



Charles Baudelaire

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Stupidity, delusion, selfishness and lust
torment our bodies and possess our minds,
and we sustain our affable remorse
the way a beggar nourishes his lice.

Our sins are stubborn, our contrition lame;
we want our scruples to be worth our while—
how cheerfully we crawl back to the mire:
a few cheap tears will wash our stains away!

Satan Trismegistus subtly rocks
our ravished spirits on his wicked bed
until the precious metal of our will
is leached out by this cunning alchemist:

the Devil's hand directs our every move—
the things we loathed become the things we love;
day by day we drop through stinking shades
quite undeterred on our descent to Hell.

Like a poor profligate who sucks and bites
the withered breast of some well-seasoned trull,
we snatch in passing at clandestine joys
and squeeze the oldest orange hardest yet.

Wriggling in our brains like a million worms,
a demon demon holds its revels there,
and when we breathe, the Lethe in our lungs
trickles sighing on its secret course.

If rape and arson, poison and the knife
have not yet stitched their ludicrous designs
onto the banal buckram of our fates,
it is because our souls lack enterprise!

But here among the scorpions and the lice,
the jackals, apes and vultures, snakes and wolves,
monsters that howl and growl and squeal and crawl,
in all the squalid zoo of vices, one

is even uglier and fouler than the rest,
although the least flamboyant of the lot;

this beast would gladly undermine the earth
and swallow all creation in a yawn;

I speak of Boredom which with ready tears
dreams of hangings as it puffs its pipe.
Reader, you know this squeamish monster well,
—hypocrite reader,—my alias,—my twin!

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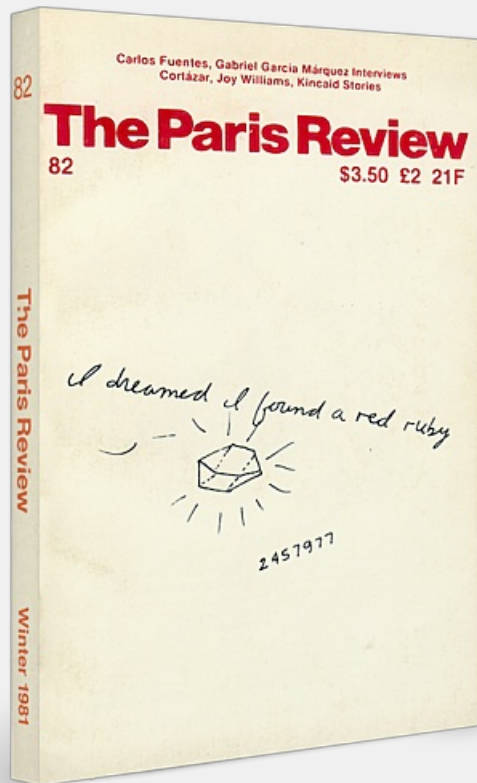
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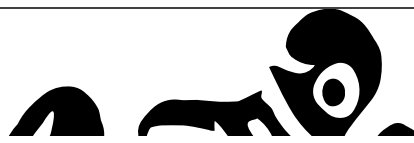
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