

MY

HEART

and other texts

LAI

BARE

Baudelaire

*'Baudelaire is a libertine, mystical, 'satanic,'
but, above all, Wagnerian.*

— Nietzsche

*'Baudelaire epitomizes the metaphysics of the
provocateur.*

— Walter Benjamin



Baudelaire

Mon cœur suj à ses

La question (torture) est, comme art de déjouer la vérité une manière barbare, c'est l'application d'un moyen matériel à un but spirituel.

La peine de Mort est le résultat d'une idée mystérieuse, tout à fait incomprise au jourd'hui. La peine de Mort n'est payée par but de sauver la société, matériellement du moins. Elle a pour but de sauver (spirituellement) la société et la conscience. Pour que le sacrifice soit payé il faut qu'il y ait appétit mortel et joie de la part de la victime. Donner du chloroforme à un condamné à mort serait une impiété, car ce serait lui enlever la conscience de son grand crime mérité et lui supprimer le moyen de gagner le Paradis.

Quant à la torture elle est née de la partie inférieure du cœur de l'homme aspirée de voluptés, cruautes et voluptés sensations d'autrui, comme l'épaveur chaud et l'épaveur froid.



Charles Baudelaire

MY HEART LAID BARE
& other texts

Translated by

Rainer J. Hanshe



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Why should the poet not be a grinder of poisons as well as a confectioner, not raise serpents for miracles and performances, a psylle in love with his reptiles, and enraptured by the icy caresses of their coils at the same time as by the terrors of the crowd?

— Baudelaire, from a letter to Jules Janin

I want to vent my anger in terrifying books. I want to turn the whole human race against me. The pleasure this would give me would console me for everything.

— Baudelaire, from a letter to his mother

**CHOICE OF
CONSOLING MAXIMS
ON LOVE**

Whoever writes maxims likes to fortify his character; — the young powder themselves, — the old adonise themselves.

The world, this vast system of contradictions, — having all caducity in great esteem, — quickly, let us blacken our wrinkles; — feeling being quite customary, let us beribbon our hearts like a frontispiece.

To what good? — If you are not true men, be true beasts. Be naive, and you will necessarily be useful or pleasurable to some. — My heart, — even if set to the right, — will well find a thousand co-pariahs among the three billion beings who graze the nettles of feeling!

If I begin with love, it is because love is for everyone, — though they may deny it, — the great thing of life!

All of you who feed some insatiable vulture, — you Hoffmannesque poets whom the harmonica sets dancing in crystal regions, and whom the violin lacerates like a blade that seeks the heart, — bitter and gluttonous contemplators to whom the spectacle of nature itself gives dangerous ecstasies, — that love be to you a sedative.

Tranquil poets, — *objective* poets, — noble partisans of method, — architects of style, — politicians who have a daily task to accomplish, — that love be to you a stimulant, a fortifying and tonic beverage, and the gymnastics of pleasure a perpetual encouragement to action!

To these here soporifics, to those there alcohols.

You for whom nature is cruel & time precious, that love be an animate and burning cordial to you.

One must therefore choose one's loves.

Without denying *love at first sight*, which is impossible, — see Stendhal, *On Love*, book I, chapter XXIII, — one must believe that fatality enjoys a certain elasticity, which is called human freedom.

Just as for theologians, liberty consists in avoiding opportunities for temptation rather than resisting them, so, in love, freedom consists in avoiding the categories of dangerous women, that is, dangerous for yourself.

Your mistress, the woman of your heaven, will be sufficiently indicated to you by your natural sympathies, verified by Lavater, by painting, and by statuary.

The physiognomic signs would be infallible, if we knew them all, and well. I cannot here give all the physiognomic signs of women who are eternally suitable to this or that man. Perhaps one day I will accomplish this enormous task in a book entitled *The Catechism of the Beloved Woman*; but I am certain that each man, aided by his imperious and vague sympathies, and guided by observation, can find in a given time the necessary woman.

Besides, our sympathies are generally not dangerous; nature, in cooking as in love, rarely gives us a taste of what is bad for us.

As I hear the word "love" in the fullest sense, I am obliged to express some particular maxims on delicate questions.

A Man of the North, an ardent navigator lost in fogs, a seeker of auroræ borealis more beautiful than sunlight, indefatigable thirster of the ideal, loves cold women. — Loves them well, because the labor is greater and more bitter, and you will find one day more honor at the tribunal of Love, which sits beyond the blue of the infinite!

A Man of the South, whose open nature has no taste for secrets & mysteries — frivolous man, — of Bordeaux, Marseille, or of Italy, — ardent women will suffice for you; this movement and this animation are your natural empire; — amusing empire.

Young man, you who wish to be a great poet, guard yourself against the paradox in love; let schoolboys drunk on their first pipe sing at the top of their voices the praises of the fat woman; abandon those lies to the neophytes of the pseudo-romantic school. If the fat woman is sometimes a charming caprice, the skinny woman is a well of dark delights!

Never slander great nature, & if she has awarded you a mistress without breasts, say: "I have a friend — with hips!" and go to the temple to render thanks to the gods.

Know how to take advantage of ugliness itself; of your own, it is too easy; all the world knows that Trenk,

the Burning Maw, was worshiped by women;¹ of *hers!* that is more rare and more beautiful, but the *association of ideas* renders it easy & natural. — I postulate your sick idol. Her beauty has disappeared under the frightful crust of smallpox, as verdure under the heavy ices of winter. Still moved by the long agonies & fluctuations of illness, you contemplate with sadness the ineffaceable stigmata upon the body of the beloved convalescent; you suddenly hear resonate in your ears a *dying* air, executed by the delirious bow of Paganini, and this sympathetic air speaks to you of yourself, and seems to tell you the entire poem of your lost inner hopes. — From then on, the traces of smallpox will be part of your happiness, and beneath your sensitized gaze the mysterious air of Paganini will always sing. Henceforth, they will not only be the objects of gentle sympathy, but also of physical rapture, if you are one of those sensitive spirits for whom beauty is above all the *promise* of happiness. It is, therefore, the association of ideas above all that makes the ugly beloved; because, if your pockmarked mistress betrays you, you will greatly risk being able to console yourself only with pockmarked women.

For certain more curious and more blasé spirits, the rapture of ugliness arises from an even more mysterious feeling, which is the thirst for the unknown, and the taste for the horrible. It is this feeling, of which each carries within himself



1. We could have quoted Mirabeau, but this is very common, and besides, we suspect that he was sanguine ugly, which is particularly antipathetic to us. [Baudelaire's note. Hereafter, any notes by CB himself are cited: [CBN].]

the germ, more or less developed, which precipitates certain poets into clinics & dissecting rooms, & women into public executions. I would vigorously lament those who cannot understand; — a harp that lacks a bass string!

As for spelling mistakes, which for some dimwits is part of moral ugliness, is it not superfluous to explain to you how it can be a whole naive poem of memories and raptures? The charming Alcibiades stuttered so well, and childhood has such divine gibberings! Beware then, young adept of rapture, of teaching French to your friend, — unless you must be her French teacher in order to become her lover.

There are people who blush for having loved a woman the day they realize that she is ferine. They are vain Aliborons, made to grind the most impure thistles of creation, or enjoy the favors of a bluestocking. Atavism is often the ornament of beauty; it is this that gives the eyes the mournful limpidity of dusky ponds, and the oily calmness of tropical seas. Atavism always preserves beauty; it removes wrinkles; it is a divine cosmetic that preserves our idols from the sting of thought that we must suffer, hideous savants that we are!

There are some who do not want their mistresses to be prodigals. They are Holy Asses, or republicans who are ignorant of the first principles of political economy. The vices of a great nation are its greatest wealth.

Others, the supine, reasonable, and moderate deists, the just-milieu of dogma, who are enraged at seeing their women throw themselves into devotion. — Oh! the clumsy, who can never play any instrument! Oh! the triple fools who do not

see that the most adorable form religion can take, — is that of their wife! — A husband to convert, what a delicious apple! The beautiful forbidden fruit that a great impiety, — in a tumultuous winter night with fire, wine, and truffles, — a mute canticle of domestic happiness, a victory won over rigorous nature, which itself seems to blaspheme the Gods!

I should not have finished too soon, if I wanted to enumerate all the beautiful & good sides of what is called vice and moral ugliness; but a difficult and anguished case often presents itself, to people of heart and intelligence, as a tragedy; it is when they are caught between the hereditary and paternal taste of morality and the tyrannical taste of a woman whom they ought to despise. Numerous & ignoble infidelities, the habits of places of ill-repute, shameful secrets wrongly discovered, inspire you with horror for the idol, and sometimes your joy gives you a shudder. You are very much impeded in your Platonic reasonings. Virtue and pride cry out to you: Flee it! Nature says in your ear: Where to flee? Terrible alternatives where even the strongest souls reveal all the insufficiency of our philosophical education. The most adroit, seeing themselves constrained by nature to play the eternal novel of Manon Lescaut & of Leone Leoni? have become unhinged in saying that contempt goes very well with love. — I will give you a very simple recipe that will not only free you of these shameful justifications, but also enable you not to bruise your idol, & not to damage your *crystallization*.²

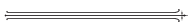


2. We know that all of our readers have read the *Stendhal*. [CBN]

I suppose that the heroine of your heart, having abused the *fas* and the *nefas*, has arrived at the limits of perdition, after having — final infidelity, supreme torture! — tried the power of her charms on her jailers and executioners.³ Will you abjure the ideal so easily, or if, faithful and weeping, nature precipitates you in the arms of this pale victim of the guillotine, will you say with the mortified accent of resignation: Contempt & love are first cousins! — Not at all, for those are the paradoxes of a timorous soul and an obscure intelligence. — Say boldly, and with the candor of the true philosopher: “Less defiled, my ideal would not have been complete. I contemplate her, and submit myself; of such a powerful rascal, great Nature alone knows what it wants to make of her. Supreme happiness & reason! absolute! *resulting* from contraries! Ormuz and Arimane, you are the same!”

And it's thus, thanks to a more synthetic view of things, that admiration will naturally lead you back to pure love, that sun whose intensity absorbs all spots.

Remember this, it is especially the paradox in love that we must guard against. It's naiveté that saves; it's naiveté that rends happy, though your mistress be as ugly as old Mab, the queen of terrors! In general, for the people of the world, — a clever moralist has said it, — love is only the love of gambling, the love of fighting. It is a great wrong; love must be love; fighting and gambling are only permitted as the politics of love.



3. As well as [Jules Janin's] *L'Âne mort [et la femme guillotinée]*. [CBN]

The most serious error of modern youth is that of *forcing their emotions*. A good number of lovers are imaginary invalids who spend a great deal on pharmacopoeias, and pay M. Fleurant and M. Purgon handsomely, without having the pleasures and privileges of a genuine illness. Note well how they enervate their stomachs with absurd drugs, and exhaust in themselves the digestive faculty of love.

Although it is necessary to be of one's century, be careful not to ape the illustrious Don Juan, who at first was nothing but, according to Molière, a rude rascal, well styled & affiliated with love, crime, and quibbles; — then became, thanks to M. Alfred de Musset and Théophile Gautier, an *artistic flâneur*, running after perfection through places of ill-repute, and finally was no more than an old dandy exhausted by all his travels, and the stupidest of the world to an honest woman well-disposed to her husband.

Summary and general rule: in love, beware of the *moon* and the *stars*, beware of the Venus de Milo, of lakes, guitars, rope ladders, and all novels, — the most beautiful in the world, — even if written by Apollo himself!

But love well, vigorously, gallantly, orientally, ferociously the one that you love; so that your love, —harmony being well understood, — does not torment the love of another; that your choice does not disturb the state. Among the Incas one loved his sister; be content with your cousin. Never climb balconies, never insult public power; don't deprive your mistress the sweetness of believing in Gods, and when you

accompany her to the temple, know how to properly dip your fingers in the pure and fresh water of the stoup.

All morals attesting to the good will of the legislators, — all religion being a supreme consolation to all the afflicted, — every woman being a piece of the *essential* woman, — love being the sole thing worth writing a sonnet and dressing in fine linen for — I revere these things more than anything else, and I denounce as a calumniator whoever makes this scrap of morality an occasion for the sign of the cross and food for scandal. — Glittering morality, is that not it? Colored glass tinting perhaps too brightly the eternal lamp of truth that shines within? — Not at all, not at all. — If I had wished to prove that everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds, the reader would have the right to say to me, as to the *ape of genius*: you are a wicked man! But I wanted to prove that everything is for the best in the worst of all possible worlds. It will then be much forgiven me, because I loved very much ... my male ... or my female reader.

**[AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL
NOTE]**

Childhood: Old Louis XVI furniture, antiques, consulate, pastels, eighteenth-century society.

After 1830, the college of Lyon, coups, battles with professors and comrades, severe melancholy.

Return to Paris, college & education by my father-in-law (General Aupick).

Youth: Expulsion from Louis the Great, episode of the baccalauréat.

Travels with my father-in-law in the Pyrenees.

Free life in Paris, first literary connections: Ourliac, Gérard, Balzac, Levavasseur, Delatouche.

Travel in India: first adventure, dismasted ship; Mauritius, Île Bourbon, Malabar, Ceylan, Indoustan, Cap; happy walks.

Second adventure: return on a ship without food & sinking.

Return to Paris; second literary connections: Sainte-Beuve, Hugo, Gautier, Esquiros.

Difficulty for a very long time of making myself understood by the editor of any newspaper.

Permanent taste since childhood for all plastic representations.

Simultaneous interests in philosophy & beauty in prose & in poetry; of the perpetual, simultaneous relationship of the ideal with life.

FLARES

1

FLARES

Even if God did not exist, Religion would still be Holy and *Divine*.

God is the sole being who, to reign, does not even need to exist.

That which is created with the mind is more alive than matter.

Love is the taste for prostitution. There is not even one noble pleasure that cannot be reduced to Prostitution.

At a show, at a ball, everyone is enraptured by all.

What is art? Prostitution.

The pleasure of being in crowds is a mysterious expression of the rapture of the multiplication of number.

All is number. Number is in *all*. Number is in the individual. Intoxication is a number.

The taste for productive concentration ought to replace, in a mature man, the taste for degradation.

Love can be derived from a generous feeling: the taste for prostitution; but it is soon corrupted by the taste for property.

Love wants to abandon itself, to confound itself with its victim, as the conqueror with the vanquished, & yet preserve the privileges of the conqueror.

The raptures of one who maintains a woman are due to both the angel and the owner. Charity and ferocity. They are even independent of sex, of beauty, & of animal kind.

The green shadows in the humid evenings of the beautiful season.

Great depth of thought in vulgar phrases, hollowed out by generations of ants.

Anecdote about the hunter, related to the intimate connection between ferocity & love.

2

FLARES

Of the femininity of the Church, as the reason for its omnipotence.

Of the color violet (love restrained, mysterious, veiled, color of a canoness).

The priest is great because he makes the horde believe in a multitude of astonishing things.

That the Church wants to make everything and every being is a [necessity] law of the human spirit.

People worship authority.

Priests are the servants and sectaries of the imagination.

The throne & the altar, a revolutionary maxim.

E.G. or the SEDUCTIVE ADVENTURESS

Religious intoxication of the great cities. — Pantheism.
I is all; All is I.

Whirlwind.

3

FLARES

I believe that I have already written in my notes that love has a strong resemblance to an act of torture or to a surgical operation. But this idea can be developed in the most bitter manner. Even if two lovers enamor one another very much and are full of reciprocal desires, one of them will always be calmer or less possessed than the other. He or she is the surgeon or the executioner; the other is the subject, the victim. Do you hear those sighs, the preludes of a tragedy of dishonor, those groans, those cries, those wails? Who has not uttered them, who has not irresistibly extorted them? And what baser thing find you than the question administered by conscientious torturers? Those contorted somnambulist eyes, the limbs of which the muscles twitch and stiffen as if under the action of a galvanic battery, — drunkenness, delirium, and opium, in their most furious results, will certainly not give you cases as [beautiful] frightful, [and] also as curious. And the human face, which Ovid believed was fashioned to reflect the stars, speaks [reflects] here only of an expression of mad ferocity, or relaxing into a type of death. For, indeed, I should believe it would be sacrilege to apply the word ecstasy to this sort of decomposition.

— Dreadful game where one of the players must lose the government of him or her self!

In my presence someone once asked what the greatest pleasure of love consisted of. Someone naturally answered: to receive, — and another: to give oneself. — The former said: the pleasure of pride! — and the latter: the rapture of humility! All those foul-tongues spoke like the *Imitation of Jesus Christ*. — Finally, an impudent utopian was found who affirmed that the greatest pleasure of love consisted of creating citizens for the country.

Myself, I say: the unique and supreme rapture of love [consists] rests in the certainty of doing *evil*. — And man and woman know [then] from birth that in evil [we find] is found all rapture.

4

PLANS · FLARES · PROJECTS

- The Comedy à la Silvestre.
Barbara and the Sheep.
- Chenavard has created a superhuman type.
- My vow to Levillant.
- Preface, mixture of mysticalness & playfulness.
Dreams and Dream Theory in Swedenborg.

The thought of Campbell (*The Conduct of Life*).
Concentration.

The power of a dominant idea.

- Absolute frankness, a means of originality.
- Pompously recount comic things.

5

FLARES · SUGGESTIONS

When a man takes to bed, nearly all his friends have a secret desire to see him die; some to verify that his health is inferior to theirs; others in the disinterested hope of studying an agony.

The arabesque is the most spiritualist of designs.

6

FLARES · SUGGESTIONS

The man of letters rends foundations and conveys a taste for intellectual gymnastics.

The arabesque is the most ideal of all designs.

We love women in proportion to their being [strangers] strangers to us. To love intelligent women is a pleasure of the pederast. Thus bestiality excludes pederasty.

The spirit of buffoonery need not exclude charity, but it is rare.

Enthusiasm applied to something other than abstractions is a sign of weakness & disease.

Thinness is more naked, more indecent than corpulence.

7

— *Tragic heaven*. Epithet of an abstract order applied to a material entity.

— Man drinks light with the atmosphere. Thus the populace is right to say that night air is unhealthy for work.

— People are born fire worshippers.

Fireworks, conflagrations, incendiaries.

If we imagine a born [, a Parsi] fire worshipper, a [Pars] *born Parsi*, we could create a novella.

8

Mistakes concerning [people] faces are the result of an eclipse of the real image by the hallucination born of it.

Know then the raptures of a harsh life; and pray, pray without ceasing. Prayer is a reservoir of strength. (*Altar of the Will. Moral Dynamic. Sorcery of Sacraments. Hygiene of the Soul.*)

Music hollows out the heavens.

Jean-Jacques said that he could not enter a cafe without a certain emotion. For a timid nature, the ticket-booth of a theater is somewhat akin to the tribunal of Hell.

Life has but one true charm; it is the charm of *Gambling*. But if we are indifferent to winning or losing?

9

SUGGESTIONS · FLARES

Nations have great men only in spite of themselves, — like families. They make every effort not to have one. And thus, to exist, the great man needs to possess a force of attack much greater than the force of resistance developed by millions of individuals.

About sleep, the sinister adventure of our every night, one can say that men daily fall asleep with an audacity that would be unintelligible if we did not know that it is the result of their ignorance of the danger.

10

There are some skins as hard as shells against which contempt is no longer a vengeance.

Many friends, many gloves. Those who loved me were despised, I might even say contemptible, if I wanted to flatter honest people.

Speak Latin, Girardin! *Pecudesque locutæ.*

To send Robert Houdin to the Arabs to divert them from miracles is the work of an incredulous Society.

11

Those great & beautiful ships, imperceptibly balanced (waddling) on tranquil waters, those robust ships, look idle and nostalgic as they ask us in a mute tongue: When do we set sail for happiness?

Not to forget the marvelous in drama, sorcery & romance.

The background, the atmospheres in which a whole story must be tempered. (See "Usher" and refer to the profound sensations of hashish & opium.)

MY HEART LAID BARE

1

Of the vaporization and centralization of the *Ego*. Everything is there.

Of a certain sensual rapture in the company of debauchees.

(I intend to begin *My Heart Laid Bare* no matter where, no matter how, and continue it from day to day, following the inspiration of the day & the circumstance, provided the inspiration is spirited).

2

The first arrival, provided that he knows how to amuse,
has the right to speak of himself.

3

I understand how one can abandon a cause so as to discover what can be experienced when serving another.

It would perhaps be sweet to be alternately victim and executioner.

4

Stupidities of Girardin

"We are accustomed to taking the bull by *the horns*. Let us then take the speech by *the conclusion*." (November 7, 1863)

Thus, Girardin believes that the horns of bulls are planted on their asses. He confuses the horns with the tail.

That before imitating the Ptolemies of French journalism, the Belgian journalists take the trouble to reflect on the question which I have been studying for thirty years in all its aspects, as will be proved by the volume that will shortly appear under this title: QUESTIONS DE PRESSE; that they do not hasten to treat with *sovereign ridicule** an opinion which is as true as it is true that the earth revolves & that the sun does not revolve.

ÉMILE DE GIRARDIN

* "There are people who pretend that nothing prevents them from believing that, the sky being motionless, it is the earth which revolves around its axis. But these people do not realize, because of what is happening around us, how their opinion is sovereignly ridiculous (πάνυ γελοιώτατον)."

P T O L E M Y, *The Almagest*, Bk. I, Ch. VI

Et habet mea mentrita meatum.

GIRARDIN.

5

For

MY HEART LAID BARE

Woman is the opposite of the Dandy.

Therefore she must inspire horror.

Woman is hungry and she wants to eat. Thirsty, and she wants to drink.

She is rutting and she wants to be fucked.

Beautiful merit!

Woman is *natural*, that is, abominable.

Thus, she is always vulgar, that is, the opposite of the Dandy.

Concerning the Legion of Honor.

He who seeks the cross seems to say: If you do not decorate me for doing my duty, I will not do it again.

— If a man has merit, what is the use of decorating him? If he has none, he can be decorated, for it will give him luster.

To consent to be decorated is to acknowledge that the State or a prince has the right to judge you, to dignify you, etc.

Besides, if not pride, Christian humility forbids this cross.

Calculation in favor of God.

Nothing exists without a purpose.

Therefore my existence has a purpose. What purpose?

I don't know.

It was not therefore I who marked it.

It is therefore a more learned man than myself.

I must therefore ask someone to enlighten me. This is the wisest course of action.

The Dandy must aspire to be sublime without interruption; he must live & sleep before a mirror.

6

Analysis of counter-religions: example of sacred prostitution.

What is sacred prostitution?

Nervous excitation.

Mysticalness of paganism.

Mysticism — a link between Paganism & Christianity.

Paganism & Christianity — reciprocal proofs.

The Revolution and the Cult of Reason prove the idea of sacrifice.

Superstition is the reservoir of all truths.

7

There is in all change something both infamous and enjoyable, something that is due to infidelity and moving house. This suffices to explain the French Revolution.

8

My intoxication in 1848.

What was the nature of that intoxication?

A taste for revenge. The *natural* pleasure of demolition.

[My fury at the coup d'État.]

[How many times I was shot at.]

Literary intoxication; memory of readings.

May 15th. — Always the taste for destruction. Legitimate taste, if everything that is natural is legitimate.

[My fury at the coup d'État.]

The horrors of June. The madness of the people and the madness of the bourgeoisie. Natural love of crime.

My fury at the coup d'État. How many times I was shot at! Another Bonaparte! what shame!

And yet everyone is pacified. Has the President no law to invoke?

What Emperor Napoléon III is. What he is worth. Find the explanation of his nature, & his providentiality.

9

To be a useful man always seemed to me something quite hideous.

1848 was amusing only because everybody made utopias like castles in Spain.

1848 was charming only because of the very excess of the Ridiculous.

Robespierre is estimable only because he has made some beautiful phrases.

10

The Revolution, through sacrifice, confirms superstition.

11

POLITICS.

I have no convictions, as the people of my century understand, because I have no ambition.

There is no foundation in myself for a conviction.

There is a certain cowardice, or rather, a certain feebleness, as among honest people.

The brigands alone are convinced, — of what? — that they must succeed. Therefore, they succeed.

Why should I succeed, since I don't even want to try?

One can found glorious empires on crime, and noble religions on imposture.

Nevertheless, I have some convictions, in a higher sense, and which can not be understood by the people of my time.

12

Feeling of *solitude*, since my childhood. Despite the family, — and among my comrades, above all, — feeling of an eternally solitary destiny.

However, a very keen taste for life & for pleasure.



COLOPHON

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In *My Heart Laid Bare*, an apodictic work of aphorism, maxim, note, & extended reflection, we encounter a fierce dandy who revolts against utilitarianism: to be useful, Baudelaire gibes, is to be hideous. Yet, contrarily, it is not dissolution that this *poète maudit* praises or celebrates. Although he rejects Progress, he prizes what he calls true progress, for him moral, the work of the individual alone. The dandy is not disaffected, but a rigorous spectator that burrows into the heart of reality itself; situated at the center of the world, yet hidden from it, this incognito figure tears back the flesh of humanity like a devilish surgeon. Through this act of absorption, observation, and analysis, like Rimbaud's Supreme Scientist, Baudelaire's dandy acquires "a subtle understanding of the entire moral mechanism of this world." Here we have the poet as philosopher king and transvaluator of values; here we have the *disciplined flâneur*. Baudelaire the keen symptomatologist who escapes "the nightmare of Time" via Pleasure or Work. If Pleasure is consumptive for him, Work is fortifying, that is, not the work of a profession, — cursed thing, — but the work of *poiesis*. A kind of poetic Marcus Aurelius forging his inner citadel, Baudelaire's dandy-flâneur does not retreat into a monastic cell, but situates himself amidst society: poet as vast mirror, poet as thinking kaleidoscope. To Nietzsche, *My Heart Laid Bare* contains "invaluable psychological observations relating to decadence of the kind in which Schopenhauer's and Byron's case has been *burned*."

Reflecting on the conceivable potency of his proposed book when writing to his mother, Baudelaire avowed that in it he would accumulate all his rage. "Ah!" he exulted, "if ever that sees the light of day, J-J's *Confessions* will seem pale." This *poète maudit* does not however offer us a heart laid bare in terms of some quotidian, memoir-like spewing of his *bios*; rather, it is the baring of *l'esprit*, a crystallization of his mind, hence the most genuine revelation of his self. In this unfinished but dense, pressurized, and magnetic work of chaotic enumeration, we have Baudelaire's *meditations*.

Also included in this volume are other texts of Baudelaire's such as the Consoling Maxims on Love, the equally burning Flares, his notes for a projected magazine, *The Philosopher Owl*, and select pieces from his cahiers.

Translated by Rainer J. Hanshe

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