

## EN 123: Modern World Literatures

# Term 1 handouts

- William Blake, “Auguries of Innocence”
- Percy Bysshe Shelley, “Ode to the West Wind” and “The Mask of Anarchy”
- Alexander Pushkin, “The Bronze Horseman”
- Charles Baudelaire, from “The Painter of Modern Life”; “The Swan” from *Fleurs du Mal*; “The Eyes of the Poor,” “Lost Halo” and “Bash the Poor!” from *Spleen de Paris*
- Arthur Rimbaud, “The Drunken Boat”



## The Crystal Cabinet

The Maiden caught me in the Wild  
 Where I was dancing merrily;  
 She put me into her Cabinet  
 And Locked me up with a golden Key.

This Cabinet is formd of Gold  
 And Pearl & Crystal Shining bright  
 And within it opens into a World  
 And a little lovely Moony Night.

10  
 Another England there I saw,  
 Another London with its Tower,  
 Another Thames & other Hills  
 And another pleasant Surrey Bower,

Another Maiden like herself  
 Translucent lovely shining clear  
 Threefold each in the other closd;  
 O what a pleasant trembling fear!

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 O what a smile, a threefold Smile  
 Fildd me that like a flame I burnd;  
 I bent to Kiss the lovely Maid  
 And found a Threefold Kiss returnd.

I strove to seize the inmost Form  
 With ardor fierce & hands of flame  
 But burst the Crystal Cabinet  
 And like a Weeping Babe became;

A weeping Babe upon the wild  
 And Weeping Woman pale reclind  
 And in the outward air again  
 I fildd with woes the passing Wind.

## Auguries of Innocence

To see a World in a Grain of Sand  
 And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,  
 Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand  
 And Eternity in an hour.

A Robin Red breast in a Cage  
 Puts all Heaven in a Rage.  
 A dove house filld with doves & Pigeons  
 Shudders Hell thro all its regions.  
 A dog starvd at his Master's gate  
 Predicts the ruin of the State.

A Horse misud upon the Road  
 Calls to Heaven for Human blood.  
 Each outcry of the hunted Hare  
 A fibre from the Brain does tear.  
 A sky lark wounded in the wing,  
 A Cherubin does cease to sing.  
 The Game Cock clipd & armd for fight  
 Does the Rising Sun affright.  
 Every Wolf's & Lion's howl  
 Raises from Hell a Human Soul.

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 The wild deer wandring here & there  
 Keeps the Human Soul from Care.  
 The Lamb misud breeds Public strife  
 And yet forgives the Butcher's Knife.  
 The Bat that flits at close of Eve  
 Has left the Brain that won't Believe.  
 The Owl that calls upon the Night  
 Speaks the Unbeliever's fright.  
 He who shall hurt the little Wren  
 Shall never be beloved by Men.  
 He who the Ox to wrath has movd  
 Shall never be by Woman lovd.  
 The wanton Boy that kills the Fly  
 Shall feel the Spider's enmity.  
 He who torments the Chafar's sprite  
 Weaves a Bower in endless Night.  
 The Caterpillar on the Leaf  
 Repeats to thee thy Mother's grief

William Blake, Selected Poems, ed. G. E. Bentley,  
 Jr. (London: Penguin, 2005)

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Kill not the Moth nor Butterfly  
 For the Last Judgment draweth nigh.  
 He who shall train the Horse to War  
 Shall never pass the Polar Bar.  
 The Begger's Dog & Widow's Cat,  
 Feed them & thou wilt grow fat.  
 The Gnat that sings his Summer's song  
 Poison gets from Slander's tongue.  
 The poison of the Snake & Newt  
 Is the sweat of Envy's Foot.  
 The Poison of the Honey Bee  
 Is the Artist's Jealousy.  
 The Prince's Robes & Beggar's Rags  
 Are Toadstools on the Miser's Bags.  
 A truth that's told with bad intent  
 Beats all the Lies you can invent.  
 It is right it should be so;  
 Man was made for Joy & Woe  
 And when this we rightly know  
 Thro the World we safely go.  
 Joy & Woe are woven fine  
 A Clothing for the soul divine;  
 Under every grief & pine  
 Runs a joy with silken twine.  
 The Babe is more than Swadling Bands;  
 Throughout all these Human Lands  
 Tools were made & Born were hands,  
 Every Farmer Understands.  
 Every Tear from Every Eye  
 Becomes a Babe in Eternity;  
 This is caught by Females bright  
 And returned to its own delight.  
 The Bleat, the Bark, Bellow & Roar  
 Are Waves that Beat on Heaven's Shore.  
 The Babe that weeps the Rod beneath  
 Writes Revenge in realms of death.  
 The Beggar's Rags fluttering in Air  
 Does to Rags the Heavens tear.  
 The Soldier armd with Sword & Gun  
 Palsied strikes the Summer's Sun.  
 The poor Man's Farthing is worth more  
 Than all the Gold on Afric's Shore.

One Mite wrung from the Labrer's hands  
 Shall buy & sell the Miser's Lands  
 Or if protected from on high  
 Does that whole Nation sell & buy.  
 He who mocks the Infant's Faith  
 Shall be mock'd in Age & Death.  
 He who shall teach the Child to Doubt  
 The rotting Grave shall neer get out.  
 He who respects the Infant's Faith  
 Triumphs over Hell & Death.  
 The Child's Toys & the Old Man's Reasons  
 Are the Fruits of the Two seasons.  
 The Questioner who sits so sly  
 Shall never know how to Reply.  
 He who replies to words of Doubt  
 Doth put the Light of Knowledge out.  
 The Strongest Poison ever known  
 Came from Caesar's Laurel Crown.  
 Nought can deform the Human Race  
 Like to the Armour's iron brace.  
 When Gold & Gems adorn the Plow  
 To peaceful Arts shall Envy bow.  
 A Riddle or the Cricketer's Cry  
 Is to Doubt a fit Reply.  
 The Emmer's Inch & Eagle's Mile  
 Make Lamé Philosophy to smile.  
 He who Doubts from what he sees  
 Will neer Believe, do what you Please.  
 If the Sun & Moon should doubt  
 They'd immediately Go out.  
 To be in a Passion you Good may do  
 But no Good if a Passion is in you.  
 The Whore & Gambler by the State  
 Licenced build that Nation's Fate.  
 The Harlot's cry from Street to Street  
 Shall weave Old England's winding Sheet.  
 The Winner's Shout, the Loser's Curse  
 Dance before dead England's Hearse.  
 Every Night & every Morn  
 Some to Misery are Born.  
 Every Morn & every Night  
 Some are Born to sweet delight,

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Some are Born to sweet delight,  
 Some are Born to Endless Night,  
 We are led to Believe a Lie  
 When we see not Thro the Eye  
 Which was Born in a Night to perish in a Night  
 When the Soul Slept in Beams of light.  
 God Appears & God is Light  
 To those poor Souls who dwell in Night  
 But does a Human Form Display  
 To those who Dwell in Realms of day.

THE GHOST OF ABEL  
 A Revelation In the Vision of Jehovah  
 Seen by William Blake  
 ([London:] 1822 W Blake's Original Stereotype was 1788)

To LORD BYRON in the Wilderness:

What dost thou here, Elijah?

Can a Poet doubt the Visions of Jehovah? Nature has no Outline: but  
 Imagination has. Nature has no Time: but Imagination has. Nature  
 has no Supernatural & dissolves: Imagination is Eternity. Scene A  
 rocky Country. Eye fainted over the dead body of Abel which lays  
 near a Grave. Adam kneels by her. Jehovah stands above.

Jehovah-

Adam!

Adam- I will not hear thee more thou Spiritual Voice.

Is this Death?

Jehovah-

Adam!

Adam- It is in vain: I will not hear thee

Henceforth! Is this thy Promise that the Woman's Seed  
 Should bruise the Serpent's head: Is this the Serpent?

Ah!

Eve revives.

Eve Is this the Promise of Jehovah! O it is all a vain delusion,

This Death & this Life & this Jehovah!

Jehovah-

Woman! lift

thine eyes!

A Voice is heard coming on.

Voice O Earth, cover not thou my Blood! cover not thou my  
 Blood!

Enter the Ghost of Abel.

Eve- Thou Visionary Phantasm, thou art not the real Abel

Abel Among the Elohim a Human Victim I wander: I am their

House

Prince of the Air, & our dimensions compass Zenith &

Nadir.

Vain is thy Covenant, O Jehovah! I am the Accuser &

Avenger

Of Blood. O Earth, Cover not thou the Blood of Abel.

What Vengeance dost thou require?

Jehovah

Life for Life! Life for Life!

Abel-

He who shall take Cain's life must also Die, O Abel.

And who is he? Adam wilt thou, or Eve thou do this?



Ode to the West Wind<sup>1</sup>

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,  
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead  
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic<sup>2</sup> red,  
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O Thou,  
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,  
Each like a corpse within its grave, until  
Thine azure sister of the Spring<sup>3</sup> shall blow

Her clarion<sup>4</sup> o'er the dreaming earth, and fill  
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)  
With living hues and odours plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;  
Destroyer and Preserver; hear, O hear!

Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commotion,  
Loose clouds like Earth's decaying leaves are shed,  
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,<sup>5</sup>

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread  
On the blue surface of thine aery surge,  
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Maenad,<sup>6</sup> even from the dim verge  
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,  
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou Dirge

1. "This poem was conceived and chiefly written in a wood that skirts the Arno, near Florence, and on a day when that tempestuous wind, whose temperature is at once mild and animating, was collecting the vapours which pour down the autumnal rains" [Shelley's note]. As in other major Romantic poems—for example, the opening of Wordsworth's *Prelude*, Coleridge's *Dejection*, and the conclusion to Shelley's *Adonais*—the rising wind, linked with the cycle of the seasons, is presented as the outer correspondent to an inner change from apathy to spiritual vitality, and from imaginative sterility to a burst of creative power that is paralleled to the inspiration of the Biblical prophets. In Hebrew, Latin, Greek, and many other languages, the words for wind, breath, soul, and inspiration are all identical or related. Thus Shelley's west wind is a "spirit" (the Latin *spiritus*: wind, breath, soul, and the root word in "inspiration"), the "breath of Autumn's being," which on earth, sky, and sea destroys in the autumn in order to revivify in the spring. Around this central image the poem weaves

Of the dying year, to which this closing night  
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,  
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapours,<sup>7</sup> from whose solid atmosphere  
Black rain and fire and hail will burst: O hear!

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams  
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,  
Lulled by the coil of his chrystalline streams,<sup>8</sup>

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,<sup>9</sup>  
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers  
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,<sup>1</sup>

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers  
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou  
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below  
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear  
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow grey with fear,  
And tremble and despoil themselves:<sup>2</sup> O hear!

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear,  
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;  
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free  
Than thou, O Uncontrollable! If even  
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,  
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed  
Scarce seemed a vision, I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.  
Oh! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!  
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed  
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

various cycles of death and regeneration—vegetational, human, and divine.

Shelley's 14-line stanza, developed from the interlaced 3-line units of the Italian *terza rima* (*abab cdcd*, etc.), consists of a set of four such tercets, closed by a complete rhyming with the middle line of the preceding tercet: *abab cdcd dcd ee*.

2. The kind of fever which occurs in tuberculosis.

3. The west wind that will blow in the spring.

4. A high, shrill trumpet.

5. The fragmentary clouds ("leaves") are torn by the wind from the larger and higher clouds ("boughs"), which are formed by a union of air with vapor drawn up by the sun from the ocean.

"Angels" (line 18) suggests the old sense: messengers, harbingers.

6. A female votary who danced frantically in the worship of Dionysus (Bacchus), the Greek god of wine and vegetation. As vegetation god, he was fabled to die in the fall and to be resurrected in the spring.

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A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed  
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

7. Clouds.

8. The currents that flow in the Mediterranean Sea, sometimes with a visible difference in color.

9. "Pumice": a porous volcanic stone. "Baiae's bay," west of Naples, was the locale of imposing villas erected by Roman emperors.

1. Shelley once observed that, when reflected in water, colors are "more vivid yet blended with more harmony."

2. "The vegetation at the bottom of the sea . . . sympathizes with that of the land in the change of seasons" [Shelley's note].

5  
 Make me thy lyre,<sup>3</sup> even as the forest is:  
 What if my leaves are falling like its own!  
 The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,  
 Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,  
 My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe  
 Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!  
 And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth  
 Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!  
 Be through my lips to unawakened Earth

The trumpet of a prophecy!<sup>4</sup> O Wind,  
 If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

1819

1820

**Prometheus Unbound** Shelley composed this work in Italy between the autumn of 1818 and the close of 1819 and published it the following summer. Upon its completion he wrote in a letter, "It is a drama, with characters and mechanism of a kind yet unattempted; and I think the execution is better than any of my former attempts." It is based upon the *Prometheus Bound* of Aeschylus, which dramatizes the sufferings of Prometheus, unrepentant champion of humanity, who, because he had stolen fire from heaven, was condemned by Zeus to be chained to Mount Caucasus and to be tortured by a vulture feeding upon his liver; in a lost sequel, Aeschylus reconciled Prometheus with his oppressor. Shelley continued Aeschylus' story, but transformed it into a symbolic drama about the origin of evil and its elimination. In such earlier writings as *Queen Mab* Shelley had expressed his belief that injustice and suffering can be eliminated by an external revolution which will wipe out or radically reform the causes of evil, which are existing social, political, and religious institutions. Implicit in *Prometheus Unbound*, on the other hand, is the view that both the origin of evil and the possibility of reform are the moral responsibility of men and women themselves. Social chaos and wars are a gigantic projection of human disorder and inner division and conflict; tyrants are the outer representatives of the tyranny of our baser over our better elements; hatred for others is an expression of self-contempt; and successful political reform is impossible unless we have first reformed our own nature at its roots, by substituting selfless love for divisive hate. Shelley thus incorporates into his secular myth (of

3. The Eolian lyre, which responds to the wind with rising and falling musical chords.

well as an allusion to the last trumpet of the apocalypse in Revelation 11. 15.

4. A reference back to the "carion" of line 10, as

the volume is numbered 5th Edition, Vol. 2 (New York: Norton, 1986)

## The Mask of Anarchy

*Written on the occasion of the massacre at Manchester.*

by Percy Bysshe Shelley

As I lay asleep in Italy  
There came a voice from over the Sea,  
And with great power it forth led me  
To walk in the visions of Poesy.

I met Murder on the way –  
He had a mask like Castlereagh –  
Very smooth he looked, yet grim;  
Seven blood-hounds followed him:

All were fat; and well they might  
Be in admirable plight,  
For one by one, and two by two,  
He tossed them human hearts to chew  
Which from his wide cloak he drew.

Next came Fraud, and he had on,  
Like Lord Eldon, an ermined gown;  
His big tears, for he wept well,  
Turned to mill-stones as they fell.

And the little children, who  
Round his feet played to and fro,  
Thinking every tear a gem,  
Had their brains knocked out by them.

Clothed with the Bible, as with light,  
And the shadows of the night,  
Like Sidmouth, next, Hypocrisy  
On a crocodile rode by.

And many more Destructions played  
In this ghastly masquerade,  
All disguised, even to the eyes,  
Like Bishops, lawyers, peers, and spies.

Last came Anarchy: he rode  
On a white horse, splashed with blood;  
He was pale even to the lips,  
Like Death in the Apocalypse.

And he wore a kingly crown;  
And in his grasp a sceptre shone;  
On his brow this mark I saw –  
'I AM GOD, AND KING, AND LAW!'

With a pace stately and fast,  
Over English land he passed,  
Trampling to a mire of blood  
The adoring multitude.

And with a mighty troop around  
With their trampling shook the ground,  
Waving each a bloody sword,  
For the service of their Lord.

And with glorious triumph they  
Rode through England proud and gay,  
Drunk as with intoxication  
Of the wine of desolation.

O'er fields and towns, from sea to sea,  
Passed the Pageant swift and free,  
Tearing up, and trampling down;  
Till they came to London town.

And each dweller, panic-stricken,  
Felt his heart with terror sicken  
Hearing the tempestuous cry  
Of the triumph of Anarchy.

For from pomp to meet him came,  
Clothed in arms like blood and flame,  
The hired murderers, who did sing  
'Thou art God, and Law, and King.

'We have waited weak and lone  
For thy coming, Mighty One!  
Our purses are empty, our swords are cold,  
Give us glory, and blood, and gold.'

Lawyers and priests a motley crowd,  
To the earth their pale brows bowed;  
Like a bad prayer not over loud,  
Whispering – 'Thou art Law and God.' –

Then all cried with one accord,  
'Thou art King, and God, and Lord;

Anarchy, to thee we bow,  
Be thy name made holy now!'

And Anarchy, the Skeleton,  
Bowed and grinned to every one,  
As well as if his education  
Had cost ten millions to the nation.

For he knew the Palaces  
Of our Kings were rightly his;  
His the sceptre, crown, and globe,  
And the gold-inwoven robe.

So he sent his slaves before  
To seize upon the Bank and Tower,  
And was proceeding with intent  
To meet his pensioned Parliament

When one fled past, a maniac maid,  
And her name was Hope, she said:  
But she looked more like Despair,  
And she cried out in the air:

'My father Time is weak and gray  
With waiting for a better day;  
See how idiot-like he stands,  
Fumbling with his palsied hands!

'He has had child after child,  
And the dust of death is piled  
Over every one but me –  
Misery, oh, Misery!'

Then she lay down in the street,  
Right before the horses feet,  
Expecting, with a patient eye,  
Murder, Fraud, and Anarchy.

When between her and her foes  
A mist, a light, an image rose.  
Small at first, and weak, and frail  
Like the vapour of a vale:

Till as clouds grow on the blast,  
Like tower-crowned giants striding fast,  
And glare with lightnings as they fly,  
And speak in thunder to the sky.

It grew – a Shape arrayed in mail  
Brighter than the viper's scale,  
And upborne on wings whose grain  
Was as the light of sunny rain.

On its helm, seen far away,  
A planet, like the Morning's, lay;  
And those plumes its light rained through  
Like a shower of crimson dew.

With step as soft as wind it passed  
O'er the heads of men – so fast  
That they knew the presence there,  
And looked, – but all was empty air.

As flowers beneath May's footstep waken,

As stars from Night's loose hair are shaken,  
As waves arise when loud winds call,  
Thoughts sprung where'er that step did fall.

And the prostrate multitude  
Looked – and ankle-deep in blood,  
Hope, that maiden most serene,  
Was walking with a quiet mien:

And Anarchy, the ghastly birth,  
Lay dead earth upon the earth;  
The Horse of Death tameless as wind  
Fled, and with his hoofs did grind  
To dust the murderers thronged behind.

A rushing light of clouds and splendour,  
A sense awakening and yet tender  
Was heard and felt – and at its close  
These words of joy and fear arose

As if their own indignant Earth  
Which gave the sons of England birth  
Had felt their blood upon her brow,  
And shuddering with a mother's throe

Had turned every drop of blood  
By which her face had been bedewed  
To an accent unwithstood, –  
As if her heart cried out aloud:

'Men of England, heirs of Glory,  
Heroes of unwritten story,

Nurslings of one mighty Mother,  
Hopes of her, and one another;

‘Rise like Lions after slumber  
In unvanquishable number.  
Shake your chains to earth like dew  
Which in sleep had fallen on you –  
Ye are many – they are few.

‘What is Freedom? – ye can tell  
That which slavery is, too well –  
For its very name has grown  
To an echo of your own.

‘Tis to work and have such pay  
As just keeps life from day to day  
In your limbs, as in a cell  
For the tyrants’ use to dwell,

‘So that ye for them are made  
Loom, and plough, and sword, and spade,  
With or without your own will bent  
To their defence and nourishment.

‘Tis to see your children weak  
With their mothers pine and peak,  
When the winter winds are bleak, –  
They are dying whilst I speak.

‘Tis to hunger for such diet  
As the rich man in his riot  
Casts to the fat dogs that lie

Surfeiting beneath his eye;

‘Tis to let the Ghost of Gold  
Take from Toil a thousandfold  
More than e’er its substance could  
In the tyrannies of old.

‘Paper coin – that forgery  
Of the title-deeds, which ye  
Hold to something from the worth  
Of the inheritance of Earth.

‘Tis to be a slave in soul  
And to hold no strong control  
Over your own wills, but be  
All that others make of ye.

‘And at length when ye complain  
With a murmur weak and vain  
‘Tis to see the Tyrant’s crew  
Ride over your wives and you –  
Blood is on the grass like dew.

‘Then it is to feel revenge  
Fiercely thirsting to exchange  
Blood for blood – and wrong for wrong –  
Do not thus when ye are strong.

‘Birds find rest, in narrow nest  
When weary of their wingèd quest;  
Beasts find fare, in woody lair  
When storm and snow are in the air.



'Horses, oxen, have a home,  
When from daily toil they come;  
Household dogs, when the wind roars,  
Find a home within warm doors.'

'Asses, swine, have litter spread  
And with fitting food are fed;  
All things have a home but one –  
Thou, Oh, Englishman, hast none!

'This is Slavery – savage men,  
Or wild beasts within a den  
Would endure not as ye do –  
But such ills they never knew.

'What art thou, Freedom? O! could slaves  
Answer from their living graves  
This demand – tyrants would flee  
Like a dream's imagery:

'Thou art not, as impostors say,  
A shadow soon to pass away,  
A superstition, and a name  
Echoing from the cave of Fame.

'For the labourer thou art bread,  
And a comely table spread  
From his daily labour come  
In a neat and happy home.

'Thou art clothes, and fire, and food

For the trampled multitude –  
No – in countries that are free  
Such starvation cannot be  
As in England now we see.

'To the rich thou art a check,  
When his foot is on the neck  
Of his victim, thou dost make  
That he treads upon a snake.

'Thou art Justice – ne'er for gold  
May thy righteous laws be sold  
As laws are in England – thou  
Shield'st alike both high and low.

'Thou art Wisdom – Freemen never  
Dream that God will damn for ever  
All who think those things untrue  
Of which Priests make such ado.

'Thou art Peace – never by thee  
Would blood and treasure wasted be  
As tyrants wasted them, when all  
Leagued to quench thy flame in Gaul.

'What if English toil and blood  
Was poured forth, even as a flood?  
It availed, Oh, Liberty.  
To dim, but not extinguish thee.

'Thou art Love – the rich have kissed  
Thy feet, and like him following Christ,

Give their substance to the free  
And through the rough world follow thee,

‘Or turn their wealth to arms, and make  
War for thy beloved sake  
On wealth, and war, and fraud – whence they  
Drew the power which is their prey.

‘Science, Poetry, and Thought  
Are thy lamps; they make the lot  
Of the dwellers in a cot  
So serene, they curse it not.

‘Spirit, Patience, Gentleness,  
All that can adorn and bless  
Art thou – let deeds, not words, express  
Thine exceeding loveliness.

‘Let a great Assembly be  
Of the fearless and the free  
On some spot of English ground  
Where the plains stretch wide around.

‘Let the blue sky overhead,  
The green earth on which ye tread,  
All that must eternal be  
Witness the solemnity.

‘From the corners uttermost  
Of the bounds of English coast;  
From every hut, village, and town  
Where those who live and suffer moan

For others’ misery or their own,

‘From the workhouse and the prison  
Where pale as corpses newly risen,  
Women, children, young and old  
Groan for pain, and weep for cold –

‘From the haunts of daily life  
Where is waged the daily strife  
With common wants and common cares  
Which sows the human heart with tares –

‘Lastly from the palaces  
Where the murmur of distress  
Echoes, like the distant sound  
Of a wind alive around

‘Those prison halls of wealth and fashion.  
Where some few feel such compassion  
For those who groan, and toil, and wail  
As must make their brethren pale –

‘Ye who suffer woes untold,  
Or to feel, or to behold  
Your lost country bought and sold  
With a price of blood and gold –

‘Let a vast assembly be,  
And with great solemnity  
Declare with measured words that ye  
Are, as God has made ye, free –

'Be your strong and simple words  
Keen to wound as sharpened swords,  
And wide as targets let them be,  
With their shade to cover ye.

'Let the tyrants pour around  
With a quick and startling sound,  
Like the loosening of a sea,  
Troops of armed emblazonry.

'Let the charged artillery drive  
Till the dead air seems alive  
With the clash of clanging wheels,  
And the tramp of horses' heels.

'Let the fixed bayonet  
Gleam with sharp desire to wet  
Its bright point in English blood  
Looking keen as one for food.

'Let the horsemen's scimitars  
Wheel and flash, like sphereless stars  
Thirsting to eclipse their burning  
In a sea of death and mourning.

'Stand ye calm and resolute,  
Like a forest close and mute,  
With folded arms and looks which are  
Weapons of unvanquished war,

'And let Panic, who outspeeds  
The career of armed steeds

Pass, a disregarded shade  
Through your phalanx undismayed.

'Let the laws of your own land,  
Good or ill, between ye stand  
Hand to hand, and foot to foot,  
Arbiters of the dispute,

'The old laws of England – they  
Whose reverend heads with age are gray,  
Children of a wiser day;  
And whose solemn voice must be  
Thine own echo – Liberty!

'On those who first should violate  
Such sacred heralds in their state  
Rest the blood that must ensue,  
And it will not rest on you.

'And if then the tyrants dare  
Let them ride among you there,  
Slash, and stab, and main, and hew, –  
What they like, that let them do.

'With folded arms and steady eyes,  
And little fear, and less surprise,  
Look upon them as they slay  
Till their rage has died away.'

'Then they will return with shame  
To the place from which they came,  
And the blood thus shed will speak

In hot blushes on their cheek.

‘Every woman in the land  
Will point at them as they stand –  
They will hardly dare to greet  
Their acquaintance in the street.

‘And the bold, true warriors  
Who have hugged Danger in wars  
Will turn to those who would be free,  
Ashamed of such base company.

‘And that slaughter to the Nation  
Shall steam up like inspiration,  
Eloquent, oracular;  
A volcano heard afar.

‘And these words shall then become  
Like Oppression’s thundered doom  
Ringing through each heart and brain.  
Heard again – again – again –

*‘Rise like Lions after slumber  
In unvanquishable number –  
Shake your chains to earth like dew  
Which in sleep had fallen on you –  
Ye are many – they are few.’*

## Alexander Pushkin: 'The Bronze Horseman'

### Prologue

On the banks of a wilderness of water  
one man stood, brimming with thoughts  
as his eyes advanced to the horizon.  
The breadth of the river surged forward,  
as a single, ramshackle canoe sped by.  
Along the moss-ruled, swampy shores  
he saw the dark and scattered huts  
of the godforsaken Finns;  
and the forest, foreign to the sun,  
sounded around him.

And he thought:  
Here's where we'll threaten the Swedes from,  
where we'll set a city's first stones  
to spite our power-drunk neighbours.  
We'll make a slave of nature,  
hack a window through to Europe  
and by this sea put down firm feet.  
All flags will find their way  
across these waves; and we'll hold a feast  
out here in these wastes.

One hundred years have passed,  
and the youthful city's become the marvel  
of the midnight regions, has risen  
from the dark forests, from the sweat  
of the marsh, luxuriant and confident.  
Where nature's neglected stepson,  
the Finnish angler, would sit by himself  
on low riverbanks to cast a fraying net

into unplumbed depths, now  
the stern hulks of palaces and towers  
crowd shores busy with life,  
and ships from all ends of the earth  
jostle towards rich jetties;  
the Neva is draped in granite,  
bridges raised across its waters,  
islands wearing the warmth  
of green gardens; in the glow  
of the younger capital  
old Moscow seems ever fainter,  
a purple-clad widow  
standing before the new tsarina.

Oh act of Peter, I'm in love  
with your strict and structured form,  
the Neva's commanding flow,  
its granite banks, the design  
in the iron railings, the translucent  
dusk and moonless sheen  
of dream-soaked nights.  
As I write in my room I need  
no lamp. Bright giants are asleep  
on the empty streets,  
and the needle of the Admiralty shines,  
and banning the gloom from gold skies,  
dusk hurries on towards dawn,  
and night makes do with a half-hour.  
I'm in love with the frost and immobile air  
of your brutal winter, the sprint  
of skates along the broad river,  
girls' faces brighter than roses,  
with ballrooms, their lights and noises;

and — when it's time for the single  
to get down to serious drinking —  
the hiss of foaming glasses,  
the rum-punch's flame of blue.  
I'm in love with the glittering force  
of the drills on the Field of Mars,  
the singular beauty of foot-soldier and horse,  
the shreds of victorious banners  
in the strict, rippling ranks,  
with bronze as it flashes on caps  
shot through in battle.  
War capital, I'm in love  
with the smoke and thunder  
at the fort when the Tsarina of the North  
bestows her son to the empire,  
or Russia triumphs over enemies  
once more, or when the Neva  
cracks open its pale blue ice,  
bundles it off to the Baltic,  
and, sensing spring days, exults.  
Stand in beauty, Peter's city,  
remain as unshakable as Russia.  
May the defeated elements  
make their peace with you. Let  
the Finnish waves forget  
their ancient enemy and prisoner,  
their futile malice fail to unsettle  
the everlasting dream of Peter.  
There was a time of terror,  
its memory fresh ... This, friends,  
is the theme of the events  
I'll relate in my bleak story.

## Part one

November breathed an autumn coldness  
across Petrograd, as it lay under dark clouds.  
The noisy waves were busy rippling  
at the edges of graceful railings,  
the Neva shifted like a sick man  
in a restive bed. It was late  
already and dark, as an angry rain  
beat and beat against the windows;  
and the wind, as it blew, seemed to whine.  
Around this time, young Yevgeny  
was walking back from friends'.  
We'll award our hero this first name.  
Its sound is fine enough; what's more,  
my pen and it have met before.  
His surname is of no concern:  
though once, it may have had its turn  
at peeling through famous stories  
beneath the quill of Karamzin,  
the world and the talk of the town  
have quite forgotten it. Our hero's home  
is in Kolonna, you'll find his name  
on a payroll somewhere,  
he keeps away from nobles,  
and no longer grieves for friends passed on  
or for things now buried and gone.  
On getting home, Yevgeny  
shook off his coat, and undressed for bed,  
but lay awake for hours as every kind  
of speculation swirled through his mind.  
His thoughts? That he wasn't well off

and would have to earn his independence  
and recognition by hard slog; that God  
was more than welcome to dole  
him out more capital and brains.  
That many contented souls  
whose intellectual aims  
weren't high — the lazy sods! —  
were on holiday all year round!  
Two years now he'd been at his job ...  
That the weather had not calmed down,  
the river was still rising; that for tonight  
the Neva bridges had been raised,  
cutting him off from his future bride  
for two to three full days.  
Breathing in deeply, Yevgeny floated  
off into a dream, as if a poet:

“Get married? Me? Why not?  
Of course it won't be easy.  
But hell, I'm young and fit,  
and ready to work round the clock;  
one way or another I'll fix us  
a quiet and simple place to live  
to put Parasha's mind at rest.  
And when a year or two has passed,  
they'll boot me up to some higher post.  
Parasha will be in charge  
of the house, of feeding the kids ... Our lives  
will really get going, and holding hands  
we'll walk ahead, our grandchildren  
will see us to our graves.”

... Yevgeny's dream. But his spirits  
that night were down, and he wished

that the howl of the wind were less dismal,  
that the rain wouldn't rattle at the window  
with such fury ...  
His drowsy eyes at last  
fell shut. Now the foul night-mist  
was thinning out. A pallid day had come ...  
a day of terror.

All night the Neva had torn  
towards the sea to face a storm,  
but failed to get the better  
of the wind's violent temper,  
so the weary river broke off battle.  
By morning, all along its banks,  
people were clustering to admire the spray,  
the swells, the foam of the frenzied waves.  
But the Neva, filled with new life  
by the force of the winds from the gulf,  
turned back in scorn, seething,  
its waters split over the islands, the weather  
upped in ferocity, the Neva  
roared as it breathed in deeply,  
like a cauldron it gurgled and steamed,  
then like a beast whose rage was at its peak  
it suddenly flung itself across the city.  
Everyone ran, everywhere emptied,  
water gushed into cellars,  
canals rushed up to railings;  
like a Triton, Petropolis surfaced,  
with water dragging at its waist.

A siegel! An assault! Malicious waves  
crawl through windows like thieves.  
Sterns take running leaps

at glass. Hawkers' trays,  
their shroud-like covers soaked through,  
wreckage of huts, beams and rooves,  
the trading stock of the thrifty,  
beggars' paltry property,  
bridges the storm abducted,  
coffins washed from the cemetery  
now bob through the streets!

God's anger is there to see:  
the populace awaits its punishment. All's gone.  
Roof and food are lost.  
Where are we to find them?

At that dangerous time  
another tsar, who's since passed on,  
still ruled in splendour.  
With worry and sorrow in his eyes,  
he stepped out onto his balcony  
and spoke: "No tsar can master  
God's elements". Grief  
seemed to wash across his face  
as he mulled over the disaster  
and its malevolence.  
Squares resembled lakes,  
streets fed into them like broad rivers.  
The Palace was a desolate island.  
The Tsar spoke — and across the city  
generals set off along dangerous routes  
that took them through violent waters  
along every street, however distant,  
to save a population gripped  
by fear, drowning in their houses.

Back then, on Peter's Square,  
a new construction towered  
in one corner. There,  
above an elevated porch,  
as if alive, with raised paws,  
two lions kept watch.  
On one of those beasts of marble  
Yevgeny was sitting, stiff and pale,  
his hat now lost,  
his arms clenched into a cross.  
A pitiful figure, filled with fear  
but not for himself. He didn't hear  
how the thirsty waves rose  
and lapped at his soles,  
how the rain lashed his face,  
how the wind, with a violent yelp,  
had suddenly ripped his cap  
from his head. His despairing gaze  
was fixed on a distant place.  
Resembling hills, the waves swelled  
bad-temperedly out of the rebellious  
depths; here a storm wailed,  
there the flotsam skimmed past ...  
Christ, no! So close  
to the waves, right on that cove,  
that unpainted fence, that willow,  
and the shanty hut where the widow  
and her daughter, his life's whole meaning —  
Parasha ... Or was he just dreaming?  
Was this what life was, in its essentials?  
A desolate dream, heaven's  
joke at the earth's expense?



As if in a trance,  
as if manacles hold him to the marble,  
our hero can't get down! Water  
surrounds him, nothing more!  
And high up and unshakeable,  
with its back towards him,  
above the mutinous Neva, stands,  
with an outstretched hand,  
that graven image on its bronze horse.

#### Part two

But glutted with destruction,  
as if it now needed a break  
from disorderly conduct,  
the Neva began to flow back,  
feasting its eyes on its mutiny,  
casually flinging about its booty.  
It was like some thug with his vicious  
gang, who've torn into a village  
and rip, shatter and smash,  
looting and yelling, and urge  
each other on to violence with curses,  
surrounded by panic and wailing,  
their plunder weighing them down,  
and afraid of the chase,  
the exhausted robbers hasten  
homewards, dropping their takings  
en route.  
The water fell, and a street  
emerged. Yevgeny, our hero,  
sped to the river as it subsided;

fear, longing and hope  
were vices clamped round his mind.  
But the malevolent waves, filled  
with the pride of victory, boiled  
again, as if a fire smouldered  
beneath them, and foam  
crested the waves once more,  
and the Neva panted like a horse  
galloping up from combat.  
Yevgeny's eyes located a boat;  
he ran up to it as if to some trinket  
glittering on a road.  
He called the ferryman.  
Untroubled by a single thing,  
the ferryman was ready to row him  
across the heartstopping waves  
for a handful of kopecks.  
That seasoned oarsman  
battled and battled with the storm,  
and at any moment the canoe  
might have sunk between the ranks  
of the waves with its foolhardy crew,  
until at last it reached the far bank.  
Frantic, Yevgeny runs  
towards familiar places,  
along familiar streets. He gazes  
round, but nothing is as he knows it.  
A panorama to flinch at.  
Torn and hurled, piled-up things,  
twisted or collapsing homes  
shifted by the waves, and scattered  
corpses as if this were a battlefield.

Weak from fear, his memories gone,  
Yevgeny runs headlong  
to where the future's been keeping  
its news for him inside a sealed letter.  
And he's reached those huts already,  
there's the creek, not far now to the house ...  
But what's this ... ?

He stopped,  
turned round, walked back to one spot.  
Looked ... stepped forward ... and gazed  
once more. OK, their hut  
must be right here. The gates,  
I guess, got taken by the flood.  
But where are the walls,  
the doors? Like an evening sky,  
anxiety darkens his mind, and he walks  
around and around in circles,  
thinking everything through, out loud,  
until suddenly he strikes  
his forehead with his hand,  
and breaks into giggles.

Night-time darkness  
dropped onto the city that was still trembling.  
That night it was long before anyone slept,  
as people talked and tried to find sense  
in that day's events.

Out of the pale,  
exhausted rainclouds, the morning's rays  
dazzled across the calm capital,  
but they discovered no trace  
of yesterday's disaster, whose malice  
was concealed again in purple.

Life reverted to good order,  
the streets were passable, and people  
walked along them unconcerned.  
Civil servants left their roosts  
for the office. Unperturbed,  
go-ahead small businessmen  
were opening up the basements  
that the Neva had burgled,  
compensating their losses  
from neighbouring properties.  
Boats were cleared from yards.

And Count Khvostov,  
poet and favourite of the heavens sang  
of the grief on the Neva's banks  
in those verses we all still love.

But Yevgeny, Yevgeny ...  
His trampled mind could not withstand  
these shockwaves. The mutinous  
noise of the Neva and of the winds  
travelled through his ears, and fear would fill  
his thoughts as he wandered, mute.  
Some kind of vision, it seemed,  
was stretching him on a rack.  
A week, a month passed by and still  
he never once went home. The lease  
expired on his vacant bolt-hole,  
the landlord let it to a poor poet,  
and Yevgeny failed to come back  
for such things as he had. Before long  
the world had lost all meaning to him. He'd wander  
the streets all day, then sleep on wharves,  
live from bread proffered through a window.

His threadbare clothes were ripped and rotting.  
Fierce children chased him with stones.  
He felt the lash of coachmen's spit  
whenever he blocked the road,  
ignoring approaching horses, deafened  
by the sound of unease in his mind.  
He dragged out his miserable life,  
neither animal nor human, neither  
one thing nor the other — alive  
on earth, or dead among ghosts ...

Once he was asleep on the quays  
by the Neva, as summer days  
declined into autumn. The wind wheezed  
with rain, and a sombre wave  
grumbled as it splashed onto the wharf,  
beating the sleek steps  
like a man at the doors of a court  
shut against his complaint.  
Our victim of events awoke.  
Everything around him was murky.  
Rain dripped, the dismal wind  
wailed. Far into the night-mist  
the watchmen were hailing round ...  
Yevgeny gave a jump:  
the flood in its whole horror  
was alive again in his memory. Hurry  
called him to his feet, and off he tramped  
along the streets, then suddenly stopped.  
Gingerly, he trailed  
his eyes around him, a wild  
fear in his face. Where was he?  
He sensed beside him the pillars

of an enormous building.  
With paws raised, up on the roof,  
life-like lions stood watch,  
and up in front of him in the gloom  
on top of the railed-off rock,  
that graven image with its outstretched hand  
sat astride its horse of bronze.

Yevgeny flinched. His thoughts  
took on disturbing forms.  
He saw once more the place  
where the flood had played,  
where the predatory waves  
had massed in their angry rebellion,  
and the square, and the lions,  
and the man whose head of bronze  
loomed from the fog, immovable,  
whose lethal willpower founded  
this city at the sea's brink.  
How terrible he looked in the mist!  
The brooding visible on his brow!  
Concealed within him, what power!  
And within that horse, what fire!  
Where is your galloping taking you, proud horse,  
where will your hooves fall?  
Great shaper of lives,  
declare: you came to the abrupt  
edge, pulled back the iron bridle,  
and Russia reared up.  
Yevgeny, out of his senses,  
kept circling the statue's base,  
kept casting savage glances  
at the face of the master

of half the globe. He felt his chest  
constrict. He rested his forehead  
against the cool bars,  
his eyes twitching in the mist,  
a flame ran across his heart,  
his blood began to seethe.  
He stood there angrily, in full view  
of the proud statue, teeth clenched,  
fingers tightened, as if seized  
by a dark strength.  
“All right, builder of things incredible!”  
he whispered, fury making him tremble,  
“I’ll get you!” And he set off  
at a run, headlong.  
And it seemed as if in a split-second  
the face of that terrible emperor  
flared into fury, and quietly turned  
towards him . . . And Yevgeny runs  
across the empty square,  
and behind him he can hear,  
like a drum-roll of thunder,  
heavy, resounding hooves  
along a quaking road. Behind him,  
in the dawnlight of the pale moon,  
one hand thrust into the sky,  
the Bronze Horseman rides  
on his noisily cantering warhorse.  
In Yevgeny’s desperate, night-long trauma,  
wherever his legs transport him,  
the Bronze Horseman pursues him  
with the clatter of his galloping hooves.

From then on, whenever he crossed  
that square, agitation was painted  
in his face. He’d hurriedly press  
one hand to his heart, to restrain  
somehow his distress,  
doffed his threadbare cap,  
didn’t raise his nervous eyes,  
skirted round to the opposite side.  
Not far off shore  
there’s a small island where, out late  
with his nets, a fisherman sometimes moors  
to boil up his meagre meal,  
or some official takes  
his Sunday boat ride  
out to this desolate island,  
where not a single blade  
of grass has grown, the place  
to where that surge, as it played,  
brought the wreckage of a hut.  
It came to rest there, like a black shrub.  
Last autumn they carried it away  
on a barge. It was empty and ruined.  
And where there’d once been a door,  
they found my insane friend,  
and gave his cold corpse  
right there its beggar’s funeral.

(1833; trans. Alistair Noon)

## Alistair Noon, "Dragged Along by a Statue: Translating Pushkin's 'The Bronze Horseman'"

Walk along the hard, straight embankments of the Neva — or take a Google Earth trip down to the centre of St. Petersburg — and you'll come to a large lump of granite, atop which a determined and martial-looking figure is pulling up a fierce, eye-bulging horse, and pointing out across the wide river in the direction of the West. Falconer's statue of Peter the Great has become the Little Mermaid of St. Petersburg, only the Little Mermaid isn't a symbol of geopolitical manoeuvring, emerging naval power and enforced socioeconomic change in a huge but predominantly agrarian territory. Peter's founding of St. Petersburg in the early 18th century derived from a need to keep the regional rivals, the Swedes, at arm's length, and construct a prestige project for his imperial ambitions.

The source material of Pushkin's tale of how a young clerk loses his prospective fiancé in a brief but deadly flood includes newspaper reports of a flood that had taken place in St. Petersburg in 1824. Somewhere in the background is also Virgil's *Aeneid*. Though the narrative is retrospective, its quasi-supernatural aspect — does the Horseman "really" come to life and pursue Yevgeny, or does it all take place in the latter's traumatized mind? — seems not dissimilar in technique to that of a science fiction story set just a few years from now where most things are the same, but one thing is different.

The poem is also a virtuoso performance of form and tone, moving from ode to narrative, to chatty interior monologue, to jibes at contemporary poets, and enactments in verse of psychological distress and trauma. It's a love poem for a city — this is the bit the censors didn't mind — and a not-too-subtly concealed elegy for those who died in its construction — an aspect the censors certainly

did mind: the poem did not appear in anything like its full form until after Pushkin's death by duelling in 1837, and even then with certain omissions. Critics have disagreed about the nature of Pushkin's attitude to Peter the Great: did he imply that Peter was to be admired? Hated? Distrusted? Accepted? At the very least, the poem problematizes the relationship of the state and the individual. It might, in Poundian terms, be accorded the status of an Image with a capital "I".

If the translation is a success it won't need an apology, but I'll offer one here for any dissatisfied customers. Pushkin is an all-rounder, so I tried to make my compromises everywhere a little bit, rather than prioritize one particular aspect and make a huge compromise elsewhere. The rhythm of 'The Bronze Horseman' can be analyzed in metrical terms as iambic tetrameter, but Russian is a strongly stressed language, and the distribution of natural as opposed to metrical stresses in a tetrameter is frequently such as to give, to my ear anyway, the feel of a three-beat line. It was the three natural stresses, rather than the four metrical stresses that I was more concerned to preserve, at least as a rough base, though the reader will quickly see and hear that even here I've been very flexible. The imagery of the poem is sharp and concise, and I was loathe to add or delete words and images for the sake of line length. This, perhaps, is where I have indeed been guilty of favouritism towards one particular element.

Eliot's 'ghost of a metre' (behind good free verse) has a parallel in rhyme I think, and my translation aims to give the feel of a rhyming poem without making the compromises in diction and meaning that tend to accompany attempts to do Pushkin in full-chime rhyme in English (Edwin Morgan's 'Autumn' is one highly successful exception to this tendency.)

## 15. The Painter of Modern Life<sup>1</sup>

### I. BEAUTY, FASHION AND HAPPINESS

IN all social circles, and even in art circles, there are people who go to the Louvre, walk quickly past a large number of most interesting though secondary pictures, without throwing them so much as a look, and plant themselves, as though in a trance, in front of a Titian or a Raphael, one of those which the engraver's art has particularly popularized; then they go out satisfied, as often as not saying to themselves: 'I know my gallery thoroughly.' There are also people who, having once read Bossuet and Racine, think they have got the history of literature at their finger-tips.

Happily from time to time knights errant step into the lists - critics, art collectors, lovers of the arts, curious-minded idlers - who assert that neither Raphael nor Racine has every secret, that minor poets have something to be said for them, substantial and delightful things to their credit, and finally that, however much we may like general beauty, which is expressed by the classical poets and artists, we nonetheless make a mistake to neglect particular beauty, the beauty of circumstance; the description of manners.

I am bound to admit that, for several years now, society has shown some improvement. The value that today's collectors attach to the delightful engraved and coloured trifles of the last century shows that a reaction has begun in the direction needed by the public; Debucourt, the Saint-Aubins<sup>2</sup> and many others have achieved mention in the dictionary of artists worthy of study. But these represent the past, whereas my purpose at this moment is to discuss the painting of our con-

temporary social scene. The past is interesting, not only because of the beauty that the artists for whom it was the present were able to extract from it, but also as past, for its historical value. The same applies to the present. The pleasure we derive from the representation of the present is due, not only to the beauty it can be clothed in, but also to its essential quality of being the present.

I have here in front of me a series of fashion plates, the earliest dating from the Revolution, the most recent from the Consulate or therabouts. These costumes, which many thoughtless people, the sort of people who are grave without true gravity, find highly amusing, have a double kind of charm, artistic and historical. They are very often beautiful and wittily drawn, but what to me is at least as important, and what I am glad to find in all or nearly all of them, is the moral attitude and the aesthetic value of the time. The idea of beauty that man creates for himself affects his whole attire, ruffles or stiffens his coat, gives curves or straight lines to his gestures and even, in process of time, subtly penetrates the very features of his face. Man comes in the end to look like his ideal image of himself. These engravings can be translated into beauty or ugliness: in ugliness they become caricatures; in beauty, antique statues.

The women who wore these dresses looked more or less like one or the other, according to the degree of poetry or vulgarity evident in their faces. The living substance gave suppleness to what appears too stiff to us. The viewer's imagination can even today see a marching man in this tunic or the shrug of a woman's shoulder beneath that shawl. One of these days perhaps some theatre or other will put on a play where we shall see a revival of the fashions in which our fathers thought themselves just as captivating as we ourselves think we are, in our modest garments (which also have their attractiveness, to be sure, but rather of a moral and spiritual kind); and, if they are worn and given life to by intelligent actors and actresses,

we shall be surprised at our having laughed at them so thoughtlessly. The past, whilst retaining its ghostly piquancy, will recapture the light and movement of life, and become present.

If an impartially-minded man were to look through the whole range of French fashions, one after the other, from the origins of France to the present day, he would find nothing to shock or even to surprise him. He would find the transition as fully prepared as in the scale of the animal kingdom. No gaps, hence no surprises. And if to the illustration representing each age he were to add the philosophic thought which that age was mainly preoccupied with or worried by, a thought which the illustration inevitably reflects, he would see what a deep harmony informs all the branches of history, and that, even in the centuries which appear to us the most outrageous and the most confused, the immortal appetite for beauty has always found satisfaction.

Here we have indeed a golden opportunity to establish a rational and historical theory of beauty, in contrast to the theory of a unique and absolute beauty, and to show that beauty is always and inevitably compounded of two elements, although the impression it conveys is one; for the difficulty we may experience in distinguishing the variable elements that go to make beauty's unity of impression does not in any way invalidate the need of variety in its composition. Beauty is made up, on the one hand, of an element that is eternal and invariable, though to determine how much of it there is is extremely difficult, and, on the other, of a relative circumstantial element, which we may like to call, successively or at one and the same time, contemporaneity, fashion, morality, passion. Without this second element, which is like the amusing, teasing, appetite-whetting coating of the divine cake, the first element would be indigestible, tasteless, unadapted and inappropriate to human nature. I challenge anyone to find any sample whatsoever of beauty that does not contain these two elements.

Let me take as an example the two extreme stages of history. In hieratic art duality is evident at the first glance; the eternal element of beauty reveals itself only by permission and under the control of the religion the artist belongs to. In the most frivolous work of a sophisticated artist, belonging to one of those ages we vaingloriously call civilized, the duality is equally apparent; the eternal part of beauty will be both veiled and expressed, if not through fashion, then at least through the individual temperament of the artist. The duality of art is an inevitable consequence of the duality of man. If you like it that way, you may identify the eternally subsisting portion as the soul of art, and the variable element as its body. That is why Stendhal, that impertinent, teasing, even repugnant mind (whose impertinences are, nevertheless, usefully thought-provoking), came close to the truth, much closer than many other people, when he said: 'The beautiful is neither more nor less than the promise of happiness.'<sup>3</sup> No doubt this definition oversteps the mark; it subordinates beauty much too much to the infinitely variable ideal of happiness; it diverts beauty too lightly of its aristocratic character; but it has the great merit of getting away from the mistake of the academicians.<sup>4</sup>

More than once before I have explained these things<sup>5</sup>; these few lines are explanation enough for those who enjoy these pastimes of abstract thought; but I am well aware that French readers for the most part take little pleasure in them, and I am myself keen to enter into the positive and solid part of my subject.

## II. MANNERS AND MODES

For sketches of manners, for the portrayal of bourgeois life and the fashion scene, the quickest and the cheapest technical means will evidently be the best. The more beauty the artist puts into it, the more valuable will the work be; but there is in the trivial things of life, in the daily changing of external



things, a speed of movement that imposes upon the artist an equal speed of execution. The multi-coloured engravings of the eighteenth century are again enjoying the favour of current fashion, as I was saying just now; pastel, etching, aquatint have provided their successive quotas to this vast dictionary of modern life in libraries, in art collector's portfolios and in the humblest shop windows. As soon as lithography was invented, it was quickly seen to be very suitable for this enormous task, so frivolous in appearance. We possess veritable national records in this class. The works of Gavarni and Daumier have been accurately described as complements to the *Comédie humaine*.<sup>6</sup> Balzac himself, I feel sure, would not have been unwilling to adopt that idea, which is all the more accurate in proportion as the artist-portrayer of manners is a genius of mixed composition, in other words, a genius with a pronounced literary element. Observer, idler, philosopher, call him what you will, but, in order to define such an artist, you will surely in the end be brought to giving him an attributive adjective that you could not apply to a painter of things eternal, or at least things of a more permanent nature, of heroic or religious subjects. Sometimes he may be a poet; more often he comes close to the novelist or the moralist; he is the painter of the fleeting moment and of all that it suggests of the eternal. Every country, for its pleasure or its fame, has possessed a few men of that sort. In our own time, to Daumier, to Gavarni, the first names that come to mind, we may add Deveria, Maurin, Numa (all chroniclers of the Restoration's shady charms), Watier, Tassart, Eugène Lami;<sup>7</sup> this last one almost English in his affection for aristocratic society, and even Trimolet and Travès,<sup>8</sup> the chroniclers of poverty and humble life.

### III. AN ARTIST, MAN OF THE WORLD, MAN OF CROWDS, AND CHILD

Today I want to talk to my readers about a singular man, whose originality is so powerful and clear-cut that it is self-sufficing, and does not bother to look for approval. None of his drawings is signed, if by signature we mean the few letters, which can be so easily forged, that compose a name, and that so many other artists grandly inscribe at the bottom of their most carefree sketches. But all his works are signed with his dazzling soul, and art-lovers who have seen and liked them will recognize them easily from the description I propose to give of them. M. C. G.<sup>9</sup> loves mixing with the crowds, loves being incognito, and carries his originality to the point of modesty. M. Thackeray, who, as is well known, is very interested in all things to do with art, and who draws the illustrations for his own novels, one day spoke of M. G. in a London review, much to the irritation of the latter who regarded the matter as an outrage to his modesty. And again quite recently, when he heard that I was proposing to make an assessment of his mind and talent, he begged me, in a most peremptory manner, to suppress his name, and to discuss his works only as though they were the works of some anonymous person. I will humbly obey this odd request. The reader and I will proceed as though M. G. did not exist, and we will discuss his drawings and his water-colours, for which he professes a patrician's disdain, in the same way as would a group of scholars faced with the task of assessing the importance of a number of precious historical documents which chance has brought to light, and the author of which must for ever remain unknown. And even to reassure my conscience completely, let my readers assume that all the things I have to say about the artist's nature, so strangely and mysteriously dazzling, have been more or less accurately suggested by the works in question; pure poetic hypothesis, conjecture, or imaginative reconstructions.



M. G. is an old man. Jean-Jacques<sup>10</sup> began writing, so they say, at the age of forty-two. Perhaps it was at about that age that M. G., obsessed by the world of images that filled his mind, plucked up courage to cast ink and colours on to a sheet of white paper. To be honest, he drew like a barbarian, like a child, angrily chiding his clumsy fingers and his disobedient tool. I have seen a large number of these early scribbles, and I admit that most of the people who know what they are talking about, or who claim to, could, without shame, have failed to discern the latent genius that dwelt in these obscure beginnings. Today, M. G., who has discovered unaided all the little tricks of the trade, and who has taught himself, without help or advice, has become a powerful master in his own way; of his early artlessness he has retained only what was needed to add an unexpected spice to his abundant gift. When he happens upon one of these efforts of his early manner, he tears it up or burns it, with a most amusing show of shame and indignation.

For ten whole years I wanted to make the acquaintance of M. G., who is by nature a great traveller and very cosmopolitan. I knew that he had for a long time been working for an English illustrated paper and that in it had appeared engravings from his travel sketches (Spain, Turkey, the Crimea). Since then I have seen a considerable mass of these on-the-spot drawings from life, and I have thus been able to 'read' a detailed and daily account, infinitely preferable to any other, of the Crimean campaign. The same paper had also published (without signature, as before) a large quantity of compositions by this artist from the new ballets and operas. When at last I ran him to ground<sup>11</sup> I saw at once that I was not dealing exactly with an artist but rather with a man of the world. In this context, pray interpret the word 'artist' in a very narrow sense, and the expression 'man of the world' in a very broad one. By 'man of the world', I mean a man of the whole world, a man who understands the world and the mysterious

and legitimate reasons behind all its customs; by 'artist', I mean a specialist, a man tied to his palette like a serf to the soil. M. G. does not like being called an artist. Is he not justified to a small extent? He takes an interest in everything the world over, he wants to know, understand, assess everything that happens on the surface of our spheroid. The artist moves little, or even not at all, in intellectual and political circles. If he lives in the Bréda quarter he knows nothing of what goes on in the Faubourg. Saint-Germain.<sup>12</sup> With two or three exceptions, which it is unnecessary to name, the majority of artists are, us face it, very skilled brutes, mere manual labourers, village pub-talkers with the minds of country bumpkins.<sup>13</sup> Their talk, inevitably enclosed within very narrow limits, quickly becomes a bore to the man of the world, to the spiritual citizen of the universe.

Thus to begin to understand M. G., the first thing to note is this: that curiosity may be considered the starting point of his genius.

Do you remember a picture (for indeed it is a picture!) written by the most powerful pen of this age<sup>14</sup> and entitled *The Man of the Crowd*? Sitting in a café, and looking through the shop window, a convalescent is enjoying the sight of the passing crowd, and identifying himself in thought with all the thoughts that are moving around him. He has only recently come back from the shades of death and breathes in with delight all the spores and odours of life; as he has been on the point of forgetting everything, he remembers and passionately wants to remember everything. In the end he rushes out into the crowd in search of a man unknown to him whose face, which he had caught sight of, had in a flash fascinated him. Curiosity had become a compelling, irresistible passion.

Now imagine an artist perpetually in the spiritual condition of the convalescent, and you will have the key to the character of M. G.

But convalescence is like a return to childhood. The

convalescent, like the child, enjoys to the highest degree the faculty of taking a lively interest in things, even the most trivial in appearance. Let us hark back, if we can, by a retrospective effort of our imaginations, to our youngest, our morning impressions, and we shall recognize that they were remarkably akin to the vividly coloured impressions that we received later on after a physical illness, provided that illness left our spiritual faculties pure and unimpaired. The child sees everything as a novelty; the child is always 'drunk'. Nothing is more like what we call inspiration than the joy the child feels in drinking in shape and colour. I will venture to go even further and declare that inspiration has some connection with congestion, that every sublime thought is accompanied by a more or less vigorous nervous impulse that reverberates in the cerebral cortex. The man of genius has strong nerves; those of the child are weak. In the one, reason has assumed an important role; in the other, sensibility occupies almost the whole being. But genius is no more than childhood recaptured at will, childhood equipped now with man's physical means to express itself, and with the analytical mind that enables it to bring order into the sum of experience, involuntarily amassed. To this deep and joyful curiosity must be attributed that stare, animal-like in its ecstacy, which all children have when confronted with something new, whatever it may be, face or landscape, light, gilding, colours, watered silk, enchantment of beauty, enhanced by the arts of dress. A friend of mine was telling me one day how, as a small boy, he used to be present when his father was dressing, and how he had always been filled with astonishment, mixed with delight, as he looked at the arm muscle, the colour tones of the skin tinged with rose and yellow, and the bluish network of the veins. The picture of the external world was already beginning to fill him with respect, and to take possession of his brain. Already the shape of things obsessed and possessed him. A precocious fate was showing the tip of its nose. His damna-

tion was settled. Need I say that, today, the child is a famous painter.

I was asking you just now to think of M. G. as an eternal convalescent; to complete your idea of him, think of him also as a man-child, as a man possessing at every moment the genius of childhood, in other words a genius for whom no edge of life is blunted.

I told you that I was unwilling to call him a pure artist, and that he himself rejected this title, with a modesty tinged with aristocratic restraint. I would willingly call him a dandy, and for that I would have a sheaf of good reasons; for the word 'dandy' implies a quintessence of character and a subtle understanding of all the moral mechanisms of this world; but, from another aspect, the dandy aspires to cold detachment, and it is in this way that M. G., who is dominated, if ever anyone was, by an insatiable passion, that of seeing and feeling, parts company trenchantly with dandyism. *Amabam amare*, said Augustine. 'I love passion, passionately,' M. G. might willingly echo. The dandy is blasé, or affects to be, as a matter of policy and class attitude. M. G. hates blasé people. Sophisticated minds will understand me when I say that he possesses that difficult art of being sincere without being ridiculous. I would willingly confer on him the title of philosopher, to which he has a right for more than one reason; but his excessive love of visible, tangible things, in their most plastic form, inspires him with a certain dislike of those things that go to make up the intangible kingdom of the metaphysician. Let us therefore reduce him to the status of the pure pictorial moralist, like La Bruyère.

The crowd is his domain, just as the air is the bird's, and water that of the fish. His passion and his profession is to merge with the crowd. For the perfect idler, for the passionate observer it becomes an immense source of enjoyment to establish his dwelling in the throng, in the ebb and flow, the bustle, the fleeting and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel

at home anywhere; to see the world, to be at the very centre of the world, and yet to be unseen of the world, such are some of the minor pleasures of those independent, intense and impartial spirits, who do not lend themselves easily to linguistic definitions. The observer is a prince enjoying his incognito wherever he goes. The lover of life makes the whole world into his family, just as the lover of the fair sex creates his from all the lovely women he has found, from those that could be found, and those who are impossible to find, just as the picture-lover lives in an enchanted world of dreams painted on canvases. Thus the lover of universal life moves into the crowd as though into an enormous reservoir of electricity. He, the lover of life, may also be compared to a mirror as vast as this crowd; to a kaleidoscope endowed with consciousness, which with every one of its movements presents a pattern of life, in all its multiplicity, and the flowing grace of all the elements that go to compose life. It is an ego artist for the non-ego, and reflecting it at every moment in energies more vivid than life itself, always inconstant and fleeting. 'Any man', M. G. once said, in one of those talks he rendered memorable by the intensity of his gaze, and by his eloquence of gesture, 'any man who is not weighed down with a sorrow so searching as to touch all his faculties, and who is bored in the midst of the crowd, is a fool! A fool! and I despise him!'

When, as he wakes up, M. G. opens his eyes and sees the sun beating vibrantly at his window-panes, he says to himself with remorse and regret: 'What an imperative command! What a fanfare of light! Light everywhere for several hours past! Light I have lost in sleep! and endless numbers of things bathed in light that I could have seen and have failed to!' And off he goes! And he watches the flow of life move by, majestic and dazzling. He admires the eternal beauty and the astonishing harmony of life in the capital cities, a harmony so providentially maintained in the tumult of human liberty. He gazes at the landscape of the great city, landscapes of stone, now

swathed in the mist, now struck in full face by the sun. He enjoys handsome equipages, proud horses, the spit and polish of the grooms, the skilful handling by the page boys, the smooth rhythmical gait of the women, the beauty of the children, full of the joy of life and proud as peacocks of their pretty clothes; in short, life universal. If in a shift of fashion, the cut of a dress has been slightly modified, if clusters of ribbons and curls have been dethroned by rosettes, if bonnets have widened and chignons have come down a little on the nape of the neck, if waist-lines have been raised and skirts become fuller, you may be sure that from a long way off his eagle's eye will have detected it. A regiment marches by, maybe on its way to the ends of the earth, filling the air of the boulevard with its martial airs, as light and lively as hope; and sure enough M. G. has already seen, inspected and analysed the weapons and the bearing of this whole body of troops. Harness, highlights, bands, determined mien, heavy and grim mustachios, all these details flood chaotically into him; and within a few minutes the poem that comes with it all is virtually composed. And then his soul will vibrate with the soul of the regiment, marching as though it were one living creature, proud image of joy and discipline!

But evening comes. The witching hour, the uncertain light, when the sky draws its curtains and the city lights go on.<sup>15</sup> The sun. Honest men or crooked customers, wise or irresponsible, all are saying to themselves: 'The day is done at last!' Good men and bad turn their thoughts to pleasure, and each hurries to his favourite haunt to drink the cup of oblivion. M. G. will be the last to leave any place where the departing glories of daylight linger, where poetry echoes, life pulsates, music sounds; any place where a human passion offers a subject to his eye where natural man and conventional man reveal themselves in strange beauty, where the rays of the dying sun play on the fleeting pleasure of the 'depraved animal!'<sup>16</sup> 'Well,

there, to be sure, is a day well filled,' murmurs to himself a type of reader well-known to all of us; 'each one of us has surely enough genius to fill it in the same way.' No few men have the gift of seeing; fewer still have the power to express themselves. And now, whilst others are sleeping, this man is leaning over his table, his steady gaze on a sheet of paper, exactly the same gaze as he directed just now at the things about him, brandishing his pencil, his pen, his brush, splashing water from the glass up to the ceiling, wiping his pen on his shirt, hurried, vigorous, active, as though he was afraid the images might escape him, quarrelsome though alone, and driving himself relentlessly on. And things seen are born again on the paper, natural and more than natural, beautiful and better than beautiful, strange and endowed with an enthusiastic life, like the soul of their creator. The weird pageant has been distilled from nature. All the materials, stored higgledy-piggledy by memory, are classified, ordered, harmonized, and undergo that deliberate idealization, which is the product of a childlike perceptiveness, in other words a perceptiveness that is acute and magical by its very ingenuousness.

#### IV. MODERNITY

And so, walking or quickening his pace, he goes his way, for ever in search. In search of what? We may rest assured that this man, such as I have described him, this solitary mortal endowed with an active imagination, always roaming the great desert of men, has a nobler aim than that of the pure idler, a more general aim, other than the fleeting pleasure of circumstance. He is looking for that indefinable something we may be allowed to call 'modernity', for want of a better term to express the idea in question. The aim for him is to extract from fashion the poetry that resides in its historical envelope, to distil the eternal from the transitory. If we cast our eye over our exhibitions of modern pictures, we shall be struck by the

general tendency of our artists to clothe all manner of subjects in the dress of the past. Almost all of them use the fashions and the furnishings of the Renaissance, as David used Roman fashions and furnishings, but there is this difference, that David, having chosen subjects peculiarly Greek or Roman, could not do otherwise than present them in the style of antiquity, whereas the painters of today, choosing, as they do, subjects of a general nature, applicable to all ages, will insist on dressing them up in the fashion of the Middle Ages, of the Renaissance, or of the East. This is evidently sheer laziness; for it is much more convenient to state roundly that everything is hopelessly ugly in the dress of a period than to apply oneself to the task of extracting the mysterious beauty that may be hidden there, however small or light it may be. Modernity is the transient, the fleeting, the contingent; it is one half of art, the other being the eternal and the immovable. There was a form of modernity for every painter of the past; the majority of the fine portraits that remain to us from former times are clothed in the dress of their own day. They are perfectly harmonious works because the dress, the hairstyle, and even the gesture, the expression and the smile (each age has its carriage, its expression and its smile) form a whole, full of vitality. You have no right to despise this transitory fleeting element, the metamorphoses of which are so frequent, nor to dispense with it. If you do, you inevitably fall into the emptiness of an abstract and indefinable beauty, like that of the one and only woman of the time before the Fall. If for the dress of the day, which is necessarily right, you substitute another, you are guilty of a piece of nonsense that only a fancy-dress ball imposed by fashion can excuse. Thus the goddesses, the nymphs, and sultans of the eighteenth century are portraits in the spirit of their day.

No doubt it is an excellent discipline to study the old masters, in order to learn how to paint, but it can be no more than a superfluous exercise if your aim is to understand the



beauty of the present day. The draperies of Rubens or Veronese will not teach you how to paint watered silk à l'antique, or satin à la reine, or any other fabric produced by our mills, supported by a swaying crinoline, or petticoats of starched muslin. The texture and grain are not the same as in the fabrics of old Venice, or those worn at the court of Catherine.<sup>17</sup> We may add that the cut of the skirt and bodice is absolutely different, that the pleats are arranged into a new pattern, and finally that the gesture and carriage of the woman of today give her dress a vitality and a character that are not those of the woman of former ages. In short, in order that any form of modernity may be worthy of becoming antiquity, the mysterious beauty that human life unintentionally puts into it must have been extracted from it. It is this task that M. G. particularly addresses himself to.

I have said that every age has its own carriage, its expression, its gestures. This proposition may be easily verified in a large portrait gallery (the one at Versailles, for example). But it can be yet further extended. In a unity we call a nation, the professions, the social classes, the successive centuries, introduce variety not only in gestures and manners, but also in the general outlines of faces. Such and such a nose, mouth, forehead, will be standard for a given interval of time, the length of which I shall not claim to determine here, but which may certainly be a matter of calculation. Such ideas are not familiar enough to portrait painters; and the great weakness of M. Ingres, in particular, is the desire to impose on every type that sits for him a more or less complete process of improvement, in other words a despotic perfecting process, borrowed from the store of classical ideas.

In a matter such as this, *a priori* reasoning would be easy and even legitimate. The perpetual correlation between what is called the soul and what is called the body is a quite satisfactory explanation of how what is material or emanates from the spiritual reflects and will always reflect the spiritual force it

derives from. If a painter, patient and scrupulous but with only inferior imaginative power, were commissioned to paint a courtesan of today, and, for this purpose, were to get his inspiration (to use the hallowed term) from a courtesan by Titian or Raphael, the odds are that his work would be fraudulent, ambiguous, and difficult to understand. The study of a masterpiece of that date and of that kind will not teach him the carriage, the gaze, the come-hitherishness, or the living representation of one of these creatures that the dictionary of fashion has, in rapid succession, pigeonholed under the coarse or light-hearted rubric of unchaste, kept women, Lorettes.<sup>18</sup>

The same remark applies precisely to the study of the soldier, the dandy, and even animals, dogs or horses, and of all things that go to make up the external life of an age. We obede the man who goes to antiquity for the study of anything other than ideal art, logic and general method! By immersing himself too deeply in it, he will no longer have the present in his mind's eye; he throws away the value and the privileges afforded by circumstance; for nearly all our originality comes from the stamp that time impresses upon our sensibility. The reader will readily understand that I could easily verify my assertions from innumerable objects other than women. What would you say, for example, of a marine painter (I take an extreme case) who, having to represent the sober and elegant beauty of a modern vessel, were to tire out his eyes in the study of the overloaded, twisted shapes, the monumental stern, of ships of bygone ages, and the complex sails and rigging of the sixteenth century? And what would you think of an artist you had commissioned to do the portrait of a thorough-bred, celebrated in the solemn annals of the turf, if he were to restrict his studies to museums, if he were to content himself with looking at equine studies of the past in the picture galleries, in Van Dyck, Bourguignon,<sup>19</sup> or Van der Meulen?<sup>20</sup>

M. G., guided by nature, tyrannized over by circumstance, has followed a quite different path. He began by looking at life, and only later did he contrive to learn how to express life. The result has been a striking originality, in which whatever traces of untutored simplicity may still remain take on the appearance of an additional proof of obedience to the impression, of a flattery of truth. For most of us, especially for businessmen, in whose eyes nature does not exist, unless it be in its strict utility relationship with their business interests, the fantastic reality of life becomes strangely blunted. M. G. registers it constantly; his memory and his eyes are full of it.]

#### V. MNEMONIC ART

The word 'barbarousness', which may have come too often from my pen, might lead some people to believe that I am alluding to a number of shapeless drawings that only the imagination of the viewer is capable of transforming into perfect things. This would be a serious misunderstanding of what I mean. I refer to a sort of inevitable, synthetic, childlike barbarousness, which can often still be seen in a perfect type of art (Mexican, Egyptian, or Ninevehite barbarousness) and derives from the need to see things big, to look at them particularly from the point of view of their effect as a whole. It is not superfluous to remark here that the accusation of barbarousness has often been made against all painters who have an eye for synthesis and abbreviation, M. Corot, for example, who begins by tracing the main lines of a landscape, its structure and features. Similarly, M. G., faithful interpreter of his own impressions, notes with instinctive vigour the culminating features or highlights of an object (they can be culminating or luminous from a dramatic point of view) or its main characteristics, sometimes even with a degree of exaggeration useful to human memory; and the imagination of the viewer, undergoing in its turn the influence of this imperious

code, conjures up in clear outline the impression produced by objects on the mind of M. G. In this case, the viewer becomes the translator of a translation, which is always clear and always intoxicating.

There is a factor that adds greatly to the vitality of this pictorial record of everyday life. I refer to M. G.'s habit of work. He draws from memory, and not from the model, except in those cases (the Crimean War, for example) where there is an urgent need to take immediate, hurried notes and to establish the broad outlines of a subject. In fact all true draughtsmen draw from the image imprinted in their brain and not from nature. If the admirable sketches of Raphael, of Watteau and many others are quoted as examples to invalidate our contention, our reply is that these are indeed highly detailed notes, but mere notes they remain. When a true artist has reached the stage of the final execution of his work, the model would be more of an embarrassment to him than a help. It even happens that men like Daumier and M. G. who have been accustomed for years to using their memory, and filling it with images, find that, when confronted with a model and the multiplicity of detail this means, their main faculty is as though confused and paralysed.

Then begins a struggle between the determination to see everything, to forget nothing, and the faculty of memory, which has acquired the habit of registering in a flash the general tones and shape, the outline pattern. An artist with a perfect sense of form but particularly accustomed to the exercise of his memory and his imagination, then finds himself assailed, as it were, by a riot of details, all of them demanding justice, with the fury of a mob in love with absolute equality. Any form of justice is inevitably infringed; any harmony is destroyed, sacrificed; a multitude of trivialities are magnified; a multitude of little things become usurers of attention. The more the artist pays impartial attention to detail, the greater does anarchy become. Whether he be short-

officer, wasp-waisted and bending forward over ladies' chairs without bashfulness, with affected movements of the shoulders, and, seen from the rear, reminiscent of some slender and elegant insect; the zouave and the riflemen, whose whole bearing suggests outstanding audacity, self-reliance and, as it were, a more than ordinary sense of personal responsibility; and the free and easy manner, the mercurial gaiety of the light cavalry; the vaguely professorial and academic features of the technical arms, like the gunners and the sappers, often confirmed by the unworlike apparatus of spectacles: none of these models, none of these nuances is neglected, and all of them are summed up, defined, with the same love and wit.

I have in front of me, as I write, one of these drawings; its subject, which conveys a general impression of heroism, is the head of an infantry column; maybe these men are back from Italy<sup>38</sup> and have halted on the boulevards, basking in the enthusiasm of the crowds; maybe they have just accomplished long marches on the roads of Lombardy; I do not know, but what is clearly visible, what comes across fully, is the steadfast audacious character, even in repose, of all these sun-tanned, weather-beaten faces.

This is without a doubt the uniform expression produced by discipline, sufferings undergone together, the resigned air of courage, tempered by long periods of exhausting strain. Trousers turned up and tucked into gaiters, great-coats tarnished by dust and vaguely discoloured, the whole equipment in fact has itself taken on the indestructible appearance of beings that have returned from afar, and have experienced strange adventures. It really is as though these men were more solidly screwed on to their hips, more firmly planted on their feet, more self-assured than ordinary mortals. If Charlet, who was always on the look-out for just this kind of beauty, and who found it often enough, had seen this drawing, he would have been greatly impressed by it.

IX. THE DANDY<sup>39</sup>

The wealthy man, who, blasé though he may be, has no occupation in life but to chase along the highway of happiness, the man nurtured in luxury, and habituated from early youth to being obeyed by others, the man, finally, who has no profession other than elegance, is bound at all times to have a facial expression of a very special kind. Dandyism is an ill-defined social attitude as strange as duelling; it goes back a long way, since Caesar, Catiline,<sup>40</sup> Alcibiades<sup>41</sup> provide us with brilliant examples of it; it is very widespread, since Chateaubriand found examples of it in the forests and on the lake-sides of the New World. Dandyism, which is an institution outside the law, has a rigorous code of laws that all its subjects are strictly bound by, however ardent and independent their individual characters may be.

The English novelists, more than others, have cultivated the 'high life' type of novel, and their French counterparts who, like M. de Custine,<sup>42</sup> have tried to specialize in love novels have very wisely taken care to endow their characters with purses long enough for them to indulge without hesitation their slightest whims; and they freed them from any profession. These beings have no other status but that of cultivating the idea of beauty in their own persons, of satisfying their passions, of feeling and thinking. Thus they possess, to their hearts' content, and to a vast degree, both time and money, without which fantasy, reduced to the state of ephemeral reverie, can scarcely be translated into action. It is unfortunately very true that, without leisure and money, love can be no more than an orgy of the common man, or the accomplishment of a conjugal duty. Instead of being a sudden impulse full of ardour and reverie, it becomes a distastefully utilitarian affair.

If I speak of love in the context of dandyism, the reason is that love is the natural occupation of men of leisure. But the

dandy does not consider love as a special aim in life. If I have mentioned money, the reason is that money is indispensable to those who make an exclusive cult of their passions, but the dandy does not aspire to wealth as an object in itself; an open bank credit could suit him just as well; he leaves that squallid passion to vulgar mortals. Contrary to what a lot of thoughtless people seem to believe, dandyism is not even an excessive delight in clothes and material elegance. For the perfect dandy, these things are no more than the symbol of the aristocratic superiority of his mind. Thus, in his eyes, enamoured as he is above all of distinction, perfection in dress consists in absolute simplicity, which is, indeed, the best way of being distinguished. What then can this passion be, which has crystallized into a doctrine, and has formed a number of outstanding devotees, this unwritten code that has moulded so proud a brotherhood? It is, above all, the burning desire to create a personal form of originality, within the external limits of social conventions. It is a kind of cult of the ego which can still survive the pursuit of that form of happiness to be found in others, in woman for example; which can even survive what are called illusions. It is the pleasure of causing surprise in others, and the proud satisfaction of never showing any oneself. A dandy may be blasé, he may even suffer pain, but in the latter case he will keep smiling, like the Spartan under the bite of the fox.<sup>43</sup>

Clearly, then, dandyism in certain respects comes close to spirituality and to stoicism, but a dandy can never be a vulgar man. If he were to commit a crime, he might perhaps be socially damned, but if the crime came from some trivial cause, the disgrace would be irreparable. Let the reader not be shocked by this mixture of the grave and the gay; let him rather reflect that there is a sort of grandeur in all follies, a driving power in every sort of excess. A strange form of spirituality indeed! For those who are its high priests and its victims at one and the same time, all the complicated material

conditions they subject themselves to, from the most flawless dress at any time of day or night to the most risky sporting feats, are no more than a series of gymnastic exercises suitable to strengthen the will and school the soul. Indeed I was not far wrong when I compared dandyism to a kind of religion. The most rigorous monastic rule, the inexorable commands of the Old Man of the Mountain,<sup>44</sup> who enjoined suicide on his intoxicated disciples, were not more despotic or more slavishly obeyed than this doctrine of elegance and originality, which, like the others, imposes upon its ambitious and humble sectaries, men as often as not full of spirit, passion, courage, controlled energy, the terrible precept: *Perinde ac cadaver!*<sup>45</sup>

Fastidious, unbelievable, beaux, lions or dandies: which ever label these men claim for themselves, one and all stem from the same origin, all share the same characteristic of opposition and revolt; all are representatives of what is best in human pride, of that need, which is too rare in the modern generation, to combat and destroy triviality. That is the source, in your dandy, of that haughty, patrician attitude, aggressive even in its coldness. Dandyism appears especially in those periods of transition when democracy has not yet become all-powerful, and when aristocracy is only partially weakened and discredited. In the confusion of such times, a certain number of men, disenchanted and leisured 'outsiders', but all of them richly endowed with native energy, may conceive the idea of establishing a new kind of aristocracy, all the more difficult to break down because established on the most precious, the most indestructible faculties, on the divine gifts that neither work nor money can give. Dandyism is the last flicker of heroism in decadent ages; and the sort of dandy discovered by the traveller in Northern America in no sense invalidates this idea; for there is no valid reason why we should not believe that the tribes we call savage are not the remnants of great civilizations of the past. Dandyism is a setting sun; like the declining star, it is magnificent, without heat and full of



melancholy. But alas! the rising tide of democracy, which spreads everywhere and reduces everything to the same level, is daily carrying away these last champions of human pride, and submerging, in the waters of oblivion, the last traces of these remarkable myrmidons. Here in France, dandies are becoming rarer and rarer, whereas amongst our neighbours in England the state of society and the constitution (the true constitution, the one that is expressed in social habits) will, for a long time yet, leave room for the heirs of Sheridan, Brummell and Byron, always assuming that men worthy of them come forward.

What to the reader may have seemed a digression is not one in fact. The moral reflections and musings that arise from the drawings of an artist are in many cases the best interpretation that the critic can make of them; the notions they suggest are part of an underlying idea, and, by revealing them in turn, we may uncover the root idea itself. Need I say that when M. G. commits one of his dandies to paper, he always gives him his historical character, we might almost say his legendary character, were it not that we are dealing with our own day and with things that are generally held to be light-hearted? For here we surely have that ease of bearing, that sureness of manner, that simplicity in the habit of command, that way of wearing a frock-coat or controlling a horse, that calmness revealing strength in every circumstance, that convince us, when our eye does pick out one of those privileged beings, in whom the attractive and the formidable mingle so mysteriously: 'There goes a rich man perhaps, but quite certainly an unemployed Hercules.'

The specific beauty of the dandy consists particularly in that cold exterior resulting from the unshakable determination to remain unmoved; one is reminded of a latent fire, whose existence is merely suspected, and which, if it wanted to, but it does not, could burst forth in 'all its brightness. All that is expressed to perfection in these illustrations. ]

#### X. WOMAN

The being who, for most men, is the source of the most lively, and even, be it said to the shame of philosophical delights, the most lasting joys; the being towards or for whom all their efforts tend; that awe-inspiring being, incommunicable like God (with this difference that the infinite does not reveal itself because it would blind and crush the finite, whereas the being we are speaking about is incommunicable only, perhaps, because having nothing to communicate); that being in whom Joseph de Maistre saw a beautiful animal, whose charm brightens and facilitates the serious game of politics; for whom and by whom fortunes are made and lost; for whom, but especially by whom, artists and poets compose their most delicate jewels; from whom flow the most enervating pleasures and the most enriching sufferings - woman, in a word, is not, for the artist in general and for M. G. in particular, only the female of the human species. She is rather a divinity, a star, that presides over all the conceptions of the male brain; she is like the shimmer of all graces of nature, condensed into one being; she is the object of the most intense admiration and interest that the spectacle of life can offer to man's contemplation. She is a kind of idol, empty-headed perhaps, but dazzling, enchanting, an idol that holds men's destinies and wills in thrall to her glances. She is not, I repeat, an animal whose limbs, correctly assembled, provide a perfect example of harmony; nor is she even that type of pure beauty which might be imagined by a sculptor, in his moments of most austere meditation; not even that would suffice to explain her mysterious and complex spellbinding power. Neither Winkelman nor Raphael can help us in this context; and I am sure that M. G., in spite of the breadth of his intelligence (be it said without affront to him), would turn away from a piece of ancient statuary if, by looking at it, he were to lose the opportunity of enjoying a portrait by Reynolds or Lawrence. All the things that adorn woman,

5. (p. 367) The next two paragraphs are from 'The Salon of 1859', section V.
  6. (p. 368) The following passage originally appeared in an article on Delacroix's mural paintings. (Périade)
  7. (p. 371) Jean de la Fontaine (1621-95), poet and fabulist.
  8. (p. 371) Nicolas Boileau (1636-1711), satirical poet and critic.
  9. (p. 371) None other than Baudelaire, perhaps.
  10. (p. 371) François de Malherbe (1555-1628), lyrical poet.
  11. (p. 372) Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-82).
  12. (p. 372) Charles de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu (1689-1755), political thinker.
  13. (p. 372) 1825-81. Writer and critic.
  14. (p. 374) i.e. Jean-Jacques Rousseau.
  15. (p. 375) 1801-32. Traveller and naturalist.
  16. (p. 375) Prosper Mérimée (1803-70), author of short stories and Inspector of Ancient Monuments.
  17. (p. 376) Monsieur de la Palisse was supposedly given to uttering weighty apophthegms of an obvious kind.
  18. (p. 376) Giuseppe Ferrari (1812-76).
  19. (p. 377) Greek sculptor (fifth century B.C.).
  20. (p. 379) Horace, *Odes*, III, 1: 'I hate the vulgar crowd . . . and keep at a distance.'
  21. (p. 379) The expression comes from a poem by Sainte-Beuve ('Épître à Villemain', *Pensées d'aouï*) in reference to Vigny.
  22. (p. 380) Jacob Jordans (1593-1678); Flemish school.
  23. (p. 381) Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527), Florentine historian and political thinker, author of *The Prince*.
  24. (p. 383) Presumably the section on Charlet in 'Some French Caricaturists'. See pp. 211-14 above.
  25. (p. 384) See note 18 on 'The Salon of 1859'.
15. The Painter of Modern Life
1. (p. 390) This article probably dates from November 1859 to February 1860. (Périade) It first appeared on 26 and 29 November and 3 December 1863; subsequently in *A.r.*
  2. (p. 390) Debuourt and the three Saint-Aubin brothers were all eighteenth-century draughtsmen and engravers.
  3. (p. 393) See *De l'Amour* (1822), Book I, Chapter 17.
  4. (p. 393) i.e. their belief in objective standards of beauty and systematic criticism.
  5. (p. 393) e.g. in 'The Universal Exhibition of 1855', section I.

6. (p. 394) In 1833 Balzac conceived the idea of giving a framework, to be called *La Comédie humaine*, to all his novels and stories, both those already published and those as yet unborn, so as to make his whole work into a kind of pageant of contemporary French society. In 'Some French Caricaturists' Baudelaire makes the same point as here about Gavarni and Daumier in relation to Balzac (see above, p. 228), but in the passage in question Balzac is stated to have recognized the relationship. That he should have done so seems a reasonable supposition.
7. (p. 394) See note 63 on 'The Salon of 1846'.
8. (p. 394) See notes 33 and 34 on 'Some French Caricaturists'.
9. (p. 395) Constantin Guys (1805-92), born in Holland; was correspondent for the *Illustrated London News* during the Crimean War. See below.
10. (p. 396) i.e. Jean-Jacques Rousseau.
11. (p. 396) Probably in 1859.
12. (p. 397) Aristocratic quarter of Paris. In contrast, the Bréda quarter, which took its name from the owner of the land on which it was developed under the Restoration, had an unsavoury reputation.
13. (p. 397) cf. 'The Salon of 1859', section I *passim*.
14. (p. 397) Edgar Allan Poe.
15. (p. 401) cf. *F. du m. No. XCV*, *Le Crépuscule du soir*.
16. (p. 401) From Rousseau's *Discours sur l'inégalité*.
17. (p. 404) Presumably Catherine the Great of Russia.
18. (p. 405) Term coined c. 1840, meaning young woman of easy virtue. 'Doe' ('une biche') has the same meaning, and came into use when 'Lorette' went out of fashion. See also 'Some French Caricaturists', p. 228.
19. (p. 405) Jacques Coutrois (1621-76), called 'Borgognone', at Bologna, where he worked for many years: mainly battle scenes, with horses.
20. (p. 405) 1634-90. Flemish origin; attached to the service of Louis XIV. Chronicler in paint of that monarch's campaigns.
21. (p. 408) Probably Ingres.
22. (p. 408) 1800-1876. Known specially for his romantic roles.
23. (p. 408) 1800-1888. Comic actor.
24. (p. 409) i.e. Crimean War. The 'Eastern Question' was in the news at the time, and this may explain why Baudelaire speaks of 'la Guerre d'Orient'.
25. (p. 410) 'Consecration of a burial-ground at Scutari by the Bishop of Gibraltar.'
26. (p. 410) 1806-71. Became Commander-in-Chief of the Turkish army.

27. (p. 411) Turkish irregular troops: Turkish word for 'bad hair'.  
 28. (p. 411) 1809-95. Marshal of France.  
 29. (p. 411) 1795-1878. Marshal of France. His service began under Napoleon I and continued until 1870.  
 30. (p. 411) Turkish Commander-in-Chief.  
 31. (p. 411) 'Achmet Pasha, Commander-in-Chief, standing in front of his tent, surrounded by his staff, receives two European officers', Achmet Pasha is presumably Achmet-Kaiserli-Pasha (1796-1881).  
 32. (p. 412) *Bustache Lesueur* (1616-55): mostly religious paintings.  
 33. (p. 413) The two main religious feasts of the Muslim year.  
 34. (p. 413) 1822-63. Son of Mehemet Ali.  
 35. (p. 415) *Friederich Ludwig* (1815-67), second son of Ludwig I of Bavaria. Ascended the Greek throne 1832; deposed 1862.  
 36. (p. 415) Greek militiamen in the Greek War of Independence; subsequently the word came to be used of any Greek remaining faithful to the traditional customs and national dress.  
 37. (p. 417) 1821-62. Man of letters and soldier; Crimean War veteran.  
 38. (p. 418) Presumably after the Italian campaign against the Austrians, with the battles of Magenta and Solferino, in June 1859.  
 39. (p. 419) Baudelaire prided himself on being a dandy; see *Théophile Gautier's* essay on him.  
 40. (p. 419) c. 109-62 B.C. Killed after the failure of his conspiracy in 63 B.C.  
 41. (p. 419) 450-404 B.C. Athenian general; murdered in exile.  
 42. (p. 419) See note 4 on '*Madame Bovary* by Gustave Flaubert'.  
 43. (p. 420) The legend of the Spartan who refused to cry out in pain when a fox was gnawing at his vitals reflects the Spartan tradition of rigid fortitude. See Plutarch, *Vita Lycurgi*, Chapter 18.  
 44. (p. 421) Chief of the Ismaelite sect in medieval Syria.  
 45. (p. 421) 'As a corpse' (Ignatius Loyola's precept of obedience for Jesuits).  
 46. (p. 424) 'The world of women.'  
 47. (p. 424) The Bois de Boulogne, woods on the western outskirts of Paris.  
 48. (p. 425) Law courts gazette, a daily journal founded in 1826.  
 49. (p. 430) See *La Bruyère's Les Caractères* (1688), III, 'Des femmes' (Penguin Classics, translated by Jean Stewart).  
 50. (p. 432) Juvenal, *Satire VI*, 'On Women', line 327: 'the natural woman'.  
 51. (p. 432) A.D. 15-48. Fourth wife of Claudius I.  
 52. (p. 435) Jean Moreau (1741-1814), draughtsman and engraver, notably of the French classics.

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Charles Bandelone, *The Flowers of Evil*,  
ed. Maurice and Jackson Mathews (New Directions, 1989)

THE FLOWERS OF EVIL

To show them further charms  
Let them implore your arms,  
And these, rebuking, humble  
Fingers that fumble

With proffered pearls aglow  
And sonnets of Belleau,  
Which, fettered by your beauty,  
They yield in duty.

Riffraff of scullion-rhymers  
Would dedicate their primers  
Under the stairs to view  
Only your shoe.

Each page-boy lucky-started,  
Each marquis, each Ronsard  
Would hang about your bowler  
To while an hour.

You'd count, among your blisses,  
Than lilies far more kisses,  
And boast, among your flames,  
Some royal names.

Yet now your beauty begs  
For scraps on floors, and dregs  
Else destined to the gutter,  
As bread and butter.

You eye, with longing tense,  
Cheap gauds for thirty cents,  
Which, pardon me, these days  
I cannot raise.

108

PARISIAN SCENES

No scent, or pearl, or stone,  
But nothing save your own  
Thin nudity for dower,  
Pass on, my flower!

—Roy Campbell

XCII

THE SWAN

To Victor Hugo

I

Andromache, I think of you. The little stream,  
A yellowing mirror that onetime beheld  
The huge solemnity of your widow's grief,  
(That other Simois your tears have swelled)

Suddenly flooded the memory's dark soil  
As I was crossing the new *Place du Carrousel*.  
The old Paris is gone (the face of a town  
Is more changeable than the heart of mortal man).

I see what seem the ghosts of these royal barracks,  
The rough-hewn capitals, the columns waiting to crack,  
Weeds, and the big rocks greened with standing water,  
And at the window, a jumble of bric-a-brac.

One time a menagerie was on display there,  
And there I saw one morning at the hour  
Of cold and clarity when Labor rises  
And brooms make little cyclones of soot in the air

109

THE FLOWERS OF EVIL

A swan that had escaped out of his cage,  
And there, web-footed on the dry sidewalk,  
Dragged his white plumes over the cobblestones,  
Lifting his beak at the gutter as if to talk,

And bathing his wings in the sifting city dust,  
His heart full of some cool, remembered lake,  
Said, "Water, when will you rain? Where is your thunder?"  
I can see him now, straining his twitching neck

Skyward again and again, like the man in Ovid,  
Toward an ironic heaven as blank as slate,  
And trapped in a ruinous myth, he lifts his head  
As if God were the object of his hate.

II

Paris changes, but nothing of my melancholy  
Gives way. Foundations, scaffoldings, tackle and blocks,  
And the old suburbs drift off into allegory,  
While my frailest memories take on the weight of rocks.

And so at the Louvre one image weighs me down:  
I think of my great swan, the imbecile strain  
Of his head, noble and foolish as all the exiled,  
Eaten by ceaseless needs—and once again

Of you, Andromache, from a great husband's arms  
Fallen to the whip and mounted lust of Pyrrhus,  
And slumped in a heap beside an empty tomb,  
(Poor widow of Hector, and bride of Helenus)

And think of the consumptive negress, stamping  
In mud, emaciate, and trying to see

PARISIAN SCENES

The vanished cocoons of hidden Africa  
Behind the thickening granite of the mist;

Of whoever has lost what cannot be found again,  
Ever, ever; of those who lap up the tears  
And nurse at the tears of that motherly she-wolf, Sorrow;  
Of orphans drying like flowers in empty jars.

So in that forest where my mind is exiled  
One memory sounds like brass in the ancient war:  
I think of sailors washed up on uncharted islands,  
Of prisoners, the conquered, and more, so many more.

—Anthony Hecht

XCIII

THE SEVEN OLD MEN

To Victor Hugo.

Ant-seething city, city full of dreams,  
Where ghosts by daylight tug the passer's sleeve.  
Mystery, like sap, through all its conduit-streams,  
Quickens the dread Colossus that they weave.

One early morning, in the street's sad mud,  
Whose houses, by the fog increased in height,  
Seemed wharves along a riverside in flood:  
When with a scene to match the actor's plight,

Foul yellow mist had filled the whole of space:  
Steeling my nerves to play a hero's part,

Valeraille de timours  
Te dédiant leurs primeurs  
Et contemplant ton soulier  
Sous l'escalier,

Maint page épris du hasard,  
Maint seigneur et maint Ronsard  
Épieraient pour le déduit  
Ton frais réduit !

Tu compterais dans tes lits  
Plus de baisers que de lis  
Et rangerais sous tes loix  
Plus d'un Valois !

— Cependant tu vas gueusant  
Quelque vieux débris gisant  
Au seuil de quelque Vêfour  
De carrefour;

Tu vas lorgnant en dessous  
Des bijoux de vingt-neuf sous  
Dont je ne puis, oh ! pardon !  
Te faire don.

Va donc, sans autre ornement,  
Parfum, perles, diamant,  
Que ta maigre nudité,  
O ma beauté !

XCII

LE CYGNE

*A Victor Hugo.*

*Mégné*

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 cœur 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 verdîs 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



LES FLEURS DU MAL

Baignait nerveusement ses ailes dans la poudre,  
Et disait, le cœur plein de son beau lac natal :  
" Eau, quand donc pleuvras-tu ? quand tonneras-tu,  
Je vois ce malheureux, mythe étrange et fatal, [foudra-tu ? ]"

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 phthisique,  
Pitétant dans la boue, et cherchant, l'œil hagard,  
Les cocotiers absents de la superbe Afrique  
Derrière la muraille immense du brouillard ;

TABLEAUX PARISIENS

A quiconque a perdu ce qui ne se retrouve  
Jamais, jamais ! à ceux qui s'abreuvent de pleurs  
Et tentent 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 !

XCIII

LES SEPT VIEILLARDS

*A Victor Hugo.*

Fourmillante cité, cité pleine de rêves,  
Où le spectre, en plein jour, raccroche le passant !  
Les mystères partout coulent comme des sèves  
Dans les canaux étroits du colosse puissant.

Un matin, cependant que dans la triste rue  
Les maisons, dont la brume allongeaît la hauteur,  
Simulaient les deux quais d'une rivière accrue,  
Et que, décor semblable à l'âme de l'acteur,

Un brouillard sale et jaune inondait tout l'espace,  
Je suivais, roidissant mes nerfs comme un héros  
Et discutant avec mon âme déjà lasse,  
Le faubourg secoué par les lourds tonbereaux.

Tout à coup, un vieillard dont les guenilles jaunes  
Imitaient la couleur de ce ciel pluvieux,  
Et dont l'aspect aurait fait pleuvoir les aumônes,  
Sans la méchanceté qui luisait dans ses yeux,

XXVI  
LES YEUX DES PAUVRES

Ah! vous voulez savoir pourquoi je vous hais aujourd'hui. Il vous sera sans doute moins facile de le comprendre qu'à moi de vous l'expliquer, car vous êtes, je crois, le plus bel exemple d'imperméabilité féminine qui se puisse rencontrer.

Nous avions passé ensemble une longue journée qui m'avait paru courte. Nous nous étions bien promis que toutes nos pensées nous seraient communes à l'un et à l'autre, et que nos deux âmes désormais n'en feraient plus qu'une; — un rêve qui n'a rien d'original, après tout, si ce n'est que, rêvé par tous les hommes, il n'a été réalisé par aucun.

Le soir, un peu fatiguée, vous voulûtes vous asseoir devant un café neuf qui formait le coin d'un boulevard neuf, encore tout plein de gravois et montrant déjà glorieusement ses splendeurs inachevées. Le café étincelait. Le gaz lui-même y déployait toute l'ardeur d'un début, et éclairait de toutes ses forces les murs aveuglants de blancheur, les nappes éblouissantes des miroirs, les ors des baguettes et des corniches, les pages aux joues rebondies traînées par les chiens en laisse, les dames riant au faucon perché sur leur poing, les nymphes et les déesses portant sur leur tête des fruits, des pâtés et du gibier, les Hébé et les Ganyrnédés présentant à bras tendu la petite amphore à bavaroises ou l'obélisque bicolore des glaces panachées; toute l'histoire et toute la mythologie mises au service de la goinfferie.

Droit devant nous, sur la chaussée, était planté un brave homme d'une quarantaine d'années, au visage fatigué, à la barbe grisonnante, tenant d'une main un petit garçon et portant sur l'autre bras un petit être trop faible pour marcher. Il remplissait l'office de bonne et faisait prendre à ses enfants l'air du soir. Tous en guenilles. Ces trois visages étaient extraordinairement sérieux, et ces six yeux contemplaient fixement le café nouveau avec une admiration égale, mais nuancée diversement par l'âge.

Les yeux du père disaient: «Que c'est beau! que c'est beau! on dirait que tout l'or du pauvre monde est venu se porter sur ces murs.» — Les yeux du petit garçon: «Que c'est beau! que c'est beau! mais c'est une maison où peuvent seuls entrer les gens qui ne sont pas comme nous.» — Quant aux yeux du plus petit, ils étaient trop fascinés pour exprimer autre chose qu'une joie stupide et profonde.

*Baudelaire, Les Poems in Prose, Trans. Francis  
Aronke (London: Arvill Press, 1989)*

XXVI  
THE EYES OF THE POOR

So you want to know why I hate you today? Perhaps this will be harder for you to understand than for me to explain, as I believe you are the most perfect example of the thick-skinned female to be found anywhere.

We had just spent a long day together, which seemed to me all too short. We had each sworn that our every thought would be common to us both, and that from now on our twin souls would be one — a dream which is in no way original except that, having been dreamt of by all men, it has been achieved by none.

That evening, as you were feeling rather tired, you wanted us to sit on the terrace outside the café at the corner of a newly built boulevard which was still littered with rubble but already making a lavish display of its uncompleted splendours. The café glittered all over with lights. The new gas-jets cast their incandescent novelty all round, brightening the whiteness of the walls, the dazzling planes of a multitude of mirrors, the gilt of all the mouldings and cornices, the rosy-cheeked pageboys drawn along by harnessed dogs, the ladies laughing at the falcons perched on their wrists, the nymphs and goddesses balancing baskets of fruits and pâtés and game on their heads, the Hébes and Ganyrnédés offering little cups of bavarian cream or multicoloured pyramids of ices — all history and mythology were exploited in the service of gluttony.

Directly opposite to where we sat, a harmless fellow who must have been in his forties stood in the roadway. He had a tired face with a grizzled beard, and was holding a small boy by the hand, and carrying a child, too small for walking yet, on the other arm. He was playing the nursemaid, taking his children out for an evening airing. They were all in rags. Their three faces were strikingly serious, with their three pairs of eyes fixed on the new café, all with equal wonderment though varying in expression according to their age.

The father's eyes seemed to be saying, 'What a beautiful sight — how beautiful it all is — it's as though all the gold in our poor world has been spread over those walls.' The little boy's eyes were saying, 'How beautiful, beautiful — but this is a house where only people who are not like us are allowed in.' As for the smallest of the trio, his eyes were too hypnotized to express anything but a mindless, deeply felt joy.



Les chansonniers disent que le plaisir rend l'âme bonne et amollit le cœur, La chanson avait raison ce soir-là, relativement à moi. Non seulement j'étais attendri par cette famille d'yeux, mais je me sentais un peu honteux de nos verres et de nos cafés, plus grands que notre soif. Je tournais mes regards vers les vôtres, cher amour, pour y lire *ma pensée*; je plongeais dans vos yeux si beaux et si bizarrement doux, dans vos yeux verts, habités par le Caprice et inspirés par la Lune, quand vous me dites: « Ces gens-là me sont insupportables avec leurs yeux ouverts comme des portes cochères! Ne pourriez-vous pas prier le maître du café de les éloigner d'ici? »

Tant il est difficile de s'entendre, mon cher ange, et tant la pensée est incommunicable, même entre gens qui s'aiment!

The music-hall songsters tell us that pleasure is good for the soul and softens the heart. The ballad was quite right, that evening, as far as I was concerned. Not only was I moved by that family of eyes, but I felt a little ashamed of our array of glasses and decanters, all so much bigger than our thirst. I was turning my eyes towards yours, my dear, to read *my thoughts* in them; I was plunging into your beautiful, strangely gentle eyes, your emerald eyes full of caprice and the inspirations of the Moon, when you remarked, 'I just can't stand those people, with their eyes as wide open as gates. Could you not ask the head-waiter to see them off?'

So you see, how hard it is to understand one another, my dear angel, how incommunicable our thoughts are, even between those who love each other.

[[1862), 1864]

XLVI  
PERTE D'AURÉOLE

«Eh! qu'on! vous ici, mon cher? Vous, dans un mauvais lieu! vous, le buveur de quintessences! vous, le mangeur d'ambroisie! En vérité, il y a là de quoi me surprendre.»

— Mon cher, vous connaissez ma terreur des chevaux et des voitures. Tout à l'heure, comme je traversais le boulevard, en grande hâte, et que je sautillais dans la boue, à travers ce chaos mouvant où la mort arrive au galop de tous les côtés à la fois, mon auréole, dans un mouvement brusque, a glissé de ma tête dans la fange du macadam. Je n'ai pas eu le courage de la ramasser. J'ai jugé moins désagréable de perdre mes insignes que de me faire rompre les os. Et puis, me suis-je dit, à quelque chose malheur est bon. Je puis maintenant me promener incognito, faire des actions basses, et me livrer à la crapule, comme les simples mortels. Et me voici, tout semblable à vous, comme vous voyez!

— Vous devriez au moins faire afficher cette auréole, ou la faire réclamer par le commissaire.

— Ma foi! non. Je me trouve bien ici. Vous seul, vous m'avez reconnu. D'ailleurs la dignité m'ennuie. Ensuite je pense avec joie que quelque mauvais poète la ramassera et s'en coiffera impudemment. Faire un heureux, quelle jouissance! et surtout un heureux qui me fera rire! Pensez à X, ou à Z! Hein! comme ce sera drôle!»

XLVII  
A LOST HALO

'Well, fancy seeing you here, old man, in a shady joint like this! You who drink nothing but quintessences and eat nothing but ambrosial! Really, you know, I have every right to be astonished.'

'Dear fellow, you know how much I dread horses and carriages. As I was crossing the road just now as fast as my legs would carry me, hopping through the mud and the chaos of traffic with death hurdling at me from every direction at once, some sharp movement of mine made my halo fall off my head and roll in the dirt on the road. I hadn't the courage to bend down and pick it up, thinking it would be less painful to lose my laurels than to have a few bones broken. I told myself that it's an ill wind and so on — now I can go around incognito, do all sorts of disgraceful things and mix with the scum of society, the way ordinary people do. So here I am, exactly the same as yourself, as you can see.'

'But at least you should advertise for your lost halo, or get the police to make an inquiry?'

'No, anything but. I feel quite at home in this place. You are the only one who has recognized me. In any case, being on one's dignity is such a bore. Then it delights me to think that some dim little versifier will pick my halo up and have the cheek to crown himself with it. I rather enjoy the idea of making some fellow happy, and above all a happlified fellow that I can laugh at. Now just imagine X or Z with a halo on his head — that'll be a laugh!'

XLIX  
ASSOMMONS LES PAUVRES!

Pendant quinze jours je m'étais confiné dans ma chambre, et je m'étais entouré des livres à la mode dans ce temps-là (il y a seize ou dix-sept ans); je veux parler des livres où il est traité de l'art de rendre les peuples heureux, sages et riches, en vingt-quatre heures. J'avais donc digéré, — avalé, veux-je dire, — toutes les élocutions de tous ces entrepreneurs de bonheur public, — de ceux qui conseillent à tous les pauvres de se faire esclaves, et de ceux qui leur persuadent qu'ils sont tous des rois détronés. — On ne trouvera pas surprenant que je fusse alors dans un état d'esprit avoisinant le vertige ou la stupidité. Il m'avait semblé seulement que je sentais, confiné au fond de mon intellect, le germe obscur d'une idée supérieure à toutes les formules de bonne femme dont j'avais récemment parcouru le dictionnaire. Mais ce n'était que l'idée d'une idée, quelque chose d'infiniment vague.

Et je sortis avec une grande soif. Car le goût passionné des mauvaises lectures engendre un besoin proportionnel du grand air et des rafraîchissants.

Comme j'allais entrer dans un cabaret, un mendiant me tendit son chapeau, avec un de ces regards inoubliables qui cultiveraient les trônes, si l'esprit renuait la matière, et si l'œil d'un magnétiseur faisait naître les raisins.

En même temps, j'entendis une voix qui chuchotait à mon oreille, une voix que je reconnus bien; c'était celle d'un bon Ange, ou d'un bon Démon, qui m'accompagne partout. Puisque Socrate avait son bon Démon, pourquoi n'aurais-je pas mon bon Ange, et pourquoi n'aurais-je pas l'hommeur, comme Socrate, d'obtenir mon brevet de folie, signé du subtil Lélut et du bien avisé Baillarger?

Il existe cette différence entre le Démon de Socrate et le mien, que celui de Socrate ne se manifestait à lui que pour défendre, avertir, empêcher, et que le mien daigne conseiller, suggérer, persuader. Ce pauvre Socrate n'avait qu'un Démon prohibiteur; le mien est un grand affirmateur, le mien est un Démon d'action, un Démon de combat.

Or, sa voix me chuchotait ceci: «Celui-là seul est l'égal d'un autre, qui le prouve, et celui-là seul est digne de la liberté, qui sait la conquérir.»

XLIX  
BASH THE POOR!

I had kept to my den for a fortnight, surrounded by the best-sellers of the day (sixteen or seventeen years ago) — I mean books dealing with the art of making nations happy and wise and rich in twenty-four hours. So I had digested or rather gulped down all the drivel of those savours of public welfare who exhort the poor to become slaves, or convince them that every pauper is an uncrowned king. You won't be surprised that in the end I was in a state bordering on an epileptic fit or imbecility.

However I had an inkling that somewhere in the dim depths of my mind the seed of an idea was busy germinating, an idea far superior to the compendium of old-wives' cure-alls I had recently been pondering over. But it was no more than the idea of an idea, something as yet completely undefinable.

At last I ventured out, with an enormous thirst, as the feverish appetite for devouring bad books had given me a proportionate need for outside air and refreshments.

I was just about to enter a bar when a beggar held his cap out towards me, with the sort of look in his eyes which would topple thrones, if mind could move matter, or if a hypnotist's eye could make grapes grow, as the Magnetists maintain.

At the same moment I heard a voice whispering in my ear, a voice which I recognized at once as that of my good angel, or good demon, who accompanies me wherever I go. As Socrates had his good demon, why shouldn't I have my good angel, and why shouldn't I have the honour, like Socrates, of being awarded a Certificate of Lunacy signed by such eminent alienists as the subtle Dr Lélut and that great authority Dr Baillarger, in person?

But there's a difference between Socrates' demon and my own, which is, that his only visited him in order to forbid, warn, and obstruct, whereas mine is so good as to advise, suggest and persuade. Poor Socrates had only a negative demon, whereas mine is positive, a spirit of action and combat.

Well, its voice was now whispering into my ear, 'A man is only equal to another man if he can prove it, and only he deserves liberty who can win it for himself.'

Immédiatement, je saurai sur mon mendiant. D'un seul coup de poing, je lui bouchai un œil, qui devint, en une seconde, gros comme une balle. Je cassai un de mes ongles à lui briser deux dents, et comme je ne me sentais pas assez fort, étant né délicat et m'étant peu exercé à la boxe, pour assommer rapidement ce vicillard, je le saisis d'une main par le collet de son habit, de l'autre, je l'empoignai à la gorge, et je me mis à lui secouer vigoureusement la tête contre un mur. Je dois avouer que j'avais préalablement inspecté les environs d'un coup d'œil, et que j'avais vérifié que dans cette banlieue déserte je me trouvais, pour un assez long temps, hors de la portée de tout agent de police.

Ayant ensuite, par un coup de pied lancé dans le dos, assez énergique pour briser les omoplates, terrassé ce sexagénnaire affaibli, je me saisis d'une grosse branche d'arbre qui traînait à terre, et je le battis avec l'énergie obstinée des cuisiniers qui veulent attendrir un beef-teack.

Tout à coup, — ô miracle! ô jouissance du philosophe qui vérifie l'excellence de sa théorie! — je vis cette antique carcasse se retourner, se redresser avec une énergie que je n'aurais jamais soupçonnée dans une machine si singulièrement détraquée, et, avec un regard de haine qui me parut de *bon augure*, le malandrin décrépiti se jeta sur moi, me pocha les deux yeux, me cassa quatre dents, et avec la même branche d'arbre me battit dru comme plâtre. — Par mon énergie méditation, je lui avais donc rendu l'orgueil et la vie.

Alors, je lui fis force signes pour lui faire comprendre que je considérais la discussion comme finie, et me relevant avec la satisfaction d'un sophiste du Portique, je lui dis: «Monsieur, *vous êtes mon égal!* veuillez me faire l'honneur de partager avec moi ma bourse; et souvenez-vous, si vous êtes réellement philanthrope, qu'il faut appliquer à tous vos confrères, quand ils vous demanderont l'aumône, la théorie que j'ai eu la *douleur* d'essayer sur votre dos.»

Il m'a bien juré qu'il avait compris ma théorie, et qu'il obéirait à mes conseils.

So I hurled myself on my beggar without further ado. With a single punch I blacked one of his eyes, which swelled like a balloon in a trice. I broke one of my fingernails in knocking a couple of his teeth out, and as I didn't feel strong enough (being of a rather delicate constitution and not a very experienced boxer) to flatten the old fellow as fast as I would like, I seized him by the collar with one hand and caught him by the throat with the other, then started banging his head vigorously against the wall. I must confess that I'd looked round and made sure that I'd be safely out of reach of a policeman for some time.

After flattening the weakening sexagenarian with a kick in his back, I picked up a branch which was lying on the ground and belaboured him with the relentless enthusiasm of a cook tendering a steak.

Then suddenly — what a miracle! — with all the delight of a philosopher who has just proved his theory to be valid, I saw the senile old carcass turn round, straighten himself up, then with an energy which I would never have suspected in such a remarkably inefficient mechanism, and with a glare of hatred which I took for a good omen, the decrepit scrounger hurled himself at me, gave me two black eyes, broke four of my teeth, and thrashed me soundly with the same branch that I had applied to his anatomy. — Thus, by means of the vigorous treatment I subjected him to, I had restored in him his self-esteem and zest for life.

After that I made him understand by various signs that I considered our encounter to be at an end, and, picking myself up with all the satisfaction of a Greek sophist, I said 'Sir, you are now my equal. Please do me the honour of sharing my purse, and remember that if you are a philanthropist you must apply to all your associates, whenever they beg for alms, the theory which I have been at such pains to demonstrate on your back.'

The good fellow swore that he quite understood my theory, and that in future he would follow my advice.

## THE DRUNKEN BOAT

I drifted on a river I could not control,  
No longer guided by the bargemen's ropes.  
They were captured by howling Indians  
Who nailed them naked to colored stakes.

I cared no more for other boats or cargoes:  
English cotton, Flemish wheat, all were gone.  
When my bargemen could no longer haul me  
I forgot about everything and drifted on.

Through the wild splash and surging of the tides  
Last winter, deaf as a child's dark night,  
I ran and ran! And the drifting Peninsulas  
Have never known such conquering delight.

Lighter than cork, I revolved upon waves  
That roll the dead forever in the deep,  
Ten days, beyond the blinking eyes of land!  
Lulled by storms, I drifted seaward from sleep.

Sweeter than children find the taste of sour fruit,  
Green water filled my cockle shell of pine.  
Anchor and rudder went drifting away,  
Washed in vomit and stained with blue wine.

Now I drift through the Poem of the Sea;  
This gruel of stars mirrors the milky sky,  
Devours green azures; ecstatic flotsam,  
Drowned men, pale and thoughtful, sometimes drift by.

Staining the sudden blueness, the slow sounds,  
Deliriums that streak the glowing sky,  
Stronger than drink and the songs we sing,  
It is boiling, bitter, red; it is love!

ARTHUR RIMBAUD: COMPLETE WORKS / 120

Trans. Paul Schmidt (New York: Harper  
Colophon Books, 1976)

I watched the lightning tear the sky apart,  
Watched waterspouts, and streaming undertow,  
And Dawn like Dove-People rising on wings—  
I've seen what men have only dreamed they saw!

I saw the sun with mystic horrors darken  
And shimmer through a violet haze;  
With a shiver of shutters the waves fell  
Like actors in ancient, forgotten plays!

I dreamed of green nights and glittering snow,  
Slow kisses rising in the eyes of the Sea,  
Unknown liquids flowing, the blue and yellow  
Stirring of phosphorescent melody!

For months I watched the surge of the sea,  
Hysterical herds attacking the reefs;  
I never thought the bright feet of Mary  
Could muzzle up the heavy-breathing waves!

I have jostled—you know?—unbelievable Floridas  
And seen among the flowers the wild eyes  
Of panthers in the skins of men! Rainbows  
Bridling blind flocks beneath the horizons!

In stinking swamps I have seen great hulks:  
A Leviathan that rotted in the reeds!  
Water crumbling in the midst of calm  
And distances that shatter into foam.

Glaciers, silver suns, waves of pearl, fiery skies,  
Giant serpents stranded where lice consume  
Them, falling in the depths of dark gulfs  
From twisted trees, bathed in black perfume!

I wanted to show children these fishes shining  
In the blue wave, the golden fish that sing—  
A froth of flowers cradled my wandering  
And delicate winds tossed me on their wings.

FIFTH SEASON / 121

The sea rocked me softly in sighing air,  
And brought me shadow-flowers with yellow stems—  
I remained like a woman, kneeling . . .

Almost an island, I balanced on my boat's sides  
Rapacious blond-eyed birds, their dung, their screams.  
I drifted on. Through fragile tangled lines  
Drowned men, still staring up, sank down to sleep.

Now I, a little lost boat, in swirling debris,  
Tossed by the storm into the birdless upper air  
—All the Hansa Merchants and Monitors  
Could not fish up my body drunk with the sea;

Free and soaring, trailing a violet haze,  
Shot through the sky, a reddening wall  
Wet with the jam of poets' inspiration,  
Lichens of sun, and snots of bright blue sky;

Lost branch spinning in a herd of hippocamps,  
Covered over with electric animals,  
An everlasting July battering  
The glittering sky and its fiery funnels;

Shaking at the sound of monsters roaring,  
Rutting Behemoths in thick whirlpools,  
Eternal weaver of unmoving blues,  
I thought of Europe and its ancient walls!

I have seen archipelagos in the stars,  
Fewerish skies where I was free to roam!  
Are these bottomless nights your exiled nests,  
Swarm of golden birds, O Strength to come?

True, I've cried too much; I am heartsick at dawn.  
The moon is bitter and the sun is sour . . .  
Love burns me; I am swollen and slow.  
Let my keel break! Oh, let me sink in the sea!

It's a small pond, dark, cold, remote,  
The odor of evening, and a child full of sorrow  
Who stoops to launch a crumpled paper boat.

Washed in your languors, Sea, I cannot trace  
The wake of tankers foaming through the cold,  
Nor assault the pride of pennants and flags,  
Nor endure the slave ship's stinking hold.

## VOWELS

Black A, white E, red I, green U, blue O—vowels,  
Some day I will open your silent pregnancies:  
A, black belt, hairy with bursting flies,  
Bumbling and buzzing over stinking cruelties,

Pits of night; E, candor of sand and pavilions,  
High glacial spears, white kings, trembling Queen Anne's lace;  
I, bloody spite, laughter dribbling from a face  
In wild denial or in anger, vermilions;

U, . . . divine movement of viridian seas,  
Peace of pastures animal-strewn, peace of calm lines  
Drawn on foreheads worn with heavy alchemies;

O, supreme Trumpet, harsh with strange stridencies,  
Silences traced in angels and astral designs:  
O . . . OMEGA . . . the violet light of His Eyes!

## "THE SUN HAS WEPT ROSE"

The sun has wept rose in the shell of your ears,  
The world has rolled white from your back, your thighs;  
The sea has stained rust the crimson of your breasts,  
And Man has bled black at your sovereign side.

ARTHUR RIMBAUD

*Le Bateau Ivre*

Comme je descendais des Fleuves impassibles,  
Je ne me sentis plus guidé par les haleurs:  
Des Peaux-Rouges criards les avaient pris pour cibles,  
Les ayant cloués nus aux poteaux de couleurs.

J'étais insoucieux de tous les équipages,  
Porteur de blés flamands ou de cotons anglais.  
Quand avec mes haleurs ont fini ces tapages,  
Les fleuves m'ont laissé descendre où je voulais.

*Drunken Boat*

Downstream on impassive rivers suddenly  
I felt the towline of the boatmen slacken.  
Redskins had taken them in a scream and stripped them and  
Skewered them to the glaring stakes for targets.

Then, delivered from my straining boatmen,  
From the trivial racket of trivial crews and from  
The freights of Flemish grain and English cotton,  
I made my own course down the passive rivers.

Dans les clapotements furieux des marées,  
Moi, l'autre hiver, plus sourd que les cerceaux d'enfants,  
Je cours ! et les Péninsules démarrées  
N'ont pas subi tohu-bohus plus triomphants.

La tempête a béni mes éveils maritimes.  
Plus léger qu'un bouchon j'ai dansé sur les flots  
Qu'on appelle rouleurs éternels de victimes,  
Dix nuits, sans regretter l'œil ni ais des falots.

Plus douce qu'aux enfants la chair des pommes sures,  
L'eau verte pénétra ma coque de sapin  
Et des taches de vins bleus et des vomissures  
Me lava, dispersant gouvernail et grappin.

Et, dès lors, je me suis baigné dans le poème  
De la mer infusé d'astres et lactescent,  
Dévorant les azurs verts où, flottaison blême  
Et ravie, un noyé pensif, parfois, descend ;

Blanker than the brain of a child I fled  
Through winter, I scoured the furious jolts of the tides,  
In an uproar and a chaos of Peninsulas,  
Exultant, from their moorings in triumph torn.

I started awake to tempestuous hallowings.  
Nine nights I danced like a cork on the billows, I danced  
On the breakers, sacrificial, for ever and ever,  
And the crass eye of the lanterns was expunged.

More firmly bland than to children apples' firm pulp,  
Soaked the green water through my hull of pine,  
Scattering helm and grappling and washing me  
Of the stains, the vomitings and blue wine.

Thenceforward, fused in the poem, milk of stars,  
Of the sea, I coiled through deeps of cloudless green,  
Where, dimly, they come swaying down,  
Rapt and sad, singly, the drowned ;



Où, teignant tout à coup les bleuités, délirés  
Et rythmes lents sous les rutilements du jour,  
Plus fortes que l'alcool, plus vastes que vos lyres,  
Fermentent les rousseurs amères de l'amour !

Je sais les cieus crevant en éclairs, et les trombes  
Et les ressacs et les courants; je sais le soir,  
L'aube exaltée ainsi qu'un peuple de colombes,  
Et j'ai vu quelquefois ce que l'homme a cru voir.

J'ai vu le soleil bas taché d'horreurs mystiques  
Illuminant de longs figements violets,  
Pareils à des acteurs de drames très antiques,  
Les flots roulant au loin leurs frissons de volets.

J'ai rêvé la nuit verte aux neiges éblouies,  
Baisers montant aux yeux des mers avec lentour,  
La circulation des sèves inouïes  
Et l'éveil jaune et bleu des phosphores chanteurs.

Where, under the sky's haemorrhage, slowly tossing  
In thuds of fever, arch-alcohol of song,  
Pumping over the blues in sudden stains,  
The bitter rednesses of love ferment.

I know the heavens split with lightnings and the currents  
Of the sea and its surgings and its spoutings; I know  
And dawn exalted like a cloud of doves.  
And my eyes have fixed phantasmagoria.  
evening,

I have seen, as shed by ancient tragic footlights,  
Out from the horror of the low sun's mystic stains,  
Long weals of violet creep across the sea  
And peals of ague rattle down its slats.

I have dreamt the green night's drifts of dazzled snow,  
The slow climb of kisses to the eyes of the seas,  
The circulation of unheard of saps,  
And the yellow-blue alarum of phosphors singing.

J'ai suivi, des mois pleins, pareille aux vacheries  
Hystériques, la boule à l'assaut des récifs,  
Sans songer que les pieds lumineux des Maries  
Pussent forcer le muffle aux Océans poussifs.

J'ai heurté, savez-vous ? d'incroyables Florides  
Mêlant aux fleurs des yeux de panthères aux peaux  
D'hommes, des arcs-en-ciel tendus comme des brides  
Sous l'horizon des mers, à de glauques troupeaux.

J'ai vu fermenter les marais, énormes nasses  
Où pourrit dans les joncs tout un Léviathan,  
Des écroulements d'eaux au milieu des bonaces  
Et les lointains vers les gouffres catacactant !

Glaciers, soleils d'argent, flots nacreux, cieus de braises,  
Échouages hideux au fond des golfes bruns  
Où les serpents géants dévorés des punaises  
Choièrent des arbres tordus avec de noirs parfums !

I have followed months long the maddened herds of the  
surf  
Storming the reefs, mindless of the feet,  
The radiant feet of the Marys that constrain  
The stampedes of the broken-winded Oceans.

I have fouled, be it known, unspeakable Floridas, tangle of  
The flowers of the eyes of panthers in the skins of  
Men and the taut rainbows curbing,  
Beyond the brows of the seas, the glaucous herds.

I have seen Leviathan sprawl rotting in the reeds  
Of the great seething swamp-nets;  
The calm sea disembowelled in waterslides  
And the catacacting of the doomed horizons.

Iridescent waters, glaciers, suns of silver, flagrant skies,  
And dark creeks' secret ledges, horror-strewn,  
Where giant reptiles, pullulant with lice,  
Lapse with dark perfumes from the writhing trees.

J'aurais voulu montrer aux enfants ces dorados  
Du flot bleu, ces poissons d'or, ces poissons chantants.  
Des écumes de fleurs ont béni mes déradés,  
Et d'ineffables vents m'ont ailé par instants.

Parfois, martyr lassé des pôles et des zones,  
La mer, dont le sanglot faisait mon roulis doux,  
Montait vers moi ses fleurs d'ombre aux ventouses jaunes  
Et je restais ainsi qu'une femme à genoux,

Presqu'île ballottant sur mes bords les querelles  
Et les fientes d'oiseaux clabaudeurs aux yeux blonds,  
Et je voguais lorsqu'à travers mes liens frêles  
Des noyés descendaient dormir à reculons . . .

Or, moi, bateau perdu sous les cheveux des anses,  
Jeté par l'ouragan dans l'éther sans oiseau,  
Moi dont les Monitors et les voiliers des Hanses  
N'auraient pas repêché la carcasse ivre d'eau,

I would have shown to children those dorados  
Of the blue wave, those golden fish, those singing fish;  
In pumes of flowers I have risen from my anchors  
And canticles of wind have blessed my wings.

Then toward me, rocking softly on its sobbing,  
Wearry of the torment of the poles and zones,  
The sea would lift its yellow polyps on flowers  
Of gloom and hold me—like a woman kneeling—

A stranded sanctuary for screeching birds,  
Flaxen-eyed, shiting on my trembling decks,  
Till down they swayed to sleep, the drowned, spreadeagled,  
And, sundering the fine tendrils, floated me.

Now I who was wrecked in the inlets' tangled hair  
And flung beyond birds aloft by the hurricane,  
Whose carcass drunk with water Monitors  
And Hanseatic sloops could not have salvaged;

Libre, fumant, monté de brumes violettes,  
Moi qui trouais le ciel rougeoyant comme un mur  
Qui porte, confiture exquise aux bons poètes,  
Des lichens de soleil et des morves d'azur,

Qui courais taché de lunules électriqués,  
Planche folle, escorté des hippocampes noirs,  
Quand les Juillets faisaient crouler à coups de triques  
Les cieus ultramarins aux ardents entonnnoirs,

Moi qui tremblais, sentant geindre à cinquante lieues  
Le rut des Béhémots et des Maelstroms épais,  
Filleur éternel des immobilités bleues,  
Je regrette l'Europe aux anciens parapets.

J'ai vu des archipels sidéraux ! et des îles  
Dont les cieus délirants sont ouverts au vogueur :  
Est-ce en ces nuits sans fond que tu dors et t'exiles,  
Million d'oiseaux d'or, ô future Vigueur ?

Who, reeking and free in a fume of purple spray,  
Have pierced the skies that flame as a wall would flame  
For a chosen poet's rapture, and stream and flame  
With solar lichen and with azure snot;

Who scudded, with my escort of black sea-horses,  
Fury of timber, scarred with electric moons,  
When Sirius flogged into a drift of ashes  
The furnace-cratered cobalt of the skies;

I who heard in trembling across a waste of leagues  
The turgent stroms, and Behemoths moan their rut,  
I weaving for ever voids of spellbound blue,  
Now remember Europe and her ancient ramparts.

I saw archipelagoes of stars and islands launched me  
Aloft on the deep delirium of their skies:  
Are these the fathomless nights of your sleep and exile,  
Million of golden birds, oh Vigour to be?

Mais, vrai, j'ai trop pleuré. Les aubes sont navrantes,  
Toute lune est atroce et tout soleil amer.  
L'âcre amour m'a gonflé de torpeurs enivrantes.  
Oh! que ma quille éclate! Oh! que j'aille à la mer!

Si je désire une eau d'Europe, c'est la flache  
Noire et froide où vers le crépuscule embaumé  
Un enfant accroupi, plein de tristesse, lâche  
Un bateau frêle comme un papillon de mai.

Je ne puis plus, baigné de vos langueurs, ô lames,  
Enlever leur sillage aux porteurs de cotons,  
Ni traverser l'orgueil des drapeaux et des flammes,  
Ni nager sous les yeux horribles des pontons!

But no more tears. Dawns have broken my heart,  
And every moon is torment, every sun bitterness;  
I am bloated with the stagnant fumes of acrid loving—  
May I split from stem to stern and founder, ah founder!

I want none of Europe's waters unless it be  
The cold black puddle where a child, full of sadness,  
Squatting, looses a boat as frail  
As a moth into the fragrant evening.

Steeped in the languors of the swell, I may  
Absorb no more the wake of the cotton-freighters,  
Nor breast the arrogant oriflammes and banners,  
Nor swim beneath the leer of the pontoons.





## The Crystal Cabinet

The Maiden caught me in the Wild  
 Where I was dancing merrily;  
 She put me into her Cabinet  
 And Locked me up with a golden Key.

This Cabinet is formd of Gold  
 And Pearl & Crystal Shining bright  
 And within it opens into a World  
 And a little lovely Moony Night.

10  
 Another England there I saw,  
 Another London with its Tower,  
 Another Thames & other Hills  
 And another pleasant Surrey Bower,

Another Maiden like herself  
 Translucent lovely shining clear  
 Threefold each in the other closd;  
 O what a pleasant trembling fear!

20  
 O what a smile, a threefold Smile  
 Fild me that like a flame I burnd;  
 I bent to Kiss the lovely Maid  
 And found a Threefold Kiss returnd.

I strove to seize the inmost Form  
 With ardor fierce & hands of flame  
 But burst the Crystal Cabinet  
 And like a Weeping Babe became;

A weeping Babe upon the wild  
 And Weeping Woman pale reclind  
 And in the outward air again  
 I fild with woes the passing Wind.

## Auguries of Innocence

To see a World in a Grain of Sand  
 And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,  
 Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand  
 And Eternity in an hour.

A Robin Red breast in a Cage  
 Puts all Heaven in a Rage.  
 A dove house fild with doves & Pigeons  
 Shudders Hell thro all its regions.  
 A dog starvd at his Master's gate  
 Predicts the ruin of the State.

A Horse misud upon the Road  
 Calls to Heaven for Human blood.  
 Each outcry of the hunted Hare  
 A fibre from the Brain does tear.  
 A sky lark wounded in the wing,  
 A Cherubin does cease to sing.  
 The Game Cock clipd & armd for fight  
 Does the Rising Sun affright.  
 Every Wolf's & Lion's howl  
 Raises from Hell a Human Soul.

30  
 The wild deer wandring here & there  
 Keeps the Human Soul from Care.  
 The Lamb misud breeds Public strife  
 And yet forgives the Butcher's Knife.  
 The Bat that flits at close of Eve  
 Has left the Brain that won't Believe.  
 The Owl that calls upon the Night  
 Speaks the Unbeliever's fright.  
 He who shall hurt the little Wren  
 Shall never be beloved by Men.  
 He who the Ox to wrath has movd  
 Shall never be by Woman lovd.  
 The wanton Boy that kills the Fly  
 Shall feel the Spider's enmity.  
 He who torments the Chafar's sprite  
 Weaves a Bower in endless Night.  
 The Caterpillar on the Leaf  
 Repeats to thee thy Mother's grief

William Blake, Selected Poems, ed. G. E. Bentley,  
 Jr. (London: Penguin, 2005)



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Kill not the Moth nor Butterfly  
 For the Last Judgment draweth nigh.  
 He who shall train the Horse to War  
 Shall never pass the Polar Bar.  
 The Begger's Dog & Widow's Cat,  
 Feed them & thou wilt grow fat.  
 The Gnat that sings his Summer's song  
 Poison gets from Slander's tongue.  
 The poison of the Snake & Newt  
 Is the sweat of Envy's Foot.  
 The Poison of the Honey Bee  
 Is the Artist's Jealousy.  
 The Prince's Robes & Beggar's Rags  
 Are Toadstools on the Miser's Bags.  
 A truth that's told with bad intent  
 Beats all the Lies you can invent.  
 It is right it should be so;  
 Man was made for Joy & Woe  
 And when this we rightly know  
 Thro the World we safely go.  
 Joy & Woe are woven fine  
 A Clothing for the soul divine;  
 Under every grief & pine  
 Runs a joy with silken twine.  
 The Babe is more than Swadling Bands;  
 Throughout all these Human Lands  
 Tools were made & Born were hands,  
 Every Farmer Understands.  
 Every Tear from Every Eye  
 Becomes a Babe in Eternity;  
 This is caught by Females bright  
 And returned to its own delight.  
 The Bleat, the Bark, Bellow & Roar  
 Are Waves that Beat on Heaven's Shore.  
 The Babe that weeps the Rod beneath  
 Writes Revenge in realms of death.  
 The Beggar's Rags fluttering in Air  
 Does to Rags the Heavens tear.  
 The Soldier armd with Sword & Gun  
 Palsied strikes the Summer's Sun.  
 The poor Man's Farthing is worth more  
 Than all the Gold on Afric's Shore.

One Mite wrung from the Labrer's hands  
 Shall buy & sell the Miser's Lands  
 Or if protected from on high  
 Does that whole Nation sell & buy.  
 He who mocks the Infant's Faith  
 Shall be mock'd in Age & Death.  
 He who shall teach the Child to Doubt  
 The rotting Grave shall neer get out.  
 He who respects the Infant's Faith  
 Triumphs over Hell & Death.  
 The Child's Toys & the Old Man's Reasons  
 Are the Fruits of the Two seasons.  
 The Questioner who sits so sly  
 Shall never know how to Reply.  
 He who replies to words of Doubt  
 Doth put the Light of Knowledge out.  
 The Strongest Poison ever known  
 Came from Caesar's Laurel Crown.  
 Nought can deform the Human Race  
 Like to the Armour's iron brace.  
 When Gold & Gems adorn the Plow  
 To peaceful Arts shall Envy bow.  
 A Riddle or the Cricketer's Cry  
 Is to Doubt a fit Reply.  
 The Emmer's Inch & Eagle's Mile  
 Make Lamé Philosophy to smile.  
 He who Doubts from what he sees  
 Will neer Believe, do what you Please.  
 If the Sun & Moon should doubt  
 They'd immediately Go out.  
 To be in a Passion you Good may do  
 But no Good if a Passion is in you.  
 The Whore & Gambler by the State  
 Licenced build that Nation's Fate.  
 The Harlot's cry from Street to Street  
 Shall weave Old England's winding Sheet.  
 The Winner's Shout, the Loser's Curse  
 Dance before dead England's Hearse.  
 Every Night & every Morn  
 Some to Misery are Born.  
 Every Morn & every Night  
 Some are Born to sweet delight,

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Some are Born to sweet delight,  
 Some are Born to Endless Night,  
 We are led to Believe a Lie  
 When we see not Thro the Eye  
 Which was Born in a Night to perish in a Night  
 When the Soul Slept in Beams of light.  
 God Appears & God is Light  
 To those poor Souls who dwell in Night  
 But does a Human Form Display  
 To those who Dwell in Realms of day.

THE GHOST OF ABEL  
 A Revelation In the Vision of Jehovah  
 Seen by William Blake  
 ([London:] 1822 W Blake's Original Stereotype was 1788)

To LORD BYRON in the Wilderness:

What dost thou here, Elijah?

Can a Poet doubt the Visions of Jehovah? Nature has no Outline: but  
 Imagination has. Nature has no Time: but Imagination has. Nature  
 has no Supernatural & dissolves: Imagination is Eternity. Scene A  
 rocky Country. Eye fainted over the dead body of Abel which lays  
 near a Grave. Adam kneels by her. Jehovah stands above.

Jehovah—

Adam!

Adam— I will not hear thee more thou Spiritual Voice.

Is this Death?

Jehovah—

Adam!

Adam— It is in vain: I will not hear thee

Henceforth! Is this thy Promise that the Woman's Seed  
 Should bruise the Serpent's head: Is this the Serpent?

Ah!

Eve revives.

Eve Is this the Promise of Jehovah! O it is all a vain delusion,

This Death & this Life & this Jehovah!

Jehovah—

Woman! lift

thine eyes!

A Voice is heard coming on.

Voice O Earth, cover not thou my Blood! cover not thou my  
 Blood!

Enter the Ghost of Abel.

Eve— Thou Visionary Phantasm, thou art not the real Abel

Among the Elohim a Human Victim I wander: I am their

House

Prince of the Air, & our dimensions compass Zenith &

Nadir.

Vain is thy Covenant, O Jehovah! I am the Accuser &

Avenger

Of Blood. O Earth, Cover not thou the Blood of Abel.

What Vengeance dost thou require?

Life for Life! Life for Life!

Jehovah He who shall take Cain's life must also Die, O Abel.

Abel— And who is he? Adam wilt thou, or Eve thou do this?



Ode to the West Wind!<sup>1</sup>

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,  
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead  
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic<sup>2</sup> red,  
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O Thou,  
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,  
Each like a corpse within its grave, until  
Thine azure sister of the Spring<sup>3</sup> shall blow

Her clarion<sup>4</sup> o'er the dreaming earth, and fill  
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)  
With living hues and odours plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;  
Destroyer and Preserver; hear, O hear!

Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commotion,  
Loose clouds like Earth's decaying leaves are shed,  
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,<sup>5</sup>

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread  
On the blue surface of thine aery surge,  
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Maenad,<sup>6</sup> even from the dim verge  
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,  
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou Dirge

1. "This poem was conceived and chiefly written in a wood that skirts the Arno, near Florence, and on a day when that tempestuous wind, whose temperature is at once mild and animating, was collecting the vapours which pour down the autumnal rains" [Shelley's note]. As in other major Romantic poems—for example, the opening of Wordsworth's *Prelude*, Coleridge's *Dejection*, and the conclusion to Shelley's *Adonais*—the rising wind, linked with the cycle of the seasons, is presented as the outer correspondent to an inner change from apathy to spiritual vitality, and from imaginative sterility to a burst of creative power that is paralleled to the inspiration of the Biblical prophets. In Hebrew, Latin, Greek, and many other languages, the words for wind, breath, soul, and inspiration are all identical or related. Thus Shelley's west wind is a "spirit" (the Latin *spiritus*: wind, breath, soul, and the root word in "inspiration"), the "breath of Autumn's being," which on earth, sky, and sea destroys in the autumn in order to revivify in the spring. Around this central image the poem weaves

Of the dying year, to which this closing night  
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,  
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapours,<sup>7</sup> from whose solid atmosphere  
Black rain and fire and hail will burst: O hear!

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams  
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,  
Lulled by the coil of his chrystalline streams,<sup>8</sup>

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,<sup>9</sup>  
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers  
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,<sup>1</sup>

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers  
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou  
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below  
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear  
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow grey with fear,  
And tremble and despoil themselves:<sup>2</sup> O hear!

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear,  
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;  
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free  
Than thou, O Uncontrollable! If even  
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,  
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed  
Scarce seemed a vision, I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.  
Oh! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!  
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed  
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

various cycles of death and regeneration—vegetational, human, and divine.

Shelley's 14-line stanza, developed from the interlaced 3-line units of the Italian *terza rima* (*abab cdcd*, etc.), consists of a set of four such tercets, closed by a complete rhyming with the middle line of the preceding tercet: *aba bcd cdc dcd ee*.

2. The kind of fever which occurs in tuberculosis.

3. The west wind that will blow in the spring.

4. A high, shrill trumpet.

5. The fragmentary clouds ("leaves") are torn by the wind from the larger and higher clouds ("boughs"), which are formed by a union of air with vapor drawn up by the sun from the ocean.

6. "Angels" (line 18) suggests the old sense: messengers, harbingers.

7. A female votary who danced frantically in the worship of Dionysus (Bacchus), the Greek god of wine and vegetation. As vegetation god, he was fabled to die in the fall and to be resurrected in the spring.

7. Clouds.  
8. The currents that flow in the Mediterranean Sea, sometimes with a visible difference in color.  
9. "Pumice": a porous volcanic stone. "Baiae's bay," west of Naples, was the locale of imposing villas erected by Roman emperors.

1. Shelley once observed that, when reflected in water, colors are "more vivid yet blended with more harmony."

2. "The vegetation at the bottom of the sea . . . sympathizes with that of the land in the change of seasons" [Shelley's note].

5  
 Make me thy lyre,<sup>3</sup> even as the forest is:  
 What if my leaves are falling like its own!  
 The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,  
 Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,  
 My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe  
 Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!  
 And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth  
 Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!  
 Be through my lips to unawakened Earth

The trumpet of a prophecy!<sup>4</sup> O Wind,  
 If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

1819

1820

**Prometheus Unbound** Shelley composed this work in Italy between the autumn of 1818 and the close of 1819 and published it the following summer. Upon its completion he wrote in a letter, "It is a drama, with characters and mechanism of a kind yet unattempted; and I think the execution is better than any of my former attempts." It is based upon the *Pro-metheus Bound* of Aeschylus, which dramatizes the sufferings of Prometheus, unrepentant champion of humanity, who, because he had stolen fire from heaven, was condemned by Zeus to be chained to Mount Caucasus and to be tortured by a vulture feeding upon his liver; in a lost sequel, Aeschylus reconciled Prometheus with his oppressor. Shelley continued Aeschylus' story, but transformed it into a symbolic drama about the origin of evil and its elimination. In such earlier writings as *Queen Mab* Shelley had expressed his belief that injustice and suffering can be eliminated by an external revolution which will wipe out or radically reform the causes of evil, which are existing social, political, and religious institutions. Implicit in *Prometheus Unbound*, on the other hand, is the view that both the origin of evil and the possibility of reform are the moral responsibility of men and women themselves. Social chaos and wars are a gigantic projection of human disorder and inner division and conflict; tyrants are the outer representatives of the tyranny of our baser over our better elements; hatred for others is an expression of self-contempt; and successful political reform is impossible unless we have first reformed our own nature at its roots, by substituting selfless love for divisive hate. Shelley thus incorporates into his secular myth (of

3. The Eolian lyre, which responds to the wind with rising and falling musical chords.

4. A reference back to the "carion" of line 10, as

well as an allusion to the last trumpet of the apocalypse in Revelation 11. 15.

the number is unusually to find in Shelley's works  
 5th Edition, Vol. 2 (New York: Norton,  
 1986)

## Alexander Pushkin: 'The Bronze Horseman'

### Prologue

On the banks of a wilderness of water  
one man stood, brimming with thoughts  
as his eyes advanced to the horizon.  
The breadth of the river surged forward,  
as a single, ramshackle canoe sped by.  
Along the moss-ruled, swampy shores  
he saw the dark and scattered huts  
of the godforsaken Finns;  
and the forest, foreign to the sun,  
sounded around him.

And he thought:  
Here's where we'll threaten the Swedes from,  
where we'll set a city's first stones  
to spite our power-drunk neighbours.  
We'll make a slave of nature,  
hack a window through to Europe  
and by this sea put down firm feet.  
All flags will find their way  
across these waves; and we'll hold a feast  
out here in these wastes.

One hundred years have passed,  
and the youthful city's become the marvel  
of the midnight regions, has risen  
from the dark forests, from the sweat  
of the marsh, luxuriant and confident.  
Where nature's neglected stepson,  
the Finnish angler, would sit by himself  
on low riverbanks to cast a fraying net

into unplumbed depths, now  
the stern hulks of palaces and towers  
crowd shores busy with life,  
and ships from all ends of the earth  
jostle towards rich jetties;  
the Neva is draped in granite,  
bridges raised across its waters,  
islands wearing the warmth  
of green gardens; in the glow  
of the younger capital  
old Moscow seems ever fainter,  
a purple-clad widow  
standing before the new tsarina.

Oh act of Peter, I'm in love  
with your strict and structured form,  
the Neva's commanding flow,  
its granite banks, the design  
in the iron railings, the translucent  
dusk and moonless sheen  
of dream-soaked nights.  
As I write in my room I need  
no lamp. Bright giants are asleep  
on the empty streets,  
and the needle of the Admiralty shines,  
and banning the gloom from gold skies,  
dusk hurries on towards dawn,  
and night makes do with a half-hour.  
I'm in love with the frost and immobile air  
of your brutal winter, the sprint  
of skates along the broad river,  
girls' faces brighter than roses,  
with ballrooms, their lights and noises;

and — when it's time for the single  
to get down to serious drinking —  
the hiss of foaming glasses,  
the rum-punch's flame of blue.  
I'm in love with the glittering force  
of the drills on the Field of Mars,  
the singular beauty of foot-soldier and horse,  
the shreds of victorious banners  
in the strict, rippling ranks,  
with bronze as it flashes on caps  
shot through in battle.  
War capital, I'm in love  
with the smoke and thunder  
at the fort when the Tsarina of the North  
bestows her son to the empire,  
or Russia triumphs over enemies  
once more, or when the Neva  
cracks open its pale blue ice,  
bundles it off to the Baltic,  
and, sensing spring days, exults.  
Stand in beauty, Peter's city,  
remain as unshakable as Russia.  
May the defeated elements  
make their peace with you. Let  
the Finnish waves forget  
their ancient enemy and prisoner,  
their futile malice fail to unsettle  
the everlasting dream of Peter.  
There was a time of terror,  
its memory fresh ... This, friends,  
is the theme of the events  
I'll relate in my bleak story.

## Part one

November breathed an autumn coldness  
across Petrograd, as it lay under dark clouds.  
The noisy waves were busy rippling  
at the edges of graceful railings,  
the Neva shifted like a sick man  
in a restive bed. It was late  
already and dark, as an angry rain  
beat and beat against the windows;  
and the wind, as it blew, seemed to whine.  
Around this time, young Yevgeny  
was walking back from friends'.  
We'll award our hero this first name.  
Its sound is fine enough; what's more,  
my pen and it have met before.  
His surname is of no concern:  
though once, it may have had its turn  
at peeling through famous stories  
beneath the quill of Karamzin,  
the world and the talk of the town  
have quite forgotten it. Our hero's home  
is in Kolonna, you'll find his name  
on a payroll somewhere,  
he keeps away from nobles,  
and no longer grieves for friends passed on  
or for things now buried and gone.  
On getting home, Yevgeny  
shook off his coat, and undressed for bed,  
but lay awake for hours as every kind  
of speculation swirled through his mind.  
His thoughts? That he wasn't well off

and would have to earn his independence  
and recognition by hard slog; that God  
was more than welcome to dole  
him out more capital and brains.  
That many contented souls  
whose intellectual aims  
weren't high — the lazy sods! —  
were on holiday all year round!  
Two years now he'd been at his job ...  
That the weather had not calmed down,  
the river was still rising; that for tonight  
the Neva bridges had been raised,  
cutting him off from his future bride  
for two to three full days.  
Breathing in deeply, Yevgeny floated  
off into a dream, as if a poet:

“Get married? Me? Why not?  
Of course it won't be easy.  
But hell, I'm young and fit,  
and ready to work round the clock;  
one way or another I'll fix us  
a quiet and simple place to live  
to put Parasha's mind at rest.  
And when a year or two has passed,  
they'll boot me up to some higher post.  
Parasha will be in charge  
of the house, of feeding the kids ... Our lives  
will really get going, and holding hands  
we'll walk ahead, our grandchildren  
will see us to our graves.”

... Yevgeny's dream. But his spirits  
that night were down, and he wished

that the howl of the wind were less dismal,  
that the rain wouldn't rattle at the window  
with such fury ...  
His drowsy eyes at last  
fell shut. Now the foul night-mist  
was thinning out. A pallid day had come ...  
a day of terror.

All night the Neva had torn  
towards the sea to face a storm,  
but failed to get the better  
of the wind's violent temper,  
so the weary river broke off battle.  
By morning, all along its banks,  
people were clustering to admire the spray,  
the swells, the foam of the frenzied waves.  
But the Neva, filled with new life  
by the force of the winds from the gulf,  
turned back in scorn, seething,  
its waters split over the islands, the weather  
upped in ferocity, the Neva  
roared as it breathed in deeply,  
like a cauldron it gurgled and steamed,  
then like a beast whose rage was at its peak  
it suddenly flung itself across the city.  
Everyone ran, everywhere emptied,  
water gushed into cellars,  
canals rushed up to railings;  
like a Triton, Petropolis surfaced,  
with water dragging at its waist.

A siegel! An assault! Malicious waves  
crawl through windows like thieves.  
Sterns take running leaps



at glass. Hawkers' trays,  
their shroud-like covers soaked through,  
wreckage of huts, beams and rooves,  
the trading stock of the thrifty,  
beggars' paltry property,  
bridges the storm abducted,  
coffins washed from the cemetery  
now bob through the streets!

God's anger is there to see:

the populace awaits its punishment. All's gone.  
Roof and food are lost.

Where are we to find them?

At that dangerous time

another tsar, who's since passed on,  
still ruled in splendour.

With worry and sorrow in his eyes,  
he stepped out onto his balcony  
and spoke: "No tsar can master  
God's elements". Grief

seemed to wash across his face  
as he mulled over the disaster  
and its malevolence.

Squares resembled lakes,

streets fed into them like broad rivers.

The Palace was a desolate island.

The Tsar spoke — and across the city  
generals set off along dangerous routes  
that took them through violent waters  
along every street, however distant,  
to save a population gripped  
by fear, drowning in their houses.

Back then, on Peter's Square,

a new construction towered  
in one corner. There,  
above an elevated porch,  
as if alive, with raised paws,  
two lions kept watch.

On one of those beasts of marble  
Yevgeny was sitting, stiff and pale,  
his hat now lost,  
his arms clenched into a cross.

A pitiful figure, filled with fear  
but not for himself. He didn't hear  
how the thirsty waves rose  
and lapped at his soles,  
how the rain lashed his face,  
how the wind, with a violent yelp,  
had suddenly ripped his cap  
from his head. His despairing gaze  
was fixed on a distant place.  
Resembling hills, the waves swelled  
bad-temperedly out of the rebellious  
depths; here a storm wailed,  
there the flotsam skinned past ...

Christ, no! So close  
to the waves, right on that cove,  
that unpainted fence, that willow,  
and the shanty hut where the widow  
and her daughter, his life's whole meaning —  
Parasha ... Or was he just dreaming?  
Was this what life was, in its essentials?  
A desolate dream, heaven's  
joke at the earth's expense?

As if in a trance,  
as if manacles hold him to the marble,  
our hero can't get down! Water  
surrounds him, nothing more!  
And high up and unshakeable,  
with its back towards him,  
above the mutinous Neva, stands,  
with an outstretched hand,  
that graven image on its bronze horse.

## Part two

But glutted with destruction,  
as if it now needed a break  
from disorderly conduct,  
the Neva began to flow back,  
feasting its eyes on its mutiny,  
casually flinging about its booty.  
It was like some thug with his vicious  
gang, who've torn into a village  
and rip, shatter and smash,  
looting and yelling, and urge  
each other on to violence with curses,  
surrounded by panic and wailing,  
their plunder weighing them down,  
and afraid of the chase,  
the exhausted robbers hasten  
homewards, dropping their takings  
en route.  
The water fell, and a street  
emerged. Yevgeny, our hero,  
sped to the river as it subsided;

fear, longing and hope  
were vices clamped round his mind.  
But the malevolent waves, filled  
with the pride of victory, boiled  
again, as if a fire smouldered  
beneath them, and foam  
crested the waves once more,  
and the Neva panted like a horse  
galloping up from combat.  
Yevgeny's eyes located a boat;  
he ran up to it as if to some trinket  
glittering on a road.  
He called the ferryman.  
Untroubled by a single thing,  
the ferryman was ready to row him  
across the heartstopping waves  
for a handful of kopecks.  
That seasoned oarsman  
battled and battled with the storm,  
and at any moment the canoe  
might have sunk between the ranks  
of the waves with its foolhardy crew,  
until at last it reached the far bank.  
Frantic, Yevgeny runs  
towards familiar places,  
along familiar streets. He gazes  
round, but nothing is as he knows it.  
A panorama to flinch at.  
Torn and hurled, piled-up things,  
twisted or collapsing homes  
shifted by the waves, and scattered  
corpses as if this were a battlefield.

Weak from fear, his memories gone,  
Yevgeny runs headlong  
to where the future's been keeping  
its news for him inside a sealed letter.  
And he's reached those huts already,  
there's the creek, not far now to the house ...  
But what's this ... ?

He stopped,  
turned round, walked back to one spot.  
Looked ... stepped forward ... and gazed  
once more. OK, their hut  
must be right here. The gates,  
I guess, got taken by the flood.  
But where are the walls,  
the doors? Like an evening sky,  
anxiety darkens his mind, and he walks  
around and around in circles,  
thinking everything through, out loud,  
until suddenly he strikes  
his forehead with his hand,  
and breaks into giggles.

Night-time darkness  
dropped onto the city that was still trembling.  
That night it was long before anyone slept,  
as people talked and tried to find sense  
in that day's events.

Out of the pale,  
exhausted rainclouds, the morning's rays  
dazzled across the calm capital,  
but they discovered no trace  
of yesterday's disaster, whose malice  
was concealed again in purple.

Life reverted to good order,  
the streets were passable, and people  
walked along them unconcerned.  
Civil servants left their roosts  
for the office. Unperturbed,  
go-ahead small businessmen  
were opening up the basements  
that the Neva had burgled,  
compensating their losses  
from neighbouring properties.  
Boats were cleared from yards.

And Count Khvostov,  
poet and favourite of the heavens sang  
of the grief on the Neva's banks  
in those verses we all still love.

But Yevgeny, Yevgeny ...  
His trampled mind could not withstand  
these shockwaves. The mutinous  
noise of the Neva and of the winds  
travelled through his ears, and fear would fill  
his thoughts as he wandered, mute.  
Some kind of vision, it seemed,  
was stretching him on a rack.  
A week, a month passed by and still  
he never once went home. The lease  
expired on his vacant bolt-hole,  
the landlord let it to a poor poet,  
and Yevgeny failed to come back  
for such things as he had. Before long  
the world had lost all meaning to him. He'd wander  
the streets all day, then sleep on wharves,  
live from bread proffered through a window.

His threadbare clothes were ripped and rotting.  
Fierce children chased him with stones.  
He felt the lash of coachmen's spit  
whenever he blocked the road,  
ignoring approaching horses, deafened  
by the sound of unease in his mind.  
He dragged out his miserable life,  
neither animal nor human, neither  
one thing nor the other — alive  
on earth, or dead among ghosts ...

Once he was asleep on the quays  
by the Neva, as summer days  
declined into autumn. The wind wheezed  
with rain, and a sombre wave  
grumbled as it splashed onto the wharf,  
beating the sleek steps  
like a man at the doors of a court  
shut against his complaint.  
Our victim of events awoke.  
Everything around him was murky.  
Rain dripped, the dismal wind  
wailed. Far into the night-mist  
the watchmen were hailing round ...  
Yevgeny gave a jump:  
the flood in its whole horror  
was alive again in his memory. Hurry  
called him to his feet, and off he tramped  
along the streets, then suddenly stopped.  
Gingerly, he trailed  
his eyes around him, a wild  
fear in his face. Where was he?  
He sensed beside him the pillars

of an enormous building.  
With paws raised, up on the roof,  
life-like lions stood watch,  
and up in front of him in the gloom  
on top of the railed-off rock,  
that graven image with its outstretched hand  
sat astride its horse of bronze.

Yevgeny flinched. His thoughts  
took on disturbing forms.  
He saw once more the place  
where the flood had played,  
where the predatory waves  
had massed in their angry rebellion,  
and the square, and the lions,  
and the man whose head of bronze  
loomed from the fog, immovable,  
whose lethal willpower founded  
this city at the sea's brink.  
How terrible he looked in the mist!  
The brooding visible on his brow!  
Concealed within him, what power!  
And within that horse, what fire!  
Where is your galloping taking you, proud horse,  
where will your hooves fall?  
Great shaper of lives,  
declare: you came to the abrupt  
edge, pulled back the iron bridle,  
and Russia reared up.  
Yevgeny, out of his senses,  
kept circling the statue's base,  
kept casting savage glances  
at the face of the master

of half the globe. He felt his chest  
constrict. He rested his forehead  
against the cool bars,  
his eyes twitching in the mist,  
a flame ran across his heart,  
his blood began to seethe.  
He stood there angrily, in full view  
of the proud statue, teeth clenched,  
fingers tightened, as if seized  
by a dark strength.  
“All right, builder of things incredible!”  
he whispered, fury making him tremble,  
“I’ll get you!” And he set off  
at a run, headlong.  
And it seemed as if in a split-second  
the face of that terrible emperor  
flared into fury, and quietly turned  
towards him . . . And Yevgeny runs  
across the empty square,  
and behind him he can hear,  
like a drum-roll of thunder,  
heavy, resounding hooves  
along a quaking road. Behind him,  
in the dawnlight of the pale moon,  
one hand thrust into the sky,  
the Bronze Horseman rides  
on his noisily cantering warhorse.  
In Yevgeny’s desperate, night-long trauma,  
wherever his legs transport him,  
the Bronze Horseman pursues him  
with the clatter of his galloping hooves.

From then on, whenever he crossed  
that square, agitation was painted  
in his face. He’d hurriedly press  
one hand to his heart, to restrain  
somehow his distress,  
doffed his threadbare cap,  
didn’t raise his nervous eyes,  
skirted round to the opposite side.  
Not far off shore  
there’s a small island where, out late  
with his nets, a fisherman sometimes moors  
to boil up his meagre meal,  
or some official takes  
his Sunday boat ride  
out to this desolate island,  
where not a single blade  
of grass has grown, the place  
to where that surge, as it played,  
brought the wreckage of a hut.  
It came to rest there, like a black shrub.  
Last autumn they carried it away  
on a barge. It was empty and ruined.  
And where there’d once been a door,  
they found my insane friend,  
and gave his cold corpse  
right there its beggar’s funeral.

(1833; trans. Alistair Noon)

## Alistair Noon, "Dragged Along by a Statue: Translating Pushkin's 'The Bronze Horseman'"

Walk along the hard, straight embankments of the Neva — or take a Google Earth trip down to the centre of St. Petersburg — and you'll come to a large lump of granite, atop which a determined and martial-looking figure is pulling up a fierce, eye-bulging horse, and pointing out across the wide river in the direction of the West. Falconer's statue of Peter the Great has become the Little Mermaid of St. Petersburg, only the Little Mermaid isn't a symbol of geopolitical manoeuvring, emerging naval power and enforced socioeconomic change in a huge but predominantly agrarian territory. Peter's founding of St. Petersburg in the early 18th century derived from a need to keep the regional rivals, the Swedes, at arm's length, and construct a prestige project for his imperial ambitions.

The source material of Pushkin's tale of how a young clerk loses his prospective fiancé in a brief but deadly flood includes newspaper reports of a flood that had taken place in St. Petersburg in 1824. Somewhere in the background is also Virgil's *Aeneid*. Though the narrative is retrospective, its quasi-supernatural aspect — does the Horseman "really" come to life and pursue Yevgeny, or does it all take place in the latter's traumatized mind? — seems not dissimilar in technique to that of a science fiction story set just a few years from now where most things are the same, but one thing is different.

The poem is also a virtuosic performance of form and tone, moving from ode to narrative, to chatty interior monologue, to jibes at contemporary poets, and enactments in verse of psychological distress and trauma. It's a love poem for a city — this is the bit the censors didn't mind — and a not-too-subtly concealed elegy for those who died in its construction — an aspect the censors certainly

did mind: the poem did not appear in anything like its full form until after Pushkin's death by duelling in 1837, and even then with certain omissions. Critics have disagreed about the nature of Pushkin's attitude to Peter the Great: did he imply that Peter was to be admired? Hated? Distrusted? Accepted? At the very least, the poem problematizes the relationship of the state and the individual. It might, in Poundian terms, be accorded the status of an Image with a capital "I".

If the translation is a success it won't need an apology, but I'll offer one here for any dissatisfied customers. Pushkin is an all-rounder, so I tried to make my compromises everywhere a little bit, rather than prioritize one particular aspect and make a huge compromise elsewhere. The rhythm of 'The Bronze Horseman' can be analyzed in metrical terms as iambic tetrameter, but Russian is a strongly stressed language, and the distribution of natural as opposed to metrical stresses in a tetrameter is frequently such as to give, to my ear anyway, the feel of a three-beat line. It was the three natural stresses, rather than the four metrical stresses that I was more concerned to preserve, at least as a rough base, though the reader will quickly see and hear that even here I've been very flexible. The imagery of the poem is sharp and concise, and I was loathe to add or delete words and images for the sake of line length. This, perhaps, is where I have indeed been guilty of favouritism towards one particular element.

Eliot's 'ghost of a metre' (behind good free verse) has a parallel in rhyme I think, and my translation aims to give the feel of a rhyming poem without making the compromises in diction and meaning that tend to accompany attempts to do Pushkin in full-chime rhyme in English (Edwin Morgan's 'Autumn' is one highly successful exception to this tendency.)

## 15. The Painter of Modern Life<sup>1</sup>

### I. BEAUTY, FASHION AND HAPPINESS

In all social circles, and even in art circles, there are people who go to the Louvre, walk quickly past a large number of most interesting though secondary pictures, without throwing them so much as a look, and plant themselves, as though in a trance, in front of a Titian or a Raphael, one of those which the engraver's art has particularly popularized; then they go out satisfied, as often as not saying to themselves: 'I know my gallery thoroughly.' There are also people who, having once read Bossuet and Racine, think they have got the history of literature at their finger-tips.

Happily from time to time knights errant step into the lists - critics, art collectors, lovers of the arts, curious-minded idlers - who assert that neither Raphael nor Racine has every secret, that minor poets have something to be said for them, substantial and delightful things to their credit, and finally that, however much we may like general beauty, which is expressed by the classical poets and artists, we nonetheless make a mistake to neglect particular beauty, the beauty of circumstance; the description of manners.

I am bound to admit that, for several years now, society has shown some improvement. The value that today's collectors attach to the delightful engraved and coloured trifles of the last century shows that a reaction has begun in the direction needed by the public; Debucourt, the Saint-Aubins<sup>2</sup> and many others have achieved mention in the dictionary of artists worthy of study. But these represent the past, whereas my purpose at this moment is to discuss the painting of our con-

temporary social scene. The past is interesting, not only because of the beauty that the artists for whom it was the present were able to extract from it, but also as past, for its historical value. The same applies to the present. The pleasure we derive from the representation of the present is due, not only to the beauty it can be clothed in, but also to its essential quality of being the present.

I have here in front of me a series of fashion plates, the earliest dating from the Revolution, the most recent from the Consulate or therabouts. These costumes, which many thoughtless people, the sort of people who are grave without true gravity, find highly amusing, have a double kind of charm, artistic and historical. They are very often beautiful and wittily drawn, but what to me is at least as important, and what I am glad to find in all or nearly all of them, is the moral attitude and the aesthetic value of the time. The idea of beauty that man creates for himself affects his whole attire, ruffles or stiffens his coat, gives curves or straight lines to his gestures and even, in process of time, subtly penetrates the very features of his face. Man comes in the end to look like his ideal image of himself. These engravings can be translated into beauty or ugliness: in ugliness they become caricatures; in beauty, antique statues.

The women who wore these dresses looked more or less like one or the other, according to the degree of poetry or vulgarity evident in their faces. The living substance gave suppleness to what appears too stiff to us. The viewer's imagination can even today see a marching man in this tunic or the shrug of a woman's shoulder beneath that shawl. One of these days perhaps some theatre or other will put on a play where we shall see a revival of the fashions in which our fathers thought themselves just as captivating as we ourselves think we are, in our modest garments (which also have their attractiveness, to be sure, but rather of a moral and spiritual kind); and, if they are worn and given life to by intelligent actors and actresses,

we shall be surprised at our having laughed at them so thoughtlessly. The past, whilst retaining its ghostly piquancy, will recapture the light and movement of life, and become present.

If an impartially-minded man were to look through the whole range of French fashions, one after the other, from the origins of France to the present day, he would find nothing to shock or even to surprise him. He would find the transition as fully prepared as in the scale of the animal kingdom. No gaps, hence no surprises. And if to the illustration representing each age he were to add the philosophic thought which that age was mainly preoccupied with or worried by, a thought which the illustration inevitably reflects, he would see what a deep harmony informs all the branches of history, and that, even in the centuries which appear to us the most outrageous and the most confused, the immortal appetite for beauty has always found satisfaction.

Here we have indeed a golden opportunity to establish a rational and historical theory of beauty, in contrast to the theory of a unique and absolute beauty, and to show that beauty is always and inevitably compounded of two elements, although the impression it conveys is one; for the difficulty we may experience in distinguishing the variable elements that go to make beauty's unity of impression does not in any way invalidate the need of variety in its composition. Beauty is made up, on the one hand, of an element that is eternal and invariable, though to determine how much of it there is is extremely difficult, and, on the other, of a relative circumstantial element, which we may like to call, successively or at one and the same time, contemporaneity, fashion, morality, passion. Without this second element, which is like the amusing, teasing, appetite-whetting coating of the divine cake, the first element would be indigestible, tasteless, unadapted and inappropriate to human nature. I challenge anyone to find any sample whatsoever of beauty that does not contain these two elements.

Let me take as an example the two extreme stages of history. In hieratic art duality is evident at the first glance; the eternal element of beauty reveals itself only by permission and under the control of the religion the artist belongs to. In the most frivolous work of a sophisticated artist, belonging to one of those ages we vaingloriously call civilized, the duality is equally apparent; the eternal part of beauty will be both veiled and expressed, if not through fashion, then at least through the individual temperament of the artist. The duality of art is an inevitable consequence of the duality of man. If you like it that way, you may identify the eternally subsisting portion as the soul of art, and the variable element as its body. That is why Stendhal, that impertinent, teasing, even repugnant mind (whose impertinences are, nevertheless, usefully thought-provoking), came close to the truth, much closer than many other people, when he said: 'The beautiful is neither more nor less than the promise of happiness.'<sup>3</sup> No doubt this definition oversteps the mark; it subordinates beauty much too much to the infinitely variable ideal of happiness; it diverts beauty too lightly of its aristocratic character; but it has the great merit of getting away from the mistake of the academicians.<sup>4</sup>

More than once before I have explained these things<sup>5</sup>; these few lines are explanation enough for those who enjoy these pastimes of abstract thought; but I am well aware that French readers for the most part take little pleasure in them, and I am myself keen to enter into the positive and solid part of my subject.

## II. MANNERS AND MODES

For sketches of manners, for the portrayal of bourgeois life and the fashion scene, the quickest and the cheapest technical means will evidently be the best. The more beauty the artist puts into it, the more valuable will the work be; but there is in the trivial things of life, in the daily changing of external



things, a speed of movement that imposes upon the artist an equal speed of execution. The multi-coloured engravings of the eighteenth century are again enjoying the favour of current fashion, as I was saying just now; pastel, etching, aquatint have provided their successive quotas to this vast dictionary of modern life in libraries, in art collector's portfolios and in the humblest shop windows. As soon as lithography was invented, it was quickly seen to be very suitable for this enormous task, so frivolous in appearance. We possess veritable national records in this class. The works of Gavarni and Daumier have been accurately described as complements to the *Comédie humaine*.<sup>6</sup> Balzac himself, I feel sure, would not have been unwilling to adopt that idea, which is all the more accurate in proportion as the artist-portrayer of manners is a genius of mixed composition, in other words, a genius with a pronounced literary element. Observer, idler, philosopher, call him what you will, but, in order to define such an artist, you will surely in the end be brought to giving him an attributive adjective that you could not apply to a painter of things eternal, or at least things of a more permanent nature, of heroic or religious subjects. Sometimes he may be a poet; more often he comes close to the novelist or the moralist; he is the painter of the fleeting moment and of all that it suggests of the eternal. Every country, for its pleasure or its fame, has possessed a few men of that sort. In our own time, to Daumier, to Gavarni, the first names that come to mind, we may add Deveria, Maurin, Numa (all chroniclers of the Restoration's shady charms), Watier, Tassart, Eugène Lami;<sup>7</sup> this last one almost English in his affection for aristocratic society, and even Trimolet and Travès,<sup>8</sup> the chroniclers of poverty and humble life.

### III. AN ARTIST, MAN OF THE WORLD, MAN OF CROWDS, AND CHILD

Today I want to talk to my readers about a singular man, whose originality is so powerful and clear-cut that it is self-sufficing, and does not bother to look for approval. None of his drawings is signed, if by signature we mean the few letters, which can be so easily forged, that compose a name, and that so many other artists grandly inscribe at the bottom of their most carefree sketches. But all his works are signed with his dazzling soul, and art-lovers who have seen and liked them will recognize them easily from the description I propose to give of them. M. C. G.<sup>9</sup> loves mixing with the crowds, loves being incognito, and carries his originality to the point of modesty. M. Thackeray, who, as is well known, is very interested in all things to do with art, and who draws the illustrations for his own novels, one day spoke of M. G. in a London review, much to the irritation of the latter who regarded the matter as an outrage to his modesty. And again quite recently, when he heard that I was proposing to make an assessment of his mind and talent, he begged me, in a most peremptory manner, to suppress his name, and to discuss his works only as though they were the works of some anonymous person. I will humbly obey this odd request. The reader and I will proceed as though M. G. did not exist, and we will discuss his drawings and his water-colours, for which he professes a patrician's disdain, in the same way as would a group of scholars faced with the task of assessing the importance of a number of precious historical documents which chance has brought to light, and the author of which must for ever remain unknown. And even to reassure my conscience completely, let my readers assume that all the things I have to say about the artist's nature, so strangely and mysteriously dazzling, have been more or less accurately suggested by the works in question; pure poetic hypothesis, conjecture, or imaginative reconstructions.

M. G. is an old man. Jean-Jacques<sup>10</sup> began writing, so they say, at the age of forty-two. Perhaps it was at about that age that M. G., obsessed by the world of images that filled his mind, plucked up courage to cast ink and colours on to a sheet of white paper. To be honest, he drew like a barbarian, like a child, angrily chiding his clumsy fingers and his disobedient tool. I have seen a large number of these early scribbles, and I admit that most of the people who know what they are talking about, or who claim to, could, without shame, have failed to discern the latent genius that dwelt in these obscure beginnings. Today, M. G., who has discovered unaided all the little tricks of the trade, and who has taught himself, without help or advice, has become a powerful master in his own way; of his early artlessness he has retained only what was needed to add an unexpected spice to his abundant gift. When he happens upon one of these efforts of his early manner, he tears it up or burns it, with a most amusing show of shame and indignation.

For ten whole years I wanted to make the acquaintance of M. G., who is by nature a great traveller and very cosmopolitan. I knew that he had for a long time been working for an English illustrated paper and that in it had appeared engravings from his travel sketches (Spain, Turkey, the Crimea). Since then I have seen a considerable mass of these on-the-spot drawings from life, and I have thus been able to 'read' a detailed and daily account, infinitely preferable to any other, of the Crimean campaign. The same paper had also published (without signature, as before) a large quantity of compositions by this artist from the new ballets and operas. When at last I ran him to ground<sup>11</sup> I saw at once that I was not dealing exactly with an artist but rather with a man of the world. In this context, pray interpret the word 'artist' in a very narrow sense, and the expression 'man of the world' in a very broad one. By 'man of the world', I mean a man of the whole world, a man who understands the world and the mysterious

and legitimate reasons behind all its customs; by 'artist', I mean a specialist, a man tied to his palette like a serf to the soil. M. G. does not like being called an artist. Is he not justified to a small extent? He takes an interest in everything the world over, he wants to know, understand, assess everything that happens on the surface of our spheroid. The artist moves little, or even not at all, in intellectual and political circles. If he lives in the Bréda quarter he knows nothing of what goes on in the Faubourg. Saint-Germain.<sup>12</sup> With two or three exceptions, which it is unnecessary to name, the majority of artists are, us face it, very skilled brutes, mere manual labourers, village pub-talkers with the minds of country bumpkins.<sup>13</sup> Their talk, inevitably enclosed within very narrow limits, quickly becomes a bore to the man of the world, to the spiritual citizen of the universe.

Thus to begin to understand M. G., the first thing to note is this: that curiosity may be considered the starting point of his genius.

Do you remember a picture (for indeed it is a picture!) written by the most powerful pen of this age<sup>14</sup> and entitled *The Man of the Crowd*? Sitting in a café, and looking through the shop window, a convalescent is enjoying the sight of the passing crowd, and identifying himself in thought with all the thoughts that are moving around him. He has only recently come back from the shades of death and breathes in with delight all the spores and odours of life; as he has been on the point of forgetting everything, he remembers and passionately wants to remember everything. In the end he rushes out into the crowd in search of a man unknown to him whose face, which he had caught sight of, had in a flash fascinated him. Curiosity had become a compelling, irresistible passion.

Now imagine an artist perpetually in the spiritual condition of the convalescent, and you will have the key to the character of M. G.

But convalescence is like a return to childhood. The

convalescent, like the child, enjoys to the highest degree the faculty of taking a lively interest in things, even the most trivial in appearance. Let us hark back, if we can, by a retrospective effort of our imaginations, to our youngest, our morning impressions, and we shall recognize that they were remarkably akin to the vividly coloured impressions that we received later on after a physical illness, provided that illness left our spiritual faculties pure and unimpaired. The child sees everything as a novelty; the child is always 'drunk'. Nothing is more like what we call inspiration than the joy the child feels in drinking in shape and colour. I will venture to go even further and declare that inspiration has some connection with congestion, that every sublime thought is accompanied by a more or less vigorous nervous impulse that reverberates in the cerebral cortex. The man of genius has strong nerves; those of the child are weak. In the one, reason has assumed an important role; in the other, sensibility occupies almost the whole being. But genius is no more than childhood recaptured at will, childhood equipped now with man's physical means to express itself, and with the analytical mind that enables it to bring order into the sum of experience, involuntarily amassed. To this deep and joyful curiosity must be attributed that stare, animal-like in its ecstacy, which all children have when confronted with something new, whatever it may be, face or landscape, light, gilding, colours, watered silk, enchantment of beauty, enhanced by the arts of dress. A friend of mine was telling me one day how, as a small boy, he used to be present when his father was dressing, and how he had always been filled with astonishment, mixed with delight, as he looked at the arm muscle, the colour tones of the skin tinged with rose and yellow, and the bluish network of the veins. The picture of the external world was already beginning to fill him with respect, and to take possession of his brain. Already the shape of things obsessed and possessed him. A precocious fate was showing the tip of its nose. His damna-

tion was settled. Need I say that, today, the child is a famous painter.

I was asking you just now to think of M. G. as an eternal convalescent; to complete your idea of him, think of him also as a man-child, as a man possessing at every moment the genius of childhood, in other words a genius for whom no edge of life is blunted.

I told you that I was unwilling to call him a pure artist, and that he himself rejected this title, with a modesty tinged with aristocratic restraint. I would willingly call him a dandy, and for that I would have a sheaf of good reasons; for the word 'dandy' implies a quintessence of character and a subtle understanding of all the moral mechanisms of this world; but, from another aspect, the dandy aspires to cold detachment, and it is in this way that M. G., who is dominated, if ever anyone was, by an insatiable passion, that of seeing and feeling, parts company trenchantly with dandyism. *Amabam amare*, said Augustine. 'I love passion, passionately,' M. G. might willingly echo. The dandy is blasé, or affects to be, as a matter of policy and class attitude. M. G. hates blasé people. Sophisticated minds will understand me when I say that he possesses that difficult art of being sincere without being ridiculous. I would willingly confer on him the title of philosopher, to which he has a right for more than one reason; but his excessive love of visible, tangible things, in their most plastic form, inspires him with a certain dislike of those things that go to make up the intangible kingdom of the metaphysician. Let us therefore reduce him to the status of the pure pictorial moralist, like La Bruyère.

The crowd is his domain, just as the air is the bird's, and water that of the fish. His passion and his profession is to merge with the crowd. For the perfect idler, for the passionate observer it becomes an immense source of enjoyment to establish his dwelling in the throng, in the ebb and flow, the bustle, the fleeting and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel

at home anywhere; to see the world, to be at the very centre of the world, and yet to be unseen of the world, such are some of the minor pleasures of those independent, intense and impartial spirits, who do not lend themselves easily to linguistic definitions. The observer is a prince enjoying his incognito wherever he goes. The lover of life makes the whole world into his family, just as the lover of the fair sex creates his from all the lovely women he has found, from those that could be found, and those who are impossible to find, just as the picture-lover lives in an enchanted world of dreams painted on canvases. Thus the lover of universal life moves into the crowd as though into an enormous reservoir of electricity. He, the lover of life, may also be compared to a mirror as vast as this crowd; to a kaleidoscope endowed with consciousness, which with every one of its movements presents a pattern of life, in all its multiplicity, and the flowing grace of all the elements that go to compose life. It is an ego artist for the non-ego, and reflecting it at every moment in energies more vivid than life itself, always inconstant and fleeting. 'Any man', M. G. once said, in one of those talks he rendered memorable by the intensity of his gaze, and by his eloquence of gesture, 'any man who is not weighed down with a sorrow so searching as to touch all his faculties, and who is bored in the midst of the crowd, is a fool! A fool! and I despise him!'

When, as he wakes up, M. G. opens his eyes and sees the sun beating vibrantly at his window-panes, he says to himself with remorse and regret: 'What an imperative command! What a fanfare of light! Light everywhere for several hours past! Light I have lost in sleep! and endless numbers of things bathed in light that I could have seen and have failed to!' And off he goes! And he watches the flow of life move by, majestic and dazzling. He admires the eternal beauty and the astonishing harmony of life in the capital cities, a harmony so providentially maintained in the tumult of human liberty. He gazes at the landscape of the great city, landscapes of stone, now

swathed in the mist, now struck in full face by the sun. He enjoys handsome equipages, proud horses, the spit and polish of the grooms, the skilful handling by the page boys, the smooth rhythmical gait of the women, the beauty of the children, full of the joy of life and proud as peacocks of their pretty clothes; in short, life universal. If in a shift of fashion, the cut of a dress has been slightly modified, if clusters of ribbons and curls have been dethroned by rosettes, if bonnets have widened and chignons have come down a little on the nape of the neck, if waist-lines have been raised and skirts become fuller, you may be sure that from a long way off his eagle's eye will have detected it. A regiment marches by, maybe on its way to the ends of the earth, filling the air of the boulevard with its martial airs, as light and lively as hope; and sure enough M. G. has already seen, inspected and analysed the weapons and the bearing of this whole body of troops. Harness, highlights, bands, determined mien, heavy and grim mustachios, all these details flood chaotically into him; and within a few minutes the poem that comes with it all is virtually composed. And then his soul will vibrate with the soul of the regiment, marching as though it were one living creature, proud image of joy and discipline!

But evening comes. The witching hour, the uncertain light, when the sky draws its curtains and the city lights go on.<sup>15</sup> The sun. Honest men or crooked customers, wise or irresponsible, all are saying to themselves: 'The day is done at last!' Good men and bad turn their thoughts to pleasure, and each hurries to his favourite haunt to drink the cup of oblivion. M. G. will be the last to leave any place where the departing glories of daylight linger, where poetry echoes, life pulsates, music sounds; any place where a human passion offers a subject to his eye where natural man and conventional man reveal themselves in strange beauty, where the rays of the dying sun play on the fleeting pleasure of the 'depraved animal!'<sup>16</sup> 'Well,



there, to be sure, is a day well filled,' murmurs to himself a type of reader well-known to all of us; 'each one of us has surely enough genius to fill it in the same way.' No few men have the gift of seeing; fewer still have the power to express themselves. And now, whilst others are sleeping, this man is leaning over his table, his steady gaze on a sheet of paper, exactly the same gaze as he directed just now at the things about him, brandishing his pencil, his pen, his brush, splashing water from the glass up to the ceiling, wiping his pen on his shirt, hurried, vigorous, active, as though he was afraid the images might escape him, quarrelsome though alone, and driving himself relentlessly on. And things seen are born again on the paper, natural and more than natural, beautiful and better than beautiful, strange and endowed with an enthusiastic life, like the soul of their creator. The weird pageant has been distilled from nature. All the materials, stored higgledy-piggledy by memory, are classified, ordered, harmonized, and undergo that deliberate idealization, which is the product of a childlike perceptiveness, in other words a perceptiveness that is acute and magical by its very ingenuousness.

#### IV. MODERNITY

And so, walking or quickening his pace, he goes his way, for ever in search. In search of what? We may rest assured that this man, such as I have described him, this solitary mortal endowed with an active imagination, always roaming the great desert of men, has a nobler aim than that of the pure idler, a more general aim, other than the fleeting pleasure of circumstance. He is looking for that indefinable something we may be allowed to call 'modernity', for want of a better term to express the idea in question. The aim for him is to extract from fashion the poetry that resides in its historical envelope, to distil the eternal from the transitory. If we cast our eye over our exhibitions of modern pictures, we shall be struck by the

general tendency of our artists to clothe all manner of subjects in the dress of the past. Almost all of them use the fashions and the furnishings of the Renaissance, as David used Roman fashions and furnishings, but there is this difference, that David, having chosen subjects peculiarly Greek or Roman, could not do otherwise than present them in the style of antiquity, whereas the painters of today, choosing, as they do, subjects of a general nature, applicable to all ages, will insist on dressing them up in the fashion of the Middle Ages, of the Renaissance, or of the East. This is evidently sheer laziness; for it is much more convenient to state roundly that everything is hopelessly ugly in the dress of a period than to apply oneself to the task of extracting the mysterious beauty that may be hidden there, however small or light it may be. Modernity is the transient, the fleeting, the contingent; it is one half of art, the other being the eternal and the immovable. There was a form of modernity for every painter of the past; the majority of the fine portraits that remain to us from former times are clothed in the dress of their own day. They are perfectly harmonious works because the dress, the hairstyle, and even the gesture, the expression and the smile (each age has its carriage, its expression and its smile) form a whole, full of vitality. You have no right to despise this transitory fleeting element, the metamorphoses of which are so frequent, nor to dispense with it. If you do, you inevitably fall into the emptiness of an abstract and indefinable beauty, like that of the one and only woman of the time before the Fall. If for the dress of the day, which is necessarily right, you substitute another, you are guilty of a piece of nonsense that only a fancy-dress ball imposed by fashion can excuse. Thus the goddesses, the nymphs, and sultans of the eighteenth century are portraits in the spirit of their day.

No doubt it is an excellent discipline to study the old masters, in order to learn how to paint, but it can be no more than a superfluous exercise if your aim is to understand the

beauty of the present day. The draperies of Rubens or Veronese will not teach you how to paint watered silk à l'antique, or satin à la reine, or any other fabric produced by our mills, supported by a swaying crinoline, or petticoats of starched muslin. The texture and grain are not the same as in the fabrics of old Venice, or those worn at the court of Catherine.<sup>17</sup> We may add that the cut of the skirt and bodice is absolutely different, that the pleats are arranged into a new pattern, and finally that the gesture and carriage of the woman of today give her dress a vitality and a character that are not those of the woman of former ages. In short, in order that any form of modernity may be worthy of becoming antiquity, the mysterious beauty that human life unintentionally puts into it must have been extracted from it. It is this task that M. G. particularly addresses himself to.

I have said that every age has its own carriage, its expression, its gestures. This proposition may be easily verified in a large portrait gallery (the one at Versailles, for example). But it can be yet further extended. In a unity we call a nation, the professions, the social classes, the successive centuries, introduce variety not only in gestures and manners, but also in the general outlines of faces. Such and such a nose, mouth, forehead, will be standard for a given interval of time, the length of which I shall not claim to determine here, but which may certainly be a matter of calculation. Such ideas are not familiar enough to portrait painters; and the great weakness of M. Ingres, in particular, is the desire to impose on every type that sits for him a more or less complete process of improvement, in other words a despotic perfecting process, borrowed from the store of classical ideas.

In a matter such as this, *a priori* reasoning would be easy and even legitimate. The perpetual correlation between what is called the soul and what is called the body is a quite satisfactory explanation of how what is material or emanates from the spiritual reflects and will always reflect the spiritual force it

derives from. If a painter, patient and scrupulous but with only inferior imaginative power, were commissioned to paint a courtesan of today, and, for this purpose, were to get his inspiration (to use the hallowed term) from a courtesan by Titian or Raphael, the odds are that his work would be fraudulent, ambiguous, and difficult to understand. The study of a masterpiece of that date and of that kind will not teach him the carriage, the gaze, the come-hitherishness, or the living representation of one of these creatures that the dictionary of fashion has, in rapid succession, pigeonholed under the coarse or light-hearted rubric of unchaste, kept women, Lorettes.<sup>18</sup>

The same remark applies precisely to the study of the soldier, the dandy, and even animals, dogs or horses, and of all things that go to make up the external life of an age. We obede the man who goes to antiquity for the study of anything other than ideal art, logic and general method! By immersing himself too deeply in it, he will no longer have the present in his mind's eye; he throws away the value and the privileges afforded by circumstance; for nearly all our originality comes from the stamp that time impresses upon our sensibility. The reader will readily understand that I could easily verify my assertions from innumerable objects other than women. What would you say, for example, of a marine painter (I take an extreme case) who, having to represent the sober and elegant beauty of a modern vessel, were to tire out his eyes in the study of the overloaded, twisted shapes, the monumental stern, of ships of bygone ages, and the complex sails and rigging of the sixteenth century? And what would you think of an artist you had commissioned to do the portrait of a thorough-bred, celebrated in the solemn annals of the turf, if he were to restrict his studies to museums, if he were to content himself with looking at equine studies of the past in the picture galleries, in Van Dyck, Bourguignon,<sup>19</sup> or Van der Meulen?<sup>20</sup>

M. G., guided by nature, tyrannized over by circumstance, has followed a quite different path. He began by looking at life, and only later did he contrive to learn how to express life. The result has been a striking originality, in which whatever traces of untutored simplicity may still remain take on the appearance of an additional proof of obedience to the impression, of a flattery of truth. For most of us, especially for businessmen, in whose eyes nature does not exist, unless it be in its strict utility relationship with their business interests, the fantastic reality of life becomes strangely blunted. M. G. registers it constantly; his memory and his eyes are full of it.]

#### V. MNEMONIC ART

The word 'barbarousness', which may have come too often from my pen, might lead some people to believe that I am alluding to a number of shapeless drawings that only the imagination of the viewer is capable of transforming into perfect things. This would be a serious misunderstanding of what I mean. I refer to a sort of inevitable, synthetic, childlike barbarousness, which can often still be seen in a perfect type of art (Mexican, Egyptian, or Ninevehite barbarousness) and derives from the need to see things big, to look at them particularly from the point of view of their effect as a whole. It is not superfluous to remark here that the accusation of barbarousness has often been made against all painters who have an eye for synthesis and abbreviation, M. Corot, for example, who begins by tracing the main lines of a landscape, its structure and features. Similarly, M. G., faithful interpreter of his own impressions, notes with instinctive vigour the culminating features or highlights of an object (they can be culminating or luminous from a dramatic point of view) or its main characteristics, sometimes even with a degree of exaggeration useful to human memory; and the imagination of the viewer, undergoing in its turn the influence of this imperious

code, conjures up in clear outline the impression produced by objects on the mind of M. G. In this case, the viewer becomes the translator of a translation, which is always clear and always intoxicating.

There is a factor that adds greatly to the vitality of this pictorial record of everyday life. I refer to M. G.'s habit of work. He draws from memory, and not from the model, except in those cases (the Crimean War, for example) where there is an urgent need to take immediate, hurried notes and to establish the broad outlines of a subject. In fact all true draughtsmen draw from the image imprinted in their brain and not from nature. If the admirable sketches of Raphael, of Watteau and many others are quoted as examples to invalidate our contention, our reply is that these are indeed highly detailed notes, but mere notes they remain. When a true artist has reached the stage of the final execution of his work, the model would be more of an embarrassment to him than a help. It even happens that men like Daumier and M. G. who have been accustomed for years to using their memory, and filling it with images, find that, when confronted with a model and the multiplicity of detail this means, their main faculty is as though confused and paralysed.

Then begins a struggle between the determination to see everything, to forget nothing, and the faculty of memory, which has acquired the habit of registering in a flash the general tones and shape, the outline pattern. An artist with a perfect sense of form but particularly accustomed to the exercise of his memory and his imagination, then finds himself assailed, as it were, by a riot of details, all of them demanding justice, with the fury of a mob in love with absolute equality. Any form of justice is inevitably infringed; any harmony is destroyed, sacrificed; a multitude of trivialities are magnified; a multitude of little things become usurers of attention. The more the artist pays impartial attention to detail, the greater does anarchy become. Whether he be short-

officer, wasp-waisted and bending forward over ladies' chairs without bashfulness, with affected movements of the shoulders, and, seen from the rear, reminiscent of some slender and elegant insect; the zouave and the riflemen, whose whole bearing suggests outstanding audacity, self-reliance and, as it were, a more than ordinary sense of personal responsibility; and the free and easy manner, the mercurial gaiety of the light cavalry; the vaguely professorial and academic features of the technical arms, like the gunners and the sappers, often confirmed by the unwarlike apparatus of spectacles: none of these models, none of these nuances is neglected, and all of them are summed up, defined, with the same love and wit.

I have in front of me, as I write, one of these drawings; its subject, which conveys a general impression of heroism, is the head of an infantry column; maybe these men are back from Italy<sup>38</sup> and have halted on the boulevards, basking in the enthusiasm of the crowds; maybe they have just accomplished long marches on the roads of Lombardy; I do not know, but what is clearly visible, what comes across fully, is the steadfast audacious character, even in repose, of all these sun-tanned, weather-beaten faces.

This is without a doubt the uniform expression produced by discipline, sufferings undergone together, the resigned air of courage, tempered by long periods of exhausting strain. Trousers turned up and tucked into gaiters, great-coats tarnished by dust and vaguely discoloured, the whole equipment in fact has itself taken on the indestructible appearance of beings that have returned from afar, and have experienced strange adventures. It really is as though these men were more solidly screwed on to their hips, more firmly planted on their feet, more self-assured than ordinary mortals. If Charlet, who was always on the look-out for just this kind of beauty, and who found it often enough, had seen this drawing, he would have been greatly impressed by it.

IX. THE DANDY<sup>39</sup>

The wealthy man, who, blasé though he may be, has no occupation in life but to chase along the highway of happiness, the man nurtured in luxury, and habituated from early youth to being obeyed by others, the man, finally, who has no profession other than elegance, is bound at all times to have a facial expression of a very special kind. Dandyism is an ill-defined social attitude as strange as duelling; it goes back a long way, since Caesar, Catiline,<sup>40</sup> Alcibiades<sup>41</sup> provide us with brilliant examples of it; it is very widespread, since Chateaubriand found examples of it in the forests and on the lake-sides of the New World. Dandyism, which is an institution outside the law, has a rigorous code of laws that all its subjects are strictly bound by, however ardent and independent their individual characters may be.

The English novelists, more than others, have cultivated the 'high life' type of novel, and their French counterparts who, like M. de Custine,<sup>42</sup> have tried to specialize in love novels have very wisely taken care to endow their characters with purses long enough for them to indulge without hesitation their slightest whims; and they freed them from any profession. These beings have no other status but that of cultivating the idea of beauty in their own persons, of satisfying their passions, of feeling and thinking. Thus they possess, to their hearts' content, and to a vast degree, both time and money, without which fantasy, reduced to the state of ephemeral reverie, can scarcely be translated into action. It is unfortunately very true that, without leisure and money, love can be no more than an orgy of the common man, or the accomplishment of a conjugal duty. Instead of being a sudden impulse full of ardour and reverie, it becomes a distastefully utilitarian affair.

If I speak of love in the context of dandyism, the reason is that love is the natural occupation of men of leisure. But the



dandy does not consider love as a special aim in life. If I have mentioned money, the reason is that money is indispensable to those who make an exclusive cult of their passions, but the dandy does not aspire to wealth as an object in itself; an open bank credit could suit him just as well; he leaves that squallid passion to vulgar mortals. Contrary to what a lot of thoughtless people seem to believe, dandyism is not even an excessive delight in clothes and material elegance. For the perfect dandy, these things are no more than the symbol of the aristocratic superiority of his mind. Thus, in his eyes, enamoured as he is above all of distinction, perfection in dress consists in absolute simplicity, which is, indeed, the best way of being distinguished. What then can this passion be, which has crystallized into a doctrine, and has formed a number of outstanding devotees, this unwritten code that has moulded so proud a brotherhood? It is, above all, the burning desire to create a personal form of originality, within the external limits of social conventions. It is a kind of cult of the ego which can still survive the pursuit of that form of happiness to be found in others, in woman for example; which can even survive what are called illusions. It is the pleasure of causing surprise in others, and the proud satisfaction of never showing any oneself. A dandy may be blasé, he may even suffer pain, but in the latter case he will keep smiling, like the Spartan under the bite of the fox.<sup>43</sup>

Clearly, then, dandyism in certain respects comes close to spirituality and to stoicism, but a dandy can never be a vulgar man. If he were to commit a crime, he might perhaps be socially damned, but if the crime came from some trivial cause, the disgrace would be irreparable. Let the reader not be shocked by this mixture of the grave and the gay; let him rather reflect that there is a sort of grandeur in all follies, a driving power in every sort of excess. A strange form of spirituality indeed! For those who are its high priests and its victims at one and the same time, all the complicated material

conditions they subject themselves to, from the most flawless dress at any time of day or night to the most risky sporting feats, are no more than a series of gymnastic exercises suitable to strengthen the will and school the soul. Indeed I was not far wrong when I compared dandyism to a kind of religion. The most rigorous monastic rule, the inexorable commands of the Old Man of the Mountain,<sup>44</sup> who enjoined suicide on his intoxicated disciples, were not more despotic or more slavishly obeyed than this doctrine of elegance and originality, which, like the others, imposes upon its ambitious and humble sectaries, men as often as not full of spirit, passion, courage, controlled energy, the terrible precept: *Perinde ac cadaver!*<sup>45</sup>

Fastidious, unbelievable, beaux, lions or dandies: which ever label these men claim for themselves, one and all stem from the same origin, all share the same characteristic of opposition and revolt; all are representatives of what is best in human pride, of that need, which is too rare in the modern generation, to combat and destroy triviality. That is the source, in your dandy, of that haughty, patrician attitude, aggressive even in its coldness. Dandyism appears especially in those periods of transition when democracy has not yet become all-powerful, and when aristocracy is only partially weakened and discredited. In the confusion of such times, a certain number of men, disenchanted and leisured 'outsiders', but all of them richly endowed with native energy, may conceive the idea of establishing a new kind of aristocracy, all the more difficult to break down because established on the most precious, the most indestructible faculties, on the divine gifts that neither work nor money can give. Dandyism is the last flicker of heroism in decadent ages; and the sort of dandy discovered by the traveller in Northern America in no sense invalidates this idea; for there is no valid reason why we should not believe that the tribes we call savage are not the remnants of great civilizations of the past. Dandyism is a setting sun; like the declining star, it is magnificent, without heat and full of

melancholy. But alas! the rising tide of democracy, which spreads everywhere and reduces everything to the same level, is daily carrying away these last champions of human pride, and submerging, in the waters of oblivion, the last traces of these remarkable myrmidons. Here in France, dandies are becoming rarer and rarer, whereas amongst our neighbours in England the state of society and the constitution (the true constitution, the one that is expressed in social habits) will, for a long time yet, leave room for the heirs of Sheridan, Brummell and Byron, always assuming that men worthy of them come forward.

What to the reader may have seemed a digression is not one in fact. The moral reflections and musings that arise from the drawings of an artist are in many cases the best interpretation that the critic can make of them; the notions they suggest are part of an underlying idea, and, by revealing them in turn, we may uncover the root idea itself. Need I say that when M. G. commits one of his dandies to paper, he always gives him his historical character, we might almost say his legendary character, were it not that we are dealing with our own day and with things that are generally held to be light-hearted? For here we surely have that ease of bearing, that sureness of manner, that simplicity in the habit of command, that way of wearing a frock-coat or controlling a horse, that calmness revealing strength in every circumstance, that convince us, when our eye does pick out one of those privileged beings, in whom the attractive and the formidable mingle so mysteriously: 'There goes a rich man perhaps, but quite certainly an unemployed Hercules.'

The specific beauty of the dandy consists particularly in that cold exterior resulting from the unshakable determination to remain unmoved; one is reminded of a latent fire, whose existence is merely suspected, and which, if it wanted to, but it does not, could burst forth in 'all its brightness. All that is expressed to perfection in these illustrations. ]

#### X. WOMAN

The being who, for most men, is the source of the most lively, and even, be it said to the shame of philosophical delights, the most lasting joys; the being towards or for whom all their efforts tend; that awe-inspiring being, incommunicable like God (with this difference that the infinite does not reveal itself because it would blind and crush the finite, whereas the being we are speaking about is incommunicable only, perhaps, because having nothing to communicate); that being in whom Joseph de Maistre saw a beautiful animal, whose charm brightens and facilitates the serious game of politics; for whom and by whom fortunes are made and lost; for whom, but especially by whom, artists and poets compose their most delicate jewels; from whom flow the most enervating pleasures and the most enriching sufferings - woman, in a word, is not, for the artist in general and for M. G. in particular, only the female of the human species. She is rather a divinity, a star, that presides over all the conceptions of the male brain; she is like the shimmer of all graces of nature, condensed into one being; she is the object of the most intense admiration and interest that the spectacle of life can offer to man's contemplation. She is a kind of idol, empty-headed perhaps, but dazzling, enchanting, an idol that holds men's destinies and wills in thrall to her glances. She is not, I repeat, an animal whose limbs, correctly assembled, provide a perfect example of harmony; nor is she even that type of pure beauty which might be imagined by a sculptor, in his moments of most austere meditation; not even that would suffice to explain her mysterious and complex spellbinding power. Neither Winkelman nor Raphael can help us in this context; and I am sure that M. G., in spite of the breadth of his intelligence (be it said without affront to him), would turn away from a piece of ancient statuary if, by looking at it, he were to lose the opportunity of enjoying a portrait by Reynolds or Lawrence. All the things that adorn woman,

5. (p. 367) The next two paragraphs are from 'The Salon of 1859', section V.
  6. (p. 368) The following passage originally appeared in an article on Delacroix's mural paintings. (Pliade)
  7. (p. 371) Jean de la Fontaine (1621-95), poet and fabulist.
  8. (p. 371) Nicolas Boileau (1636-1711), satirical poet and critic.
  9. (p. 371) None other than Baudelaire, perhaps.
  10. (p. 371) François de Malherbe (1555-1628), lyrical poet.
  11. (p. 372) Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-82).
  12. (p. 372) Charles de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu (1689-1755), political thinker.
  13. (p. 372) 1825-81. Writer and critic.
  14. (p. 374) i.e. Jean-Jacques Rousseau.
  15. (p. 375) 1801-32. Traveller and naturalist.
  16. (p. 375) Prosper Mérimée (1803-70), author of short stories and Inspector of Ancient Monuments.
  17. (p. 376) Monsieur de la Palisse was supposedly given to uttering weighty apophthegms of an obvious kind.
  18. (p. 376) Giuseppe Ferrari (1812-76).
  19. (p. 377) Greek sculptor (fifth century B.C.).
  20. (p. 379) Horace, *Odes*, III, 1: 'I hate the vulgar crowd . . . and keep at a distance.'
  21. (p. 379) The expression comes from a poem by Sainte-Beuve ('Épître à Villemain', *Pensées d'aouï*) in reference to Vigny.
  22. (p. 380) Jacob Jordans (1593-1678); Flemish school.
  23. (p. 381) Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527), Florentine historian and political thinker, author of *The Prince*.
  24. (p. 383) Presumably the section on Charlet in 'Some French Caricaturists'. See pp. 211-14 above.
  25. (p. 384) See note 18 on 'The Salon of 1859'.
15. The Painter of Modern Life
1. (p. 390) This article probably dates from November 1859 to February 1860. (Pliade) It first appeared on 26 and 29 November and 3 December 1863; subsequently in *A.r.*
  2. (p. 390) Debucoart and the three Saint-Aubin brothers were all eighteenth-century draughtsmen and engravers.
  3. (p. 393) See *De l'Amour* (1822), Book I, Chapter 17.
  4. (p. 393) i.e. their belief in objective standards of beauty and systematic criticism.
  5. (p. 393) e.g. in 'The Universal Exhibition of 1855', section I.

6. (p. 394) In 1833 Balzac conceived the idea of giving a framework, to be called *La Comédie humaine*, to all his novels and stories, both those already published and those as yet unborn, so as to make his whole work into a kind of pageant of contemporary French society. In 'Some French Caricaturists' Baudelaire makes the same point as here about Gavarni and Daumier in relation to Balzac (see above, p. 228), but in the passage in question Balzac is stated to have recognized the relationship. That he should have done so seems a reasonable supposition.
7. (p. 394) See note 63 on 'The Salon of 1846'.
8. (p. 394) See notes 33 and 34 on 'Some French Caricaturists'.
9. (p. 395) Constantin Guys (1805-92), born in Holland; was correspondent for the *Illustrated London News* during the Crimean War. See below.
10. (p. 396) i.e. Jean-Jacques Rousseau.
11. (p. 396) Probably in 1859.
12. (p. 397) Aristocratic quarter of Paris. In contrast, the Bréda quarter, which took its name from the owner of the land on which it was developed under the Restoration, had an unsavoury reputation.
13. (p. 397) cf. 'The Salon of 1859', section I *passim*.
14. (p. 397) Edgar Allan Poe.
15. (p. 401) cf. *F. du m. No. XCV*, *Le Crépuscule du soir*.
16. (p. 401) From Rousseau's *Discours sur l'inégalité*.
17. (p. 404) Presumably Catherine the Great of Russia.
18. (p. 405) Term coined c. 1840, meaning young woman of easy virtue. 'Doe' ('une biche') has the same meaning, and came into use when 'Lorette' went out of fashion. See also 'Some French Caricaturists', p. 228.
19. (p. 405) Jacques Coutrois (1621-76), called 'Borgognone', at Bologna, where he worked for many years: mainly battle scenes, with horses.
20. (p. 405) 1634-90. Flemish origin; attached to the service of Louis XIV. Chronicler in paint of that monarch's campaigns.
21. (p. 408) Probably Ingres.
22. (p. 408) 1800-1876. Known specially for his romantic roles.
23. (p. 408) 1800-1888. Comic actor.
24. (p. 409) i.e. Crimean War. The 'Eastern Question' was in the news at the time, and this may explain why Baudelaire speaks of 'la Guerre d'Orient'.
25. (p. 410) 'Consecration of a burial-ground at Scutari by the Bishop of Gibraltar.'
26. (p. 410) 1806-71. Became Commander-in-Chief of the Turkish army.

27. (p. 411) Turkish irregular troops: Turkish word for 'bad hair'.
28. (p. 411) 1809-95. Marshal of France.
29. (p. 411) 1795-1878. Marshal of France. His service began under Napoleon I and continued until 1870.
30. (p. 411) Turkish Commander-in-Chief.
31. (p. 411) 'Achmet Pasha, Commander-in-Chief, standing in front of his tent, surrounded by his staff, receives two European officers', Achmet Pasha is presumably Achmet-Kaiserli-Pasha (1796-1881).
32. (p. 412) *Bustache Lesueur* (1616-55): mostly religious paintings.
33. (p. 413) The two main religious feasts of the Muslim year.
34. (p. 413) 1822-63. Son of Mehemet Ali.
35. (p. 415) *Friederich Ludwig* (1815-67), second son of Ludwig I of Bavaria. Ascended the Greek throne 1832; deposed 1862.
36. (p. 415) Greek militiamen in the Greek War of Independence; subsequently the word came to be used of any Greek remaining faithful to the traditional customs and national dress.
37. (p. 417) 1821-62. Man of letters and soldier; Crimean War veteran.
38. (p. 418) Presumably after the Italian campaign against the Austrians, with the battles of Magenta and Solferino, in June 1859.
39. (p. 419) Baudelaire prided himself on being a dandy; see Théophile Gautier's essay on him.
40. (p. 419) c. 109-62 B.C. Killed after the failure of his conspiracy in 63 B.C.
41. (p. 419) 450-404 B.C. Athenian general; murdered in exile.
42. (p. 419) See note 4 on '*Madame Bovary* by Gustave Flaubert'.
43. (p. 420) The legend of the Spartan who refused to cry out in pain when a fox was gnawing at his vitals reflects the Spartan tradition of rigid fortitude. See Plutarch, *Vita Lycurgi*, Chapter 18.
44. (p. 421) Chief of the Ismaelite sect in medieval Syria.
45. (p. 421) 'As a corpse' (Ignatius Loyola's precept of obedience for Jesuits).
46. (p. 424) 'The world of women.'
47. (p. 424) The Bois de Boulogne, woods on the western outskirts of Paris.
48. (p. 425) Law courts gazette, a daily journal founded in 1826.
49. (p. 430) See *La Bruyère's Les Caractères* (1688), III, 'Des femmes' (Penguin Classics, translated by Jean Stewart).
50. (p. 432) Juvenal, *Satire VI*, 'On Women', line 327: 'the natural woman'.
51. (p. 432) A.D. 15-48. Fourth wife of Claudius I.
52. (p. 435) Jean Moreau (1741-1814), draughtsman and engraver, notably of the French classics.

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Charles Bandelone, *The Flowers of Evil*,  
ed. Maurice and Jackson Mathews (New Directions, 1989)

THE FLOWERS OF EVIL

To show them further charms  
Let them implore your arms,  
And these, rebuking, humble  
Fingers that fumble

With proffered pearls aglow  
And sonnets of Belleau,  
Which, fettered by your beauty,  
They yield in duty.

Riffraff of scullion-rhymers  
Would dedicate their primers  
Under the stairs to view  
Only your shoe.

Each page-boy lucky-started,  
Each marquis, each Ronsard  
Would hang about your bowler  
To while an hour.

You'd count, among your blisses,  
Than lilies far more kisses,  
And boast, among your flames,  
Some royal names.

Yet now your beauty begs  
For scraps on floors, and dregs  
Else destined to the gutter,  
As bread and butter.

You eye, with longing tense,  
Cheap gauds for thirty cents,  
Which, pardon me, these days  
I cannot raise.

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PARISIAN SCENES

No scent, or pearl, or stone,  
But nothing save your own  
Thin nudity for dower,  
Pass on, my flower!

—Roy Campbell

XCII

THE SWAN

To Victor Hugo

I

Andromache, I think of you. The little stream,  
A yellowing mirror that onetime beheld  
The huge solemnity of your widow's grief,  
(That other Simois your tears have swelled)

Suddenly flooded the memory's dark soil  
As I was crossing the new *Place du Carrousel*.  
The old Paris is gone (the face of a town  
Is more changeable than the heart of mortal man).

I see what seem the ghosts of these royal barracks,  
The rough-hewn capitals, the columns waiting to crack,  
Weeds, and the big rocks greened with standing water,  
And at the window, a jumble of bric-a-brac.

One time a menagerie was on display there,  
And there I saw one morning at the hour  
Of cold and clarity when Labor rises  
And brooms make little cyclones of soot in the air

109



THE FLOWERS OF EVIL

A swan that had escaped out of his cage,  
And there, web-footed on the dry sidewalk,  
Dragged his white plumes over the cobblestones,  
Lifting his beak at the gutter as if to talk,

And bathing his wings in the sifting city dust,  
His heart full of some cool, remembered lake,  
Said, "Water, when will you rain? Where is your thunder?"  
I can see him now, straining his twitching neck

Skyward again and again, like the man in Ovid,  
Toward an ironic heaven as blank as slate,  
And trapped in a ruinous myth, he lifts his head  
As if God were the object of his hate.

II

Paris changes, but nothing of my melancholy  
Gives way. Foundations, scaffoldings, tackle and blocks,  
And the old suburbs drift off into allegory,  
While my frailest memories take on the weight of rocks.

And so at the Louvre one image weighs me down:  
I think of my great swan, the imbecile strain  
Of his head, noble and foolish as all the exiled,  
Eaten by ceaseless needs—and once again

Of you, Andromache, from a great husband's arms  
Fallen to the whip and mounted lust of Pyrrhus,  
And slumped in a heap beside an empty tomb,  
(Poor widow of Hector, and bride of Helenus)

And think of the consumptive negress, stamping  
In mud, emaciate, and trying to see

PARISIAN SCENES

The vanished cocoons of hidden Africa  
Behind the thickening granite of the mist;

Of whoever has lost what cannot be found again,  
Ever, ever; of those who lap up the tears  
And nurse at the tears of that motherly she-wolf, Sorrow;  
Of orphans drying like flowers in empty jars.

So in that forest where my mind is exiled  
One memory sounds like brass in the ancient war:  
I think of sailors washed up on uncharted islands,  
Of prisoners, the conquered, and more, so many more.

—Anthony Hecht

XCIII

THE SEVEN OLD MEN

To Victor Hugo.

Ant-seething city, city full of dreams,  
Where ghosts by daylight tug the passer's sleeve.  
Mystery, like sap, through all its conduit-streams,  
Quickens the dread Colossus that they weave.

One early morning, in the street's sad mud,  
Whose houses, by the fog increased in height,  
Seemed wharves along a riverside in flood:  
When with a scene to match the actor's plight,

Foul yellow mist had filled the whole of space:  
Steeling my nerves to play a hero's part,

Valeraille de timours  
Te dédiant leurs primeurs  
Et contemplant ton soulier  
Sous l'escalier,

Maint page épris du hasard,  
Maint seigneur et maint Ronsard  
Épieraient pour le déduit  
Ton frais réduit !

Tu compterais dans tes lits  
Plus de baisers que de lis  
Et rangerais sous tes loix  
Plus d'un Valois !

— Cependant tu vas guesusant  
Quelque vieux débris gisant  
Au seuil de quelque Vêfour  
De carrefour;

Tu vas lorgnant en dessous  
Des bijoux de vingt-neuf sous  
Dont je ne puis, oh ! pardon !  
Te faire don.

Va donc, sans autre ornement,  
Parfum, perles, diamant,  
Que ta maigre nudité,  
O ma beauté !

XCII

LE CYGNE

*A Victor Hugo.*

*Mégné*

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 cœur 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 verdîs 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 cieus  
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

LES FLEURS DU MAL

Baignait nerveusement ses ailes dans la poudre,  
Et disait, le cœur plein de son beau lac natal :  
" Eau, quand donc pleuvras-tu ? quand tonneras-tu,  
Je vois ce malheureux, mythe étrange et fatal, [foudra ? ]"

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 phthisique,  
Piétinant dans la boue, et cherchant, l'œil hagard,  
Les cocotiers absents de la superbe Afrique  
Derrière la muraille immense du brouillard ;

TABLEAUX PARISIENS

A quiconque a perdu ce qui ne se retrouve  
Jamais, jamais ! à ceux qui s'abreuvent de pleurs  
Et tentent 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 somme à plein souffle du cor !  
Je pense aux matelots oubliés dans une île,  
Aux captifs, aux vaincus !... à bien d'autres encor !

XCIII

LES SEPT VIEILLARDS

*A Victor Hugo.*

Fourmillante cité, cité pleine de rêves,  
Où le spectre, en plein jour, racroche le passant !  
Les mystères partout coulent comme des séves  
Dans les canaux étroits du colosse puissant.

Un matin, cependant que dans la triste rue  
Les maisons, dont la brume allongeaît la hauteur,  
Simulaient les deux quais d'une rivière accrue,  
Et que, décor semblable à l'âme de l'acteur,

Un brouillard sale et jaune inondait tout l'espace,  
Je suivais, roidissant mes nerfs comme un héros  
Et discutant avec mon âme déjà lasse,  
Le faubourg secoué par les lourds tomberaux.

Tout à coup, un vieillard dont les guenilles jaunes  
Imitaient la couleur de ce ciel pluvieux,  
Et dont l'aspect aurait fait pleuvoir les aumônes,  
Sans la méchanceté qui luisait dans ses yeux,



XXVI  
LES YEUX DES PAUVRES

Ah! vous voulez savoir pourquoi je vous hais aujourd'hui. Il vous sera sans doute moins facile de le comprendre qu'à moi de vous l'expliquer, car vous êtes, je crois, le plus bel exemple d'imperméabilité féminine qui se puisse rencontrer.

Nous avions passé ensemble une longue journée qui m'avait paru courte. Nous nous étions bien promis que toutes nos pensées nous seraient communes à l'un et à l'autre, et que nos deux âmes désormais n'en feraient plus qu'une; — un rêve qui n'a rien d'original, après tout, si ce n'est que, rêvé par tous les hommes, il n'a été réalisé par aucun.

Le soir, un peu fatiguée, vous voulûtes vous asseoir devant un café neuf qui formait le coin d'un boulevard neuf, encore tout plein de gravois et montrant déjà glorieusement ses splendeurs inachevées. Le café étincelait. Le gaz lui-même y déployait toute l'ardeur d'un début, et éclairait de toutes ses forces les murs aveuglants de blancheur, les nappes éblouissantes des miroirs, les ors des baguettes et des corniches, les pages aux joues rebondies traînées par les chiens en laisse, les dames riant au faucon perché sur leur poing, les nymphes et les déesses portant sur leur tête des fruits, des pâtés et du gibier, les Hébé et les Ganyrnédés présentant à bras tendu la petite amphore à bavaroises ou l'obélisque bicolore des glaces panachées; toute l'histoire et toute la mythologie mises au service de la goinfferie.

Droit devant nous, sur la chaussée, était planté un brave homme d'une quarantaine d'années, au visage fatigué, à la barbe grisonnante, tenant d'une main un petit garçon et portant sur l'autre bras un petit être trop faible pour marcher. Il remplissait l'office de bonne et faisait prendre à ses enfants l'air du soir. Tous en guenilles. Ces trois visages étaient extraordinairement sérieux, et ces six yeux contemplaient fixement le café nouveau avec une admiration égale, mais nuancée diversement par l'âge.

Les yeux du père disaient: «Que c'est beau! que c'est beau! on dirait que tout l'or du pauvre monde est venu se porter sur ces murs.» — Les yeux du petit garçon: «Que c'est beau! que c'est beau! mais c'est une maison où peuvent seuls entrer les gens qui ne sont pas comme nous.» — Quant aux yeux du plus petit, ils étaient trop fascinés pour exprimer autre chose qu'une joie stupide et profonde.

*Baudelaire, Les Poems in Prose, Trans. Francis  
Aronke (London: Arvill Press, 1989)*

XXVI  
THE EYES OF THE POOR

So you want to know why I hate you today? Perhaps this will be harder for you to understand than for me to explain, as I believe you are the most perfect example of the thick-skinned female to be found anywhere.

We had just spent a long day together, which seemed to me all too short. We had each sworn that our every thought would be common to us both, and that from now on our twin souls would be one — a dream which is in no way original except that, having been dreamt of by all men, it has been achieved by none.

That evening, as you were feeling rather tired, you wanted us to sit on the terrace outside the café at the corner of a newly built boulevard which was still littered with rubble but already making a lavish display of its uncompleted splendours. The café glittered all over with lights. The new gas-jets cast their incandescent novelty all round, brightening the whiteness of the walls, the dazzling planes of a multitude of mirrors, the gilt of all the mouldings and cornices, the rosy-cheeked pageboys drawn along by harnessed dogs, the ladies laughing at the falcons perched on their wrists, the nymphs and goddesses balancing baskets of fruits and pâtés and game on their heads, the Hébes and Ganyrnédés offering little cups of bavarian cream or multicoloured pyramids of ices — all history and mythology were exploited in the service of gluttony.

Directly opposite to where we sat, a harmless fellow who must have been in his forties stood in the roadway. He had a tired face with a grizzled beard, and was holding a small boy by the hand, and carrying a child, too small for walking yet, on the other arm. He was playing the nursemaid, taking his children out for an evening airing. They were all in rags. Their three faces were strikingly serious, with their three pairs of eyes fixed on the new café, all with equal wonderment though varying in expression according to their age.

The father's eyes seemed to be saying, 'What a beautiful sight — how beautiful it all is — it's as though all the gold in our poor world has been spread over those walls.' The little boy's eyes were saying, 'How beautiful, beautiful — but this is a house where only people who are not like us are allowed in.' As for the smallest of the trio, his eyes were too hypnotized to express anything but a mindless, deeply felt joy.

Les chansonniers disent que le plaisir rend l'âme bonne et amollit le cœur, La chanson avait raison ce soir-là, relativement à moi. Non seulement j'étais attendri par cette famille d'yeux, mais je me sentais un peu honteux de nos verres et de nos cafés, plus grands que notre soif. Je tournais mes regards vers les vôtres, cher amour, pour y lire *ma pensée*; je plongeais dans vos yeux si beaux et si bizarrement doux, dans vos yeux verts, habités par le Caprice et inspirés par la Lune, quand vous me dites: « Ces gens-là me sont insupportables avec leurs yeux ouverts comme des portes cochères! Ne pourriez-vous pas prier le maître du café de les éloigner d'ici? »

Tant il est difficile de s'entendre, mon cher ange, et tant la pensée est incommunicable, même entre gens qui s'aiment!

The music-hall songsters tell us that pleasure is good for the soul and softens the heart. The ballad was quite right, that evening, as far as I was concerned. Not only was I moved by that family of eyes, but I felt a little ashamed of our array of glasses and decanters, all so much bigger than our thirst. I was turning my eyes towards yours, my dear, to read *my thoughts* in them; I was plunging into your beautiful, strangely gentle eyes, your emerald eyes full of caprice and the inspirations of the Moon, when you remarked, 'I just can't stand those people, with their eyes as wide open as gates. Could you not ask the head-waiter to see them off?'

So you see, how hard it is to understand one another, my dear angel, how incommunicable our thoughts are, even between those who love each other.

[[1862), 1864]

XLVI  
PERTE D'AURÉOLE

«Eh! qu'on! vous ici, mon cher? Vous, dans un mauvais lieu! vous, le buveur de quintessences! vous, le mangeur d'ambroisie! En vérité, il y a là de quoi me surprendre.»

— Mon cher, vous connaissez ma terreur des chevaux et des voitures. Tout à l'heure, comme je traversais le boulevard, en grande hâte, et que je sautillais dans la boue, à travers ce chaos mouvant où la mort arrive au galop de tous les côtés à la fois, mon auréole, dans un mouvement brusque, a glissé de ma tête dans la fange du macadam. Je n'ai pas eu le courage de la ramasser. J'ai jugé moins désagréable de perdre mes insignes que de me faire rompre les os. Et puis, me suis-je dit, à quelque chose malheur est bon. Je puis maintenant me promener incognito, faire des actions basses, et me livrer à la crapule, comme les simples mortels. Et me voici, tout semblable à vous, comme vous voyez!

— Vous devriez au moins faire afficher cette auréole, ou la faire réclamer par le commissaire.

— Ma foi! non. Je me trouve bien ici. Vous seul, vous m'avez reconnu. D'ailleurs la dignité m'ennuie. Ensuite je pense avec joie que quelque mauvais poète la ramassera et s'en coiffera impudemment. Faire un heureux, quelle jouissance! et surtout un heureux qui me fera rire! Pensez à X, ou à Z! Hein! comme ce sera drôle!»

XLVII  
A LOST HALO

'Well, fancy seeing you here, old man, in a shady joint like this! You who drink nothing but quintessences and eat nothing but ambrosial! Really, you know, I have every right to be astonished.'

'Dear fellow, you know how much I dread horses and carriages. As I was crossing the road just now as fast as my legs would carry me, hopping through the mud and the chaos of traffic with death hurdling at me from every direction at once, some sharp movement of mine made my halo fall off my head and roll in the dirt on the road. I hadn't the courage to bend down and pick it up, thinking it would be less painful to lose my laurels than to have a few bones broken. I told myself that it's an ill wind and so on — now I can go around incognito, do all sorts of disgraceful things and mix with the scum of society, the way ordinary people do. So here I am, exactly the same as yourself, as you can see.'

'But at least you should advertise for your lost halo, or get the police to make an inquiry?'

'No, anything but. I feel quite at home in this place. You are the only one who has recognized me. In any case, being on one's dignity is such a bore. Then it delights me to think that some dim little versifier will pick my halo up and have the cheek to crown himself with it. I rather enjoy the idea of making some fellow happy, and above all a happy fellow that I can laugh at. Now just imagine X or Z with a halo on his head — that'll be a laugh!'

XLIX  
ASSOMMONS LES PAUVRES!

Pendant quinze jours je m'étais confiné dans ma chambre, et je m'étais entouré des livres à la mode dans ce temps-là (il y a seize ou dix-sept ans); je veux parler des livres où il est traité de l'art de rendre les peuples heureux, sages et riches, en vingt-quatre heures. J'avais donc digéré, — avalé, veux-je dire, — toutes les élocutions de tous ces entrepreneurs de bonheur public, — de ceux qui conseillent à tous les pauvres de se faire esclaves, et de ceux qui leur persuadent qu'ils sont tous des rois détronés. — On ne trouvera pas surprenant que je fusse alors dans un état d'esprit avoisinant le vertige ou la stupidité. Il m'avait semblé seulement que je sentais, confiné au fond de mon intellect, le germe obscur d'une idée supérieure à toutes les formules de bonne femme dont j'avais récemment parcouru le dictionnaire. Mais ce n'était que l'idée d'une idée, quelque chose d'infiniment vague.

Et je sortis avec une grande soif. Car le goût passionné des mauvaises lectures engendre un besoin proportionnel du grand air et des rafraîchissants.

Comme j'allais entrer dans un cabaret, un mendiant me tendit son chapeau, avec un de ces regards inoubliables qui cultiveraient les trônes, si l'esprit renuait la matière, et si l'œil d'un magnétiseur faisait naître les raisins.

En même temps, j'entendis une voix qui chuchotait à mon oreille, une voix que je reconnus bien; c'était celle d'un bon Ange, ou d'un bon Démon, qui m'accompagne partout. Puisque Socrate avait son bon Démon, pourquoi n'aurais-je pas mon bon Ange, et pourquoi n'aurais-je pas l'hommeur, comme Socrate, d'obtenir mon brevet de folie, signé du subtil Lélut et du bien avisé Baillarger?

Il existe cette différence entre le Démon de Socrate et le mien, que celui de Socrate ne se manifestait à lui que pour défendre, avertir, empêcher, et que le mien daigne conseiller, suggérer, persuader. Ce pauvre Socrate n'avait qu'un Démon prohibiteur; le mien est un grand affirmateur, le mien est un Démon d'action, un Démon de combat.

Or, sa voix me chuchotait ceci: «Celui-là seul est l'égal d'un autre, qui le prouve, et celui-là seul est digne de la liberté, qui sait la conquérir.»

XLIX  
BASH THE POOR!

I had kept to my den for a fortnight, surrounded by the best-sellers of the day (sixteen or seventeen years ago) — I mean books dealing with the art of making nations happy and wise and rich in twenty-four hours. So I had digested or rather gulped down all the drivel of those savours of public welfare who exhort the poor to become slaves, or convince them that every pauper is an uncrowned king. You won't be surprised that in the end I was in a state bordering on an epileptic fit or imbecility.

However I had an inkling that somewhere in the dim depths of my mind the seed of an idea was busy germinating, an idea far superior to the compendium of old-wives' cure-alls I had recently been pondering over. But it was no more than the idea of an idea, something as yet completely undefinable.

At last I ventured out, with an enormous thirst, as the feverish appetite for devouring bad books had given me a proportionate need for outside air and refreshments.

I was just about to enter a bar when a beggar held his cap out towards me, with the sort of look in his eyes which would topple thrones, if mind could move matter, or if a hypnotist's eye could make grapes grow, as the Magnetists maintain.

At the same moment I heard a voice whispering in my ear, a voice which I recognized at once as that of my good angel, or good demon, who accompanies me wherever I go. As Socrates had his good demon, why shouldn't I have my good angel, and why shouldn't I have the honour, like Socrates, of being awarded a Certificate of Lunacy signed by such eminent alienists as the subtle Dr Lélut and that great authority Dr Baillarger, in person?

But there's a difference between Socrates' demon and my own, which is, that his only visited him in order to forbid, warn, and obstruct, whereas mine is so good as to advise, suggest and persuade. Poor Socrates had only a negative demon, whereas mine is positive, a spirit of action and combat.

Well, its voice was now whispering into my ear, 'A man is only equal to another man if he can prove it, and only he deserves liberty who can win it for himself.'

Immédiatement, je saurai sur mon mendiant. D'un seul coup de poing, je lui bouchai un œil, qui devint, en une seconde, gros comme une balle. Je cassai un de mes ongles à lui briser deux dents, et comme je ne me sentais pas assez fort, étant né délicat et m'étant peu exercé à la boxe, pour assommer rapidement ce vicillard, je le saisis d'une main par le collet de son habit, de l'autre, je l'empoignai à la gorge, et je me mis à lui secouer vigoureusement la tête contre un mur. Je dois avouer que j'avais préalablement inspecté les environs d'un coup d'œil, et que j'avais vérifié que dans cette banlieue déserte je me trouvais, pour un assez long temps, hors de la portée de tout agent de police.

Ayant ensuite, par un coup de pied lancé dans le dos, assez énergique pour briser les omoplates, terrassé ce sexagénnaire affaibli, je me saisis d'une grosse branche d'arbre qui traînait à terre, et je le battis avec l'énergie obstinée des cuisiniers qui veulent attendrir un beef-teack.

Tout à coup, — ô miracle! ô jouissance du philosophe qui vérifie l'excellence de sa théorie! — je vis cette antique carcasse se retourner, se redresser avec une énergie que je n'aurais jamais soupçonnée dans une machine si singulièrement détraquée, et, avec un regard de haine qui me parut de *bon augure*, le malandrin décrépît se jeta sur moi, me pocha les deux yeux, me cassa quatre dents, et avec la même branche d'arbre me battit dru comme plâtre. — Par mon énergie méditation, je lui avais donc rendu l'orgueil et la vie.

Alors, je lui fis force signes pour lui faire comprendre que je considérais la discussion comme finie, et me relevant avec la satisfaction d'un sophiste du Portique, je lui dis: «Monsieur, vous êtes mon égal! veuillez me faire l'honneur de partager avec moi ma bourse; et souvenez-vous, si vous êtes réellement philanthrope, qu'il faut appliquer à tous vos confrères, quand ils vous demanderont l'aumône, la théorie que j'ai eu la *douleur* d'essayer sur votre dos.»

Il m'a bien juré qu'il avait compris ma théorie, et qu'il obéirait à mes conseils.

So I hurled myself on my beggar without further ado. With a single punch I blacked one of his eyes, which swelled like a balloon in a trice. I broke one of my fingernails in knocking a couple of his teeth out, and as I didn't feel strong enough (being of a rather delicate constitution and not a very experienced boxer) to flatten the old fellow as fast as I would like, I seized him by the collar with one hand and caught him by the throat with the other, then started banging his head vigorously against the wall. I must confess that I'd looked round and made sure that I'd be safely out of reach of a policeman for some time.

After flattening the weakening sexagenarian with a kick in his back, I picked up a branch which was lying on the ground and belaboured him with the relentless enthusiasm of a cook tendering a steak.

Then suddenly — what a miracle! — with all the delight of a philosopher who has just proved his theory to be valid, I saw the senile old carcass turn round, straighten himself up, then with an energy which I would never have suspected in such a remarkably inefficient mechanism, and with a glare of hatred which I took for a good omen, the decrepit scrounger hurled himself at me, gave me two black eyes, broke four of my teeth, and thrashed me soundly with the same branch that I had applied to his anatomy. — Thus, by means of the vigorous treatment I subjected him to, I had restored in him his self-esteem and zest for life.

After that I made him understand by various signs that I considered our encounter to be at an end, and, picking myself up with all the satisfaction of a Greek sophist, I said 'Sir, you are now my equal. Please do me the honour of sharing my purse, and remember that if you are a philanthropist you must apply to all your associates, whenever they beg for alms, the theory which I have been at such pains to demonstrate on your back.'

The good fellow swore that he quite understood my theory, and that in future he would follow my advice.

## THE DRUNKEN BOAT

I drifted on a river I could not control,  
No longer guided by the bargemen's ropes.  
They were captured by howling Indians  
Who nailed them naked to colored stakes.

I cared no more for other boats or cargoes:  
English cotton, Flemish wheat, all were gone.  
When my bargemen could no longer haul me  
I forgot about everything and drifted on.

Through the wild splash and surging of the tides  
Last winter, deaf as a child's dark night,  
I ran and ran! And the drifting Peninsulas  
Have never known such conquering delight.

Lighter than cork, I revolved upon waves  
That roll the dead forever in the deep,  
Ten days, beyond the blinking eyes of land!  
Lulled by storms, I drifted seaward from sleep.

Sweeter than children find the taste of sour fruit,  
Green water filled my cockle shell of pine.  
Anchor and rudder went drifting away,  
Washed in vomit and stained with blue wine.

Now I drift through the Poem of the Sea;  
This gruel of stars mirrors the milky sky,  
Devours green azures; ecstatic flotsam,  
Drowned men, pale and thoughtful, sometimes drift by.

Staining the sudden blueness, the slow sounds,  
Deliriums that streak the glowing sky,  
Stronger than drink and the songs we sing,  
It is boiling, bitter, red; it is love!

ARTHUR RIMBAUD: COMPLETE WORKS / 120

Trans. Paul Schmidt (New York: Harper  
Colophon Books, 1976)

I watched the lightning tear the sky apart,  
Watched waterspouts, and streaming undertow,  
And Dawn like Dove-People rising on wings—  
I've seen what men have only dreamed they saw!

I saw the sun with mystic horrors darken  
And shimmer through a violet haze;  
With a shiver of shutters the waves fell  
Like actors in ancient, forgotten plays!

I dreamed of green nights and glittering snow,  
Slow kisses rising in the eyes of the Sea,  
Unknown liquids flowing, the blue and yellow  
Stirring of phosphorescent melody!

For months I watched the surge of the sea,  
Hysterical herds attacking the reefs;  
I never thought the bright feet of Mary  
Could muzzle up the heavy-breathing waves!

I have jostled—you know?—unbelievable Floridas  
And seen among the flowers the wild eyes  
Of panthers in the skins of men! Rainbows  
Bridling blind flocks beneath the horizons!

In stinking swamps I have seen great hulks:  
A Leviathan that rotted in the reeds!  
Water crumpling in the midst of calm  
And distances that shatter into foam.

Glaciers, silver suns, waves of pearl, fiery skies,  
Giant serpents stranded where lice consume  
Them, falling in the depths of dark gulfs  
From twisted trees, bathed in black perfume!

I wanted to show children these fishes shining  
In the blue wave, the golden fish that sing—  
A froth of flowers cradled my wandering  
And delicate winds tossed me on their wings.

FIFTH SEASON / 121

The sea rocked me softly in sighing air,  
And brought me shadow-flowers with yellow stems—  
I remained like a woman, kneeling . . .

Almost an island, I balanced on my boat's sides  
Rapacious blond-eyed birds, their dung, their screams.  
I drifted on. Through fragile tangled lines  
Drowned men, still staring up, sank down to sleep.

Now I, a little lost boat, in swirling debris,  
Tossed by the storm into the birdless upper air  
—All the Hansa Merchants and Monitors  
Could not fish up my body drunk with the sea;

Free and soaring, trailing a violet haze,  
Shot through the sky, a reddening wall  
Wet with the jam of poets' inspiration,  
Lichens of sun, and snots of bright blue sky;

Lost branch spinning in a herd of hippocamps,  
Covered over with electric animals,  
An everlasting July battering  
The glittering sky and its fiery funnels;

Shaking at the sound of monsters roaring,  
Rutting Behemoths in thick whirlpools,  
Eternal weaver of unmoving blues,  
I thought of Europe and its ancient walls!

I have seen archipelagos in the stars,  
Fewerish skies where I was free to roam!  
Are these bottomless nights your exiled nests,  
Swarm of golden birds, O Strength to come?

True, I've cried too much; I am heartsick at dawn.  
The moon is bitter and the sun is sour . . .  
Love burns me; I am swollen and slow.  
Let my keel break! Oh, let me sink in the sea!

It's a small pond, dark, cold, remote,  
The odor of evening, and a child full of sorrow  
Who stoops to launch a crumpled paper boat.

Washed in your languors, Sea, I cannot trace  
The wake of tankers foaming through the cold,  
Nor assault the pride of pennants and flags,  
Nor endure the slave ship's stinking hold.

## VOWELS

Black A, white E, red I, green U, blue O—vowels,  
Some day I will open your silent pregnancies:  
A, black belt, hairy with bursting flies,  
Bumbling and buzzing over stinking cruelties,

Pits of night; E, candor of sand and pavilions,  
High glacial spears, white kings, trembling Queen Anne's lace;  
I, bloody spite, laughter dribbling from a face  
In wild denial or in anger, vermilions;

U, . . . divine movement of viridian seas,  
Peace of pastures animal-strewn, peace of calm lines  
Drawn on foreheads worn with heavy alchemies;

O, supreme Trumpet, harsh with strange stridencies,  
Silences traced in angels and astral designs:  
O . . . OMEGA . . . the violet light of His Eyes!

## "THE SUN HAS WEPT ROSE"

The sun has wept rose in the shell of your ears,  
The world has rolled white from your back, your thighs;  
The sea has stained rust the crimson of your breasts,  
And Man has bled black at your sovereign side.

ARTHUR RIMBAUD

*Le Bateau Ivre*

Comme je descendais des Fleuves impassibles,  
Je ne me sentis plus guidé par les haleurs:  
Des Peaux-Rouges criards les avaient pris pour cibles,  
Les ayant cloués nus aux poteaux de couleurs.

J'étais insoucieux de tous les équipages,  
Porteur de blés flamands ou de cotons anglais.  
Quand avec mes haleurs ont fini ces tapages,  
Les fleuves m'ont laissé descendre où je voulais.

*Drunken Boat*

Downstream on impassive rivers suddenly  
I felt the towline of the boatmen slacken.  
Redskins had taken them in a scream and stripped them and  
Skewered them to the glaring stakes for targets.

Then, delivered from my straining boatmen,  
From the trivial racket of trivial crews and from  
The freights of Flemish grain and English cotton,  
I made my own course down the passive rivers.



Dans les clapotements furieux des marées,  
Moi, l'autre hiver, plus sourd que les cerceaux d'enfants,  
Je cours ! et les Péninsules démarrées  
N'ont pas subi tohu-bohus plus triomphants.

La tempête a béni mes éveils maritimes.  
Plus léger qu'un bouchon j'ai dansé sur les flots  
Qu'on appelle rouleurs éternels de vicatimes,  
Dix nuits, sans regretter l'œil ni ais des falots.

Plus douce qu'aux enfants la chair des pommes sures,  
L'eau verte pénétra ma coque de sapin  
Et des taches de vins bleus et des vomissures  
Me lava, dispersant gouvernail et grappin.

Et, dès lors, je me suis baigné dans le poème  
De la mer infusé d'astres et lactescent,  
Dévorant les azurs verts où, flottaison blême  
Et ravie, un noyé pensif, parfois, descend ;

Blanker than the brain of a child I fled  
Through winter, I scoured the furious jolts of the tides,  
In an uproar and a chaos of Peninsulas,  
Exultant, from their moorings in triumph torn.

I started awake to tempestuous hallowings.  
Nine nights I danced like a cork on the billows, I danced  
On the breakers, sacrificial, for ever and ever,  
And the crass eye of the lanterns was expunged.

More firmly bland than to children apples' firm pulp,  
Soaked the green water through my hull of pine,  
Scattering helm and grappling and washing me  
Of the stains, the vomitings and blue wine.

Thenceforward, fused in the poem, milk of stars,  
Of the sea, I coiled through deeps of cloudless green,  
Where, dimly, they come swaying down,  
Rapt and sad, singly, the drowned ;

Où, teignant tout à coup les bleuités, délirés  
Et rythmes lents sous les rutilements du jour,  
Plus fortes que l'alcool, plus vastes que vos lyres,  
Fermentent les rousseurs amères de l'amour !

Je sais les cieus crevant en éclairs, et les trombes  
Et les ressacs et les courants; je sais le soir,  
L'aube exaltée ainsi qu'un peuple de colombes,  
Et j'ai vu quelquefois ce que l'homme a cru voir.

J'ai vu le soleil bas taché d'horreurs mystiques  
Illuminant de longs figements violets,  
Pareils à des acteurs de drames très antiques,  
Les flots roulant au loin leurs frissons de volets.

J'ai rêvé la nuit verte aux neiges éblouies,  
Baisers montant aux yeux des mers avec lentour,  
La circulation des sèves inouïes  
Et l'éveil jaune et bleu des phosphores chanteurs.

Where, under the sky's haemorrhage, slowly tossing  
In thuds of fever, arch-alcohol of song,  
Pumping over the blues in sudden stains,  
The bitter rednesses of love ferment.

I know the heavens split with lightnings and the currents  
Of the sea and its surgings and its spoutings; I know  
And dawn exalted like a cloud of doves.  
And my eyes have fixed phantasmagoria.  
evening,

I have seen, as shed by ancient tragic footlights,  
Out from the horror of the low sun's mystic stains,  
Long weals of violet creep across the sea  
And peals of ague rattle down its slats.

I have dreamt the green night's drifts of dazzled snow,  
The slow climb of kisses to the eyes of the seas,  
The circulation of unheard of saps,  
And the yellow-blue alarum of phosphors singing.

J'ai suivi, des mois pleins, pareille aux vacheries  
Hystériques, la boule à l'assaut des récifs,  
Sans songer que les pieds lumineux des Maries  
Pussent forcer le muffle aux Océans poussifs.

J'ai heurté, savez-vous ? d'incroyables Florides  
Mêlant aux fleurs des yeux de panthères aux peaux  
D'hommes, des arcs-en-ciel tendus comme des brides  
Sous l'horizon des mers, à de glauques troupeaux.

J'ai vu fermenter les marais, énormes nasses  
Où pourrit dans les joncs tout un Léviathan,  
Des écroulements d'eaux au milieu des bonaces  
Et les lointains vers les gouffres catacactant !

Glaciers, soleils d'argent, flots nacreux, cieux de braises,  
Échouages hideux au fond des golfes bruns  
Où les serpents géants dévorés des punaises  
Choièrent des arbres tordus avec de noirs parfums !

I have followed months long the maddened herds of the  
surf  
Storming the reefs, mindless of the feet,  
The radiant feet of the Marys that constrain  
The stampedes of the broken-winded Oceans.

I have fouled, be it known, unspeakable Floridas, tangle of  
The flowers of the eyes of panthers in the skins of  
Men and the taut rainbows curbing,  
Beyond the brows of the seas, the glaucous herds.

I have seen Leviathan sprawl rotting in the reeds  
Of the great seething swamp-nets;  
The calm sea disembowelled in waterslides  
And the catacacting of the doomed horizons.

Iridescent waters, glaciers, suns of silver, flagrant skies,  
And dark creeks' secret ledges, horror-strewn,  
Where giant reptiles, pullulant with lice,  
Lapse with dark perfumes from the writhing trees.

J'aurais voulu montrer aux enfants ces dorados  
Du flot bleu, ces poissons d'or, ces poissons chantants.  
Des écumes de fleurs ont béni mes déradés,  
Et d'ineffables vents m'ont ailé par instants.

Parfois, martyr lassé des pôles et des zones,  
La mer, dont le sanglot faisait mon roulis doux,  
Montait vers moi ses fleurs d'ombre aux ventouses jaunes  
Et je restais ainsi qu'une femme à genoux,

Presqu'île ballottant sur mes bords les querelles  
Et les fientes d'oiseaux clabaudeurs aux yeux blonds,  
Et je voguais lorsqu'à travers mes liens frêles  
Des noyés descendaient dormir à reculons . . .

Or, moi, bateau perdu sous les cheveux des anses,  
Jeté par l'ouragan dans l'éther sans oiseau,  
Moi dont les Monitors et les voiliers des Hanses  
N'auraient pas repêché la carcasse ivre d'eau,

I would have shown to children those dorados  
Of the blue wave, those golden fish, those singing fish;  
In pumes of flowers I have risen from my anchors  
And canticles of wind have blessed my wings.

Then toward me, rocking softly on its sobbing,  
Wearry of the torment of the poles and zones,  
The sea would lift its yellow polyps on flowers  
Of gloom and hold me—like a woman kneeling—

A stranded sanctuary for screeching birds,  
Flaxen-eyed, shiting on my trembling decks,  
Till down they swayed to sleep, the drowned, spreadeagled,  
And, sundering the fine tendrils, floated me.

Now I who was wrecked in the inlets' tangled hair  
And flung beyond birds aloft by the hurricane,  
Whose carcass drunk with water Monitors  
And Hanseatic sloops could not have salvaged;

Libre, fumant, monté de brumes violettes,  
Moi qui trouais le ciel rougeoyant comme un mur  
Qui porte, confiture exquise aux bons poètes,  
Des lichens de soleil et des morves d'azur,

Qui courais taché de lunules électriqués,  
Planche folle, escorté des hippocampes noirs,  
Quand les Juillets faisaient crouler à coups de triques  
Les cieus ultramarins aux ardents entonnnoirs,

Moi qui tremblais, sentant geindre à cinquante lieues  
Le rut des Béhémots et des Maelstroms épais,  
Filleur éternel des immobilités bleues,  
Je regrette l'Europe aux anciens parapets.

J'ai vu des archipels sidéraux ! et des îles  
Dont les cieus délirants sont ouverts au vogueur :  
Est-ce en ces nuits sans fond que tu dors et t'exiles,  
Million d'oiseaux d'or, ô future Vigueur ?

Who, reeking and free in a fume of purple spray,  
Have pierced the skies that flame as a wall would flame  
For a chosen poet's rapture, and stream and flame  
With solar lichen and with azure snot;

Who scudded, with my escort of black sea-horses,  
Fury of timber, scarred with electric moons,  
When Sirius flogged into a drift of ashes  
The furnace-cratered cobalt of the skies;

I who heard in trembling across a waste of leagues  
The turgent stroms, and Behemoths moan their rut,  
I weaving for ever voids of spellbound blue,  
Now remember Europe and her ancient ramparts.

I saw archipelagoes of stars and islands launched me  
Aloft on the deep delirium of their skies:  
Are these the fathomless nights of your sleep and exile,  
Million of golden birds, oh Vigour to be?

Mais, vrai, j'ai trop pleuré. Les aubes sont navrantes,  
Toute lune est atroce et tout soleil amer.  
L'âcre amour m'a gonflé de torpeurs enivrantes.  
Oh! que ma quille éclate! Oh! que j'aille à la mer!

Si je désire une eau d'Europe, c'est la flache  
Noire et froide où vers le crépuscule embaumé  
Un enfant accroupi, plein de tristesse, lâche  
Un bateau frêle comme un papillon de mai.

Je ne puis plus, baigné de vos langueurs, ô lames,  
Enlever leur sillage aux porteurs de cotons,  
Ni traverser l'orgueil des drapeaux et des flammes,  
Ni nager sous les yeux horribles des pontons!

But no more tears. Dawns have broken my heart,  
And every moon is torment, every sun bitterness;  
I am bloated with the stagnant fumes of acrid loving—  
May I split from stem to stern and founder, ah founder!

I want none of Europe's waters unless it be  
The cold black puddle where a child, full of sadness,  
Squatting, looses a boat as frail  
As a moth into the fragrant evening.

Steeped in the languors of the swell, I may  
Absorb no more the wake of the cotton-freighters,  
Nor breast the arrogant oriflammes and banners,  
Nor swim beneath the leer of the pontoons.

