

CORRESPONDENCES

Nature is a temple whose living pillars
Sometimes yield confusing paroles;
Man there crosses [remains enclosed in] forests of symbols
That observe him with familiar looks.

Like long echoes that from afar are confused
Into one dark and profound unity,
Vast like the night and like the light,
The perfumes, the colors and the sounds correspond.

There are scents fresh like the skin of children,
Soft like the oboe, green like the prairies,
--And others, corrupt, rich and triumphant,

Having the expansiveness of infinite things,
Like amber, musk, benjamin and incense,
Which sing the transports of the mind and the senses.

THE BLIND MEN

Contemplate them, my soul; they are truly frightful!
Like mannequins, vaguely ridiculous,
Terrifying and singular, like sleep-walkers;
Their dark orbs darting in all directions.

Their eyes, from which the divine spark has departed,
As if they were staring into the distance, remain lifted
Toward the sky; you never see them dreamily
Bow their heavy heads to the cobbled road.

Thus they traverse the unlimited night,
That brother of eternal silence. O city!
While you sing, laugh, and howl all around us,

Bent on pleasure to excess,
Look! I also drag myself along; but even more stupefied
than they,

I say: What are they seeking in the Heavens, all those blind men?

À UNE PASSANTE

The deafening street was screaming all around me.
Long, slender, in deep mourning, majestic grief,
A woman passed, raising and swaying, with a delicate hand,
The trim and hem of her skirt;

Graceful and noble, with her statue's leg.
And I was drinking, frozen like a madman,
In her eye, livid sky where the storm breeds,
The softness that fascinates and the pleasure that kills.

A flash...then night!--O fleeting beauty
Whose look suddenly gave me new life
Shall I not see you again but in eternity?

Elsewhere, far from here! Too late! *Never*, perhaps!
I know not where you flee, you don't know where I go,
You, whom I would have loved, you who knew it was so.

A CURIOUS MAN'S DREAM

to F. N.

Have you known—like me—a pleasurable pain?
Do they say about you, too: "O, the singular man!"
I was dying. There was in my amorous soul,
Desire mixed with horror, a particular evil;

Anguish and expectation, without factious humor.
The closer I came to the fatal hourglass,
The sharper and more delicious was my torment;
My whole heart was breaking free from the familiar world.

I was like a child in front of a spectacle,
Hating the curtain as one hates an obstacle...
Finally the cold truth was revealed:

I had died without surprise, and the terrible dawn
Enveloped me. And what! Is this all there is?
The curtain was up and I was waiting still.