LE TRAVAIL DU PEINTRE
(Paul Éluard)

21 i Pablo Picasso

Entoure ce citron de blanc d’œuf informe
Enrobe ce blanc d’œuf d’un azur souple et fin
La ligne droite et noire a beau venir de toi
L’aube est derrière ton tableau

Et des murs innombrables croulent
Derrière ton tableau et toi l’œil fixe
Comme un aveugle comme un fou
Tu dresses une haute épée dans le vide

Une main pourquoi pas une seconde main
Et pourquoi pas la bouche nue comme une plume
Pourquoi pas un sourire et pourquoi pas des larmes
Tout au bord de la toile où jouent les petits clous

Voici le jour d’autrui laisse aux ombres leur chance
Et d’un seul mouvement des paupières renonce

21 ii Marc Chagall

Àne ou vache coq ou cheval
Jusqu’à la peau d’un violon
Homme chanteur un seul oiseau
Danseur agile avec sa femme

Couple trempé dans son printemps

L’or de l’herbe le plomb du ciel
Séparés par les flammes bleues
De la santé de la rosée
La sang s’irise le cœur tinte

Un couple le premier reflet

Et dans un souterrain de neige
La vigne opulente dessine
Un visage aux lèvres de lune
Qui n’a jamais dormi la nuit.

THE WORK OF THE PAINTER

Pablo Picasso

Surround this lemon with formless egg-white
Coat this egg-white with a supple and delicate blue
Though the straight black line stems from you
Dawn lies behind your picture

And innumerable walls crumble
Behind your picture and you staring
Like a blind man like a madman
You raise up a tall sword in the void

A hand why not a second hand
And why not a mouth unadorned like a quill
Why not a smile and why not tears
At the very edge of the canvas where tiny nails are fixed

This is the day of others leave their good fortune to
the shadows
And with a single movement of the eyelids
renounce

Marc Chagall

Ass or cow cock or horse
Even a violin’s skin
Singing man single bird
Agile dancer with his wife

Couple steeped in their springtime

The gold of the grass the lead of the sky
Divided by the blue flames
Of health of dew
The blood grows iridescent the heart rings

A couple the first reflection

And in a cavern of snow
The luxuriant vine traces
A face with moon-like lips
Which has never slept at night.
21 iii  

Georges Braque

Un oiseau s’envole,
Il rejette les nues comme un voile inutile,
Il n’a jamais craint la lumière,
Encore dans son vol,
Il n’a jamais eu d’ombre.

Coquilles des moissons brisées par le soleil,
Toutes les feuilles dans les bois disent oui,
Elles ne savent dire que oui,
Toute question, toute réponse
Et la rosée coule au fond de ce oui.

Un homme aux yeux légers décrit le ciel d’amour.
Il en rassemble les merveilles
Comme des feuilles dans un bois,
Comme des oiseaux dans leurs ailes
Et des hommes dans le sommeil.

Georges Braque

A bird flies off,
It discards the clouds like a useless veil,
It has never feared the light,
Enclosed in its flight
It has never had a shadow.

Sun-split husks of harvest grains.
All the forest leaves say yes,
Yes is all they know how to say,
Every question, every answer
And the dew flows in the depth of this yes.

A man with carefree eyes describes the heaven of love.
He gathers together its wonders
Like leaves in a wood,
Like birds in their wings
And men in sleep.

21 iv  

Juan Gris*

De jour merci de nuit prends garde
De douceur la moitié du monde
L’autre montrait rigueur aveugle

Aux veines se lisait un présent sans merci
Aux beautés des contours l’espace limité
Cimentait tous les joints des objets familiers

Table guitare et verre vide
Sur un arpent de terre pleine
De toile blanche d’air nocturne

Table devait se soutenir
Lampe rester pein de l’ombre
Journal délaissait sa moitié

Deux fois le jour deux fois la nuit
De deux objets un double objet
Un seul ensemble à tout jamais

Juan Gris

Give thanks by day beware by night
One half of the world sweetness
The other showed blind harshness

In the veins a relentless present could be read
In the beauties of the contours limited space
Cemented together all familiar objects

Table guitar and empty glass
On an acre of full earth
Of white canvas of night air

Table had to support itself
Lamp remain a pip of the shadow
Newspaper shed a half of itself

Twice the day twice the night
Of two objects one double object
A single whole for evermore

* Juan Gris (1887–1927), Spanish artist who settled in Paris and lived near Picasso; painted Cubist pictures and also used collage; worked for Diaghileff in 1922–3.
21 v  Paul Klee
Sur la pente fatale, le voyageur profite
De la faveur du jour, verglas et sans cailloux,
Et les yeux bleus d'amour, découvre sa saison
Qui porte à tous les doigts de grands astres en bague.

Sur la plage la mer a laissé ses oreilles
Et le sable crevé la place d'un beau crime,
Le supplice est plus dur aux bourreaux qu'aux
victimes
Les couteaux sont des signes et les balles des larmes.

21 vi  Joan Miró
Soleil de proie prisonnier da ma tête,
Enlève la colline, enlève la forêt.
Le ciel est plus beau que jamais.

Les libellules des raisins
Lui donnent des formes précises
Que je dissipe d'un geste.

Nuages du premier jour,
Nuages insensibles et que rien n'autorise,
Leurs graines brûlent
Dans les feux de paille de mes regards.

À la fin, pour se couvrir d'une aube
Il faudra que le ciel soit aussi pur que la nuit.

21 vii  Jacques Villon*
Irremédiable vie
Vie à toujours chérir

En dépit des fléaux
Et des morales basses
En dépit des étoiles fausses
Et des cendres envahissantes

En dépit des fièvres grincantes
Des crimes à hauteur du ventre
Des seins taris des fronts idiots
En dépit des soleils mortels

Paul Klee
On the fatal slope, the traveller profits
From the day's favour, frost-glazed and pebbleless,
And eyes blue with love, he discovers his season
Which wears on each finger great stars as rings.

The sea has left its ear-shells on the shore
And the hollowed sand the site of a noble crime.
Executioners agonize more than victims
Knives are omens and bullets tears.

Joan Miró
Sun of prey prisoner of my head
Remove the hill, remove the forest.
The sky is lovelier than ever.

The grapes' dragonflies
Give it precise forms
That I with one gesture dispel.

Clouds of primeval day,
Indifferent clouds sanctioned by nothing.
Their seeds burn
In the straw fires of my glances.

At the last, to cloak itself with dawn
The sky must be as pure as night.

Jacques Villon
Irremediable life
Life to be cherished always

Despite scourges
And base morals
Despite false stars
And encroaching ashes

Despite creaking fevers
Belly-high crimes
Desiccated breasts foolish faces
Despite mortal suns

* Jacques Villon (1875–1951) was the brother of Marcel Duchamp; he went to Paris in 1895, where he befriended Toulouse-Lautrec. He came to Cubism in 1911.
En dépit des dieux morts
En dépit des mensonges
L’aube l’horizon l’eau
L’oiseau l’homme l’amour.

L’homme léger et bon
Adoucissant la terre
Éclairissant les bois
Illuminant la pierre.

Et la rose nocturne
Et le sang de la foule.

Despite dead gods
Despite the lies
Dawn horizon water
Bird man love.

Man light-hearted and good
Sweetening the earth
Clearing the woods
Illuminating the stone.

And the nocturnal rose
And the blood of the crowd.

LA COURTE PAILLE
(Maurice Carême)

22 i Le sommeil

Le sommeil est en voyage,
Mon Dieu! où est-il parti?
J’ai beau bercer mon petit,
Il pleure dans son lit-cage,
Il pleure depuis midi.

Où le sommeil a-t-il mis
Son sable et ses rêves sages?
J’ai beau bercer mon petit,
Il se tourne tout en nage,
Il sanglote dans son lit.

Ah! reviens, reviens, sommeil,
Sur ton beau cheval de course!
Dans le ciel noir, la Grande Ourse,
A enterré le soleil
Et rallumé ses abeilles.

Si l’enfant ne dort pas bien,
Il ne dira pas bonjour,
Il ne dira rien demain
À ses doigts, au lait, au pain
Qui l’accueillent dans le jour.

Sleep

Sleep has gone on his travels.
Good gracious! Where to?
In vain I’ve rocked my little man,
He’s crying in his folding cot,
He’s been crying since midday.

Where’s the sandman put
His sand and gentle dreams?
In vain I’ve rocked my little man,
Drenched in sweat he kicks and turns,
He’s sobbing in his bed.

Ah! Sleep, come back, come back,
Astride your handsome race-horse!
The Great Bear in the black sky
Has buried the sun
And lit again his bees.

If the child doesn’t sleep soundly,
He’ll never say ‘good day’,
And have nothing to say tomorrow
To his fingers, his milk and bread
That greet him in the morning.
Echoes and Memory

“Although the texts of these two songs are by different poets, Hart Crane and Theodore Roethke, Echoes and Memory have often been performed as a group, and both were composed in the same year (2002). Both songs are based on love poems, and from a compositional standpoint, they often seek to envelope the voice and the poetry in rich, warm piano sonority, with the pianist a near-equal partner to the baritone. The songs are brief, lasting about 5 minutes in total.” LK

Texts

Echoes

Slivers of rain upon the pane,
Jade-green with sunlight, melt and flow
Upward again: they leave no stain
Of all the storm an hour ago.

Over the hill a last cloud dips
And disappears, and I should go
As silently but that your lips
Are warmer with a redder glow.

Fresh and fragile, your arms now
Are circles of cool roses, so….
In opal pools beneath your brow
I dream we quarreled long, long ago.

Poetry by Hart Crane

Memory

In the slow world of dream,
We breathe in unison.
The outside dies within,
And she knows all I am.

She turns, as if to go,
Half-bird, half-animal.
The wind dies on the hill.
Love’s all. Love’s all I know.

A doe drinks by a stream,
A doe and its fawn.
When I follow after them,
The grass changes to stone.

Poetry by Theodore Roethke

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The Girl by the Ocean

– poem by Maria Jazwinski

The sunset dances for me as I watch the new waking moon.
Mother Nature soothes me.
I lose myself in my thoughts.

The stars twinkle softly, lulling the girl by the ocean to her dreams.
The water is by her feet now, the sleepy sea sends soft waves that caress her feet.
Far away, she senses flames, intense, vivid and wild, dancing in the wind.

The night is quiet.
In her dreams, she follows the ocean until she finds a river, walking in her own surreal fantasy.
The river leads into a stream, narrowing into a creek.

Warmth touches the girl in her sleep.
The birds begin to whisper.
Slowly, the girl awakens.

She is finally home.
She is safe.
The darkness is gone.
CLAIR-OBSCUR
(Jean Cocteau)

Des sentinelles sous les armes
Des sentinelles sous les armes
Surveillent mes membres épars.
Fortifié de toutes parts
Je dors noyé sous l’eau des larmes.
Dormeurs échappant aux polices
Dormeurs libres du poids des corps
Vous flottez entre les décors
De vos dangereuses coulisses.

Armed sentries
Watch to my scattered limbs.
Fortified on all sides,
I sleep, drowned by watering tears.
Sleepers, escaping from police,
And freed from bodies weight,
You are floating between
Your dangerous backstage scenery.

Tu sembles parti mais tu restes
Tu sembles parti mais tu restes
Dans un invisible univers
Dans cet autre endroit dont les gestes
Ne peuvent se lire à l’envers.
Notre demeure non pareille
Nous assigne les mêmes lieux.
Sourdes pour toi sont mes oreilles
Aveugles pour moi sont tes yeux.

You seem gone, but you remain
In an invisible universe,
In that place where right and wrong sides
Cannot mix together.
We are assigned different abodes
But in the same places.
To you my ears are deaf,
Blind to me are your eyes.

D’un fauteuil la main dolente
D’un fauteuil la main dolente
Sommeille sur le genou
Et une jambe à la plante
Paresseusement se noue.
C’est l’heure de la sieste
La chambre rentre ses ongles
Moï seul éveillé je reste
Dans l’épouvantable jungle.
Dorment des hanches des bras
Des épaules pêle-mêle
Et même une ébauche d’aile
Sur le désordre des draps.

The doleful arm of an armchair
Lies dormant on the knee
And to the pot plant a leg
Is lazely knotted.
It’s siesta time.
The room retires its claws.
Alone I stay awake
In the dreadful jungle.
Hips and arms are sleeping
Mingled with shoulders,
And even the rough shape of a wing
Amid the messy bed sheets.

Que ne suis-je un de cette Égypte
Que ne suis-je un de cette Égypte
Où mourir était voyager ?
Où tu croirais que dans leur crypte
Les morts savent boire et manger.
Tu n’aurais aucune tristesse
Des lieux qui m’éloignent d’ici.
Tu te dirais simplement : « Est-ce
Que son voyage a réussi ? »
Tu pourrais admirer ma feinte
D’imiter un homme qui dort
Et poser tes lèvres sans crainte
Sur mes gants et mon masque d’or.

If I were one from that Egypt
Where death was a voyage,
And you believing that in their crypt
The dead can eat and drink,
You would not feel any sadness
Over the places keeping me afar,
But would simply ask :
‘Was his trip succesful?’
You would admire my imitation
Of a sleeping man,
And fearlessly put your lips
On my golden gloves and mask.
Friedrich Heinrich Kern
5 Lieder after poems by Joerg Martin Hartmann
Program Note

Beginning in 2001, ‘5 Lieder’ started a collaboration between two young artists - a poet and a musician - at the beginning of their careers. Each text constitutes a microorganism of storylines, triggering their corresponding musical structure. At the same time, the musical ideas expand their textural confinement and develop its color palette, buffering a bizarre, grotesque, and distorted reality.

I. Der Schlüsselmacher
Selbst die goldensten Schlüssel drück ich Dir in die Hand
Die weiten Ländereien
Sie sind nun alle auch Dein

The Keymaker
I give you even the most golden keys into your hand
The vast land
They are also yours

II. Verschwommen
Sterngefüllte Augen – aufgehen
Blicken auf den Rolltreppenboden
Und laufen auf den Metallenen Platten
Zum Meeresboden
Wo Atlantis beginnt im Schatten
Blinkt gold verschwommen die Stadt
Für den der ein Auge dafür hat

Blurred
Star-filled eyes - rising
Looking on the ground of the escalator
Running on the metal plates
to the bottom of the sea
Atlantis begins in the shadow
the city blinks golden and blurry
for the one who has an eye for it

II. Etwas mehr
Die lautesten Wolken
Könnten mich retten
Doch die Blasen im Moor
Ploppen dumpf
Wohin ich geh?
Ich weiß es nicht
Das Trockeneis
Du weißt
Woher ich kam?
Aus dem Garten
Dort wo die Fee mich traf
Mich beschenkte mit goldenem Glück

A Bit More
The loudest clouds
could save me
but the bubbles in the swamp
plopping dull
Where am I going?
I don't know
The dry ice
You know
Where did I come from?
From the garden
where I met the fairy
She presented me with golden luck

IV. Blicke hinter den Vorhang
Schritt durch die Wand
Griff ins Fleisch
Sprung auf den Stern
Schrei über Jahre
Nachthimmel spült
Salzige Tränen ans Meer
Türen öffnen
Räume in kühle klare Luft
Dieser Wind weht
Die Flocken vom Berg

Looks Behind the Curtain
Steps through the wall
Grip into the flesh
Leap onto the star
Scream over years
The nightly sky washes up
Salty tears to the seas
Doors open
Rooms in cool clear air
This wind blows
The flakes from the mountain
V. Im Malstrom

Die Bäume im weiten Land
Sie blühten gelb wie Raps
Gottes Finger berührte
Eine Ente am fernen Horizont
Die Vignetten der Flaschen Riefen
Verwunderung hervor Doch die
die meisten waren sich einig Luft sei
die innere Sonne.

Text: Joerg Martin Hartmann
Translation: Friedrich Heinrich Kern

Into the Maelström

The trees in the wide land
they bloomed yellow like rape
God’s finger touched
a duck on the distant horizon
The vignettes of the bottles
caused amazement
But most of them agreed Air
be the inner sun
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.
— Roy Campbell, Poems of Baudelaire (New York: Pantheon Books, 1952)

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 hearse, could their pride to it have bent.
Dreaming, the noble postures they assume
Of sphinxes stretching out into the gloom
That seems to swoon into an endless trance.
Their fertile flanks are full of sparks that tingle,
And particles of gold, like grains of shingle,
Vaguely be-star their pupils as they glance.
— Roy Campbell, Poems of Baudelaire (New York: Pantheon Books, 1952)

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 fountaneous 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 cœur, 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 prèside, il inspire
Toutes choses dans son empire;
peut-être est-il fée, est-il dieu?
Quand mes yeux, vers ce chat que j'aime
Tirés comme par un aimant,
Se retournent docilement
Et que je regarde en moi-même,
Je vois avec étonnement
Le feu de ses prunelles pâles,
Clairs fanaux, vivantes opales
Qui me contemplent fixement.

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

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