

Translations to English by Paul Mason (2006) from the original French of:
II... 'Correspondances' Charles Baudelaire
III... 'Voyelles' Arthur Rimbaud

Fleurs du mal:
IV - Correspondances

La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers
Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.

Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent
Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité,
Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarté,
Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent.

Il est des parfums frais comme des chairs d'enfants,
Doux comme les hautbois, verts comme les prairies,
— Et d'autres, corrompus, riches et triomphants,

Ayant l'expansion des choses infinies,
Comme l'ambre, le musc, le benjoin et l'encens,
Qui chantent les transports de l'esprit et des sens.

— Charles Baudelaire, 1857/1861

English translation:

Nature is a temple where living pillars
Sometimes let forth confused words;
Man passes there, through forests of symbols
Which observe him with familiar glances.

Like prolonged echoes which from a distance blur
Into a tenebrous and deep unity,
Vast like the dark of night and the light of day,
Perfumes, colours, and sounds all correspond.

There are perfumes as cool as the flesh of children,
Soft as oboes, green as meadows,
— And others corrupt, rich and triumphant,

Having the expansion of infinite things,
Like amber, musk, benzoin and incense,
That sing the voyage of the soul and the senses.

Written in Paris, "Correspondances" is situated among 19th century Romantic artists and intellectuals who were interested in synaesthesia and the possible unity behind all reality. Baudelaire believed in the importance to represent truth undidactically, through symbols and metaphors.

Voyelles

A noir, E blanc, I rouge, U vert, O bleu: voyelles,
Je dirai quelque jour vos naissances latentes:
A, noir corset velu des mouches éclatantes
Qui bombinent autour des puanteurs cruelles,

Golfes d'ombre ; E, candeurs des vapeurs et des tentes,
Lances des glaciers fiers, rois blancs, frissons d'ombelles;
I, pourpres, sang craché, rire des lèvres belles
Dans la colère ou les ivresses pénitentes;

U, cycles, vibrations divins des mers virides,
Paix des pâtis semés d'animaux, paix des rides
Que l'alchimie imprime aux grands fronts studieux;

O, suprême Clairon plein des strideurs étranges,
Silences traversés des Mondes et des Anges;
- O l'Oméga, rayon violet de Ses Yeux!

— Arthur Rimbaud, 1871

English translation:

Black A, white E, red I, green U, blue O: vowels,
One day, I shall reveal your latent births:
A, black corset hairy with dazzling flies
which buzz around cruel stench,

Gulfs of shade; E, whiteness of vapours and tents,
lances of proud glaciers, white kings, the shivering of flowers;
I, crimsons, spat blood, laughter of beautiful lips
in anger or penitent intoxications;

U, cycles, divine vibrations of green seas,
Peace of pastures dotted with animals, peace of wrinkles
which alchemy imprints on broad studious foreheads;

O, supreme Trumpet full of strange strident calls,
silences crossed by the Worlds and by the Angels:
-O the Omega, violet ray of His Eyes!

The symbolist poet, Rimbaud, helped popularise synaesthesia with his poem "Voyelles", which he wrote at the age of 16.