighted up like shops, like public fairs,
How insolent they are! — as if their power were theirs
Indeed! — this borrowed power, this Beauty, you direct
And use, whose law, however, you do not suspect.

Unwholesome instrument for health, O deaf machine
And blind, fecund in tortures! — how is it you have not seen,
You drinker of the world's blood, your mirrored loveliness
Blench and recoil? how is it you feel no shame? confess:
Has never, then, this evil's very magnitude
Caused you to stagger? — you, who think yourself so shrewd
In evil? — seeing how Nature, patient and abstruse —
O Woman, Queen of Sins, Vile Animal, — has made use
Of you, to mould a genius? — employed you all this time?

O muddy grandeur! — ignominy ironic and sublime!

— Translated by Edna St. Vincent Millay

Charles Baudelaire

Un Fantôme (A Phantom)

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
Condamne à peindre, hélas! sur les ténèbres;
Où, cuisinier aux appétits funèbres,
Je fais bouillir et je mange mon coeur,

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'enchanté
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!

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!

— Translated by William Aggeler

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 hems.

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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Portrait

Disease and Death make ashes out of all
The fires that flamed for us, out of the round
Wide eyes, so fervent and so kind withal,
Out of the mouth wherein my heart was drowned,
Out of our kisses, strong as pepperwort,
Out of throes bright as patterns sunbeams etch.
What is left now? What dreadful last resort,
O Soul? Only a faint three-colored sketch

Which is, like me, a lonely dying thing,
And which that oldster Time with scornful heart
Bruises each day beneath his jagged wing.
Slayer of Life and murderer of Art,
Mine, still, one treasure you shall not destroy:
She who was all my glory and my joy!

[The original publication only includes this last section of the poem].

— Translated by Jacques LeClercq

The Portrait

Disease and Death, these are the ashes of
All that was fire, and warmed us heretofore.
Of those big eyes, so full of faith and love,
That mouth which stopped my heart, that endless store

Of kisses strong as dittany — that whole
Transport, that passion hotter than the sun,

What now remains? A sorry thing, my soul!
A faded sketch, in three pale crayons done;

Which, like myself, in dusty solitude
Subsides, and which with his injurious wing
Time daily rubs against. O black and rude

Assassin of proud Life and powerful Art:
You cannot rob my memory of one thing, —
Her, that was all my triumph, all my heart.

[The original publication only includes this last section of the poem].

— Translated by Edna St. Vincent Millay

Un Fantôme

I Les Tenebres

down in the unplumbed crypt of blight
where Fate abandoned me to die,
where falls no cheering ray; where I,
sole lodger of the sulky Night,

like artists blind God sets apart
in mockery — I paint the murk;
where, like a ghoulish cook at work,
I boil and munch upon my heart,

momently gleams, and grows apace,
a phantom languorously bright,
and by its dreamy Orient grace,

when it attains its radiant height,
at last I know the lovely thing:
'tis She! girl black yet glimmering.

II Le Parfum

how long, in silken favours, last
their prisoned scents! how greedily
we breathe the incense-grain, a sea
of fragrance, in cathedrals vast!

o deep enchanting sorcery!
in present joys to find the past!
'tis thus on cherished flesh amassed
Love culls the flower of memory.

her thick curled hair, like bags of musk
or living censers, left the dusk
with strange wild odours all astir,

and, from her lace and velvet busk,
— candid and girlish, over her,
hovered a heavy scent of fur.

III Le Cadre

as framing to a portrait gives
— though from a famous brush it be —
a magic full of mystery
secluding it from all that lives,

so gems, divans, gold, steel became
her beauty's border and attire;
no pomp obscured its perfect fire,
all seemed to serve her as a frame.

one even might have said she found
all sought to love her, for she drowned
in kisses of her silks and laces,

her fair nude body, all a-quiver,
and swift or slow, each pose would give her
a host of girlish simian graces.

IV Le Portrait

Death and Disease to ashes turn
all flames that wrapped our youth around.
of her soft eyes, so quick to burn,
her mouth, wherein my heart was drowned.

of her wild kisses' tyrannies,
her passion's blaze implacable —
drear heart! what now is left of these?
only a faded old pastel

dying, like me, in loneliness,
duller each day in every part,
stripped by Time's pinion merciless...

black murderer of life and art,
never shalt thou destroy in me
her, once my pride and ecstasy!

— Translated by Lewis Piaget Shanks

A Ghost

I Perfume

Reader, have you ever breathed in
With intoxication and slow gluttony,
That grain of incense which fills a church,
Or that embedded musk of a scent-bag?

Deep, magical charm, the past recalled
By you now makes us drunk.
Thus a lover plucks from an adored body
The exquisite flower of memory.

From her buoyant, heavy hair,
A living sachet, censer of recesses,
There climbs a fragrance, savage, wild,

And from her muslin or velvet dresses,
Permeated with her pure youth,

Escapes a perfume of fur.

II The Frame

As a fine frame adds to its picture,
Though it may come from a well-known brush,
Thus jewels, furniture, metals or gilding
Adapted themselves quite to her unusual beauty;

it was some strange enchantment,
Parting her from enormous nature;
Nothing darkened her perfect pellucidity,
Everything seemed to serve her as frame.

At times one would even have said that she thought
That all things desired to love her; voluptuously
She drowned her nakedness

In kisses of satin and linen,
And, slow or sudden, in each movement
Showed the childlike grace of the monkey.

[The original publication only includes these two sections of the poem].

— Translated by Geoffrey Wagner

Charles Baudelaire

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 infame
Sur un lit semé de cailloux,

Charles Baudelaire

Une Gravure Fantastique (A Fantastic Engraving)

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.

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.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

Fantastic Print

This eerie specter wears no clothes at all.
A dreadful crown, reeking of carnival,
Sits weirdly on his naked skull. Without
Or spurs or whip, he wears his charger out
(A ghostly and apocalyptic nag,
Nose foaming like an epileptic hag).
The hideous pair plunge ruthlessly through space,
Trampling infinity at breakneck pace.

The horseman's flaming sword, as on they rush,
Fells victims that his steed has failed to crush,
And, like a prince inspecting his domain,
He scans the graveyard's limitless chill plain
Where, in a dull white sun's exhausted light,
Lies every race since man emerged from night.

— Translated by Jacques LeClercq

Charles Baudelaire

Une Nuit Que J'Étais Près D'Une Affreuse Juive (On Night I Lay With A Frightful Jewess)

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 baisé 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.

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!
Soften the brilliancy of your cold eyes.

— Translated by William Aggeler

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.

— Translated by Roy Campbell

A Bed of Shame

One night I lay, a hideous Jewess at my side,
We were stretched out, corpse to like corpse, on my cold bed,
And all my thoughts, leaving this foul bought body, sped
To that sad beauty whom my own desire denied.
I pictured all her native majesty, her pride,
Her glance in all its force and grace and subtlety,
Her hair, a perfumed casque, and the mere memory
Rekindled my love's thirst, ever unsatisfied.

I would have kissed your queenly body fervently,
Spreading the treasures of my rapturous caresses
Upward from your cool feet to your warm onyx tresses,
If some night with a tear bestowed effortlessly

You could, O queen of cruel women, that I prize,
Obscure the glacial splendor of your scornful eyes.

— Translated by Jacques LeClercq

Charles Baudelaire

Voyage To Cythera

Free as a bird and joyfully my heart
Soared up among the rigging, in and out;
Under a cloudless sky the ship rolled on
Like an angel drunk with brilliant sun.

"That dark, grim island there--which would that be?"
"Cythera," we're told, "the legendary isle
Old bachelors tell stories of and smile.
There's really not much to it, you can see."

O place of many a mystic sacrament!
Archaic Aphrodite's splendid shade
Lingers above your waters like a scent
Infusing spirits with an amorous mood.

Worshipped from of old by every nation,
Myrtle-green isle, where each new bud discloses
Sighs of souls in loving adoration
Breathing like incense from a bank of roses

Or like a dove roo-cooing endlessly . . .
No; Cythera was a poor infertile rock,
A stony desert harrowed by the shriek
Of gulls. And yet there was something to see:

This was no temple deep in flowers and trees
With a young priestess moving to and fro,
Her body heated by a secret glow,
Her robe half-opening to every breeze;

But coasting nearer, close enough to land
To scatter flocks of birds as we passed by,
We saw a tall cypress-shaped thing at hand--
A triple gibbet black against the sky.

Ferocious birds, each perched on its own meal,
Were madly tearing at the thing that hung
And ripened; each, its filthy beak a drill,
Made little bleeding holes to root among.

The eyes were hollowed. Heavy guts cascading
Flowed like water halfway down the thighs;
The torturers, though gorged on these vile joys,
Had also put their beaks to use castrating

The corpse. A pack of dogs beneath its feet,
Their muzzles lifted, whirled and snapped and gnawed;
One bigger beast amidst this jealous lot
Looked like an executioner with his guard.

O Cytherean, child of this fair clime,
Silently you suffered these attacks,
Paying the penalty for whatever acts
Of infamy had kept you from a tomb.

Grotesquely dangling, somehow you brought on--
Violent as vomit rising from the chest,
Strong as a river bilious to taste--
A flow of sufferings I'd thought long gone.

Confronted with such dear remembered freight,
Poor devil, now it was my turn to feel
A panther's slavering jaws, a beak's cruel drill--
Once it was my flesh they loved to eat.

The sky was lovely, and the sea divine,
but something thick and binding like a shroud
Wrapped my heart in layers of black and blood;
Henceforth this allegory would be mine.

O Venus! On your isle what did I see
But my own image on the gallows tree?
O God, give me the strength to contemplate
My own heart, my own body without hate!

Charles Baudelaire

Windows

Looking from outside into an open window one never sees as much as when one looks through a closed window. There is nothing more profound, more mysterious, more pregnant, more insidious, more dazzling than a window lighted by a single candle. What one can see out in the sunlight is always less interesting than what goes on behind a windowpane. In that black or luminous square life lives, life dreams, life suffers.

Across the ocean of roofs I can see a middle-aged woman, her face already lined, who is forever bending over something and who never goes out. Out of her face, her dress, and her gestures, out of practically nothing at all, I have made up this woman's story, or rather legend, and sometimes I tell it to myself and weep.

If it had been an old man I could have made up his just as well.

And I go to bed proud to have lived and to have suffered in some one besides myself.

Perhaps you will say "Are you sure that your story is the really one?" But what does it matter what reality is outside myself, so long as it has helped me to live, to feel that I am, and what I am?

Charles Baudelaire