Le Chat

Viens, mon beau chat, sur mon coeur amoureux;
Retiens les griffes de ta patte,
Et laisse-moi plonger dans tes beaux yeux,
Mêlés de métal et d'agate.
Lorsque mes doigts caressent à loisir
Ta tête et ton dos élastique,
Et que ma main s'enivre du plaisir
De palper ton corps électrique,
Je vois ma femme en esprit. Son regard,
Comme le tien, aimable bête
Profond et froid, coupe et fend comme un dard,
Et, des pieds jusques à la tête,
Un air subtil, un dangereux parfum
Nagent autour de son corps brun.

— Charles Baudelaire
The Cat
Come, superb cat, to my amorous heart;
Hold back the talons of your paws,
Let me gaze into your beautiful eyes
Of metal and agate.
When my fingers leisurely caress you,
Your head and your elastic back,
And when my hand tingles with the pleasure
Of feeling your electric body,
In spirit I see my woman. Her gaze
Like your own, amiable beast,
Profound and cold, cuts and cleaves like a dart,
And, from her head down to her feet,
A subtle air, a dangerous perfume
Floats about her dusky body.

The Cat
Come, my fine cat, against my loving heart;
Sheathe your sharp claws, and settle.
And let my eyes into your pupils dart
Where agate sparks with metal.
Now while my fingertips caress at leisure
Your head and wiry curves,
And that my hand’s elated with the pleasure
Of your electric nerves,
I think about my woman — how her glances
Like yours, dear beast, deep-down
And cold, can cut and wound one as with lances;
Then, too, she has that vagrant
And subtle air of danger that makes fragrant
Her body, lithe and brown.

The Cat
My beautiful cat, come onto my heart full of love;
Hold back the claws of your paw,
And let me plunge into your adorable eyes
Mixed with metal and agate.
When my fingers lazily fondle
Your head and your elastic back,
And my hand gets drunk with the pleasure
Of feeling your electric body,
I see in spirit my personal lady. Her glance,
Like yours, dear creature,
Deep and cold, slits and splits like a dart,
And from her feet to her head,
A subtle atmosphere, a dangerous perfume,
Swim around her brown body.
Les Chats

Les amoureux fervents et les savants austères
Aiment également, dans leur mûre saison,
Les chats puissants et doux, orgueil de la maison,
Qui comme eux sont frileux et comme eux sédentaires.

Amis de la science et de la volupté
Ils cherchent le silence et l'horreur des ténèbres;
L'Erèbe les eût pris pour ses coursiers funèbres,
S'ils pouvaient au servage incliner leur fierté.

Ils prennent en songeant les nobles attitudes
Des grands sphinx allongés au fond des solitudes,
Qui semblent s'endormir dans un rêve sans fin;

Leurs reins féconds sont pleins d'étincelles magiques,
Et des parcelles d'or, ainsi qu'un sable fin,

Etoilent vaguement leurs prunelles mystiques.

— Charles Baudelaire
Cats
Both ardent lovers and austere scholars
Love in their mature years
The strong and gentle cats, pride of the house,
Who like them are sedentary and sensitive to cold.
Friends of learning and sensual pleasure,
They seek the silence and the horror of darkness;
Erebus would have used them as his gloomy steeds:
If their pride could let them stoop to bondage.
When they dream, they assume the noble attitudes
Of the mighty sphinxes stretched out in solitude,
Who seem to fall into a sleep of endless dreams;
Their fertile loins are full of magic sparks,
And particles of gold, like fine grains of sand,
Spangle dimly their mystic eyes.

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

Cats
No one but indefatigable lovers and old
Chilly philosophers can understand the true
Charm of these animals serene and potent, who
Likewise are sedentary and suffer from the cold.
They are the friends of learning and of sexual bliss;
Silence they love, and darkness, where temptation breeds.
Erebus would have made them his funereal steeds,
Save that their proud free nature would not stoop to this.
Like those great sphinxes lounging through eternity
In noble attitudes upon the desert sand,
They gaze incuriously at nothing, calm and wise.
Their fecund loins give forth electric flashes, and
Thousands of golden particles drift ceaselessly,
Like galaxies of stars, in their mysterious eyes.
— George Dillon, *Flowers of Evil* (NY: Harper and Brothers, 1936)

**Cats**

All ardent lovers and all sages prize,
— As ripening years incline upon their brows —
The mild and mighty cats — pride of the house —
That like unto them are indolent, stern and wise.
The friends of Learning and of Ecstasy,
They search for silence and the horrors of gloom;
The devil had used them for his steeds of Doom,
Could he alone have bent their pride to slavery.
When musing, they display those outlines chaste,
Of the great sphinxes — stretched o’er the sandy waste,
That seem to slumber deep in a dream without end:
From out their loins a fountainous furnace flies,
And grains of sparkling gold, as fine as sand,
Bestar the mystic pupils of their eyes.

**The Cats**

The lover and the stern philosopher
Both love, in their ripe time, the confident
Soft cats, the house’s chiepest ornament,
Who like themselves are cold and seldom stir.
Of knowledge and of pleasure amorous,
Silence they seek and Darkness’ fell domain;
Had not their proud souls scorned to brook his rein,
They would have made grim steeds for Erebus.
Pensive they rest in noble attitudes
Like great stretched sphinxes in vast solitudes
Which seem to sleep wrapt in an endless dream;
Their fruitful loins are full of sparks divine,
And gleams of gold within their pupils shine
As ’twere within the shadow of a stream.
Cats
The ardent lovers and the stern students
in their maturity, love equally,
the gentle, powerful cats, pride of the family,
they too feel the cold and favour indolence.
Companions of knowledge and desire
they seek the silent horrors darkness breeds,
Erebus would take them for his funeral steeds,
were they able to soften their pride.
They take as they dream the noble pose
of the great sphinxes, reclined in desolate land,
lost, it seems, in an endless doze
Their fecund loins brim with enchanting glitter,
whilst their haunting eyes at random flicker
with particles of gold, like fine sand.
— Claire Trevien
Le Chat

I.

Dans ma cervelle se promène,
Ainsi qu'en son appartement,
Un beau chat, fort, doux et charmant.
Quand il miaule, on l'entend à peine,
Tant son timbre est tendre et discret;
Mais que sa voix s'apaise ou gronde,
Elle est toujours riche et profonde.
C'est là son charme et son secret.
Cette voix, qui perle et qui filtre
Dans mon fonds le plus ténébreux,
Me remplit comme un vers nombreux
Et me réjouit comme un philtre.
Elle endort les plus cruels maux
Et contient toutes les extases;
Pour dire les plus longues phrases,
Elle n'a pas besoin de mots.
Non, il n'est pas d'archet qui morde
Sur mon coeur, parfait instrument,
Et fasse plus royalement
Chanter sa plus vibrante corde,
Que ta voix, chat mystérieux,
Chat séraphique, chat étrange,
En qui tout est, comme en un ange,
Aussi subtil qu'harmonieux!

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

— Charles Baudelaire
The Cat

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

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

The Cat

I.
A fine strong gentle cat is prowling
As in his bedroom, in my brain;
So soft his voice, so smooth its strain,
That you can scarcely hear him miowling.
But should he venture to complain
Or scold, the voice is rich and deep:
And thus he manages to keep
The charm of his untroubled reign.
This voice, which seems to pearl and filter
Through my soul's inmost shady nook,
Fills me with poems, like a book,
And fortifies me, like a philtre.
His voice can cure the direst pain
And it contains the rarest raptures.
The deepest meanings, which it captures,
It needs no language to explain.
There is no bow that can so sweep
That perfect instrument, my heart:
Or make more sumptuous music start
From its most vibrant cord and deep,
Than can the voice of this strange elf,
This cat, bewitching and seraphic,
Subtly harmonious in his traffic
With all things else, and with himself.

II.
So sweet a perfume seems to swim
Out of his fur both brown and bright,
I nearly was embalmed one night
From (only once) caressing him.
Familiar Lar of where I stay,
He rules, presides, inspires and teaches
All things to which his empire reaches.
Perhaps he is a god, or fay.
When to a cherished cat my gaze
Is magnet-drawn and then returns
Back to itself, it there discerns,
With strange excitement and amaze,
Deep down in my own self, the rays
Of living opals, torch-like gleams
And pallid fire of eyes, it seems,
That fixedly return my gaze.
— Roy Campbell, Poems of Baudelaire (New York: Pantheon Books, 1952)
Le Chat

I.
she prowls around my shadowy brain
as though it were her dwelling-place
— a great soft beast of charming ways,
meowling in a mellow strain,
yet so discreetly all of her
angry or peaceful moods resound,
I scarcely hear their song profound
— her secret, rich, voluptuous purr.
o droning voice elegiac
creeping into my heart perverse
to drown it like a rippling verse
or potent aphrodisiac!
no torture that it cannot lull,
no ecstasy but it contains;
no phrase so long but its refrains
can voice it, wordless, wonderful.
ay, never master’s bow divine,
rending my heart-strings like a sword,
rang, vibrant, in so rich a chord,
such royal harmony as thing,
as thine, mysterious puss, methinks,
feline seraphic, weird and strange,
spirit of subtlety and change,
melodious and lovely sphynx!

II.
golden and brown, her tawny fur
secretes a scent of such delight
I breathe its fragrance till the night
when once my fingers fondle her.
she is the genius of the shrine;
no deed of mine and no desire
she does not judge, direct, inspire;
is she a fairy, or divine?
for when my amorous glances, fain
of her enchantment, slowly turn
and by their lode-stone drawn, discern
this prowling creature of my brain,
startled and marvelling I see
her glowing pupils cold and pale,
— clear harbour-lights no vapours veil —
like living opals, holding me.
— Lewis Piaget Shanks, *Flowers of Evil* (New York: Ives Washburn, 1931)
The Cat

I.
Along my brain there walks,
As though in its own home,
A lovely, strong and sweet and charming cat.
When it mews, one hardly hears,
So tender and discreet its tone;
Appeasing or complaining its voice
Is always rich and deep:
Therein is its charm and secret.
This voice, which glistens and strains
Through the darkest soils of my being,
Satiates me like an harmonious line,
Delights me like a philter.
It lulls to sleep most cruel ills
And holds all ecstasy;
To tell the longest phrase,
It has no need of words.
No, there is no bow that gnaws
On my heart, perfect instrument,
To make more regally sing
The most vibrant string,
Than your voice, mysterious,
Seraphic, strange cat,
In whom all is, like an angel,
As subtle as harmonious!

II.
From its fair and dark fur
Comes a scent so gentle, that one night
I was caught in its balm, by having
Caressed it once, only once.
It is the familiar spirit of the place;
It judges, presides, inspires
Everything in its empire;
It is perhaps a fairy or a god?
When my eyes, drawn like a magnet
To this cat that I love,
Come meekly back again
And I look inside myself,
I see with amazement
The fire of its pale pupils,
Clear beacons, living opals,
Looking at me fixedly.