

CATS

Charles Baudelaire

Devoted couples and grave scholars share
The same love, in life's mellow eventide,
For gently potent cats, the household's pride,
Like them draught-haters, happiest in a chair.

Drawn both to learning and to ecstasy,
Cats like the hush and frisson night-time breeds;
Erebus might have made them his grim steeds,
Could they have bowed their pride to slavery.

Musing, they take up stately attitudes,
Like sphinxes stretched in deepest solitudes
As if they slept through some eternal dream;

With magic sparks their fecund loins surprise,
And flecks of gold, like sand-grains as they gleam,
Vaguely bestar their mystic pupils' skies.

—Translated by Philip Higson

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