

Fourmillante cite, cite plein de rêves,  
 Où le spectre en plein jour raccroche le passant! CHECK TEXT

In the ant-swarm of the city, it is the spectre, not a human being, that, in broad daylight, keeps jostling the passerby. And in our century it is not in the Paris street but over London Bridge ( or in the New York subway ) that the crowd prompts the poet to exclaim, in an echo of the appalled utterance of Dante in Hell, "I had not thought death had undone so many." \* Meanwhile, Fostoiveski, in

\* Inferno, Canto \_\_\_\_\_ ? On this matter of the view of the "specters", Raymond Williams, in Culture and Society (NY 1958, pp. 297 ff. ) would, like a good many other men of good will, argue

that the sense of unreality in the "mass," in the "others," -- even the casual use of the word mass, as in "mass democracy" or "mass media" -- springs from an unconscious elitism or class pride or simply a failure in humane imagination. Let us grant that in this stricture there is some justice. But we must also remember that in this modern situation the individual does not find the passant unreal and in doing so congratulates himself on his superior reality. This sense of the unreality of the passant is only the obverse of a psychological coin, the reverse of which is the individual's sense of his own unreality -- of alienation, anomie, displacement, and devaluation. That is, to return to Baudelaire's poem, the poet who sees the passant as a spectre at the end declares himself ~~Blasé par le mystère et par l'absurdité.~~

Blessé par le mystère et par l'absurdité. - or Everyman

The mystery and the absurdity have wounded the poet so that, now sick, chilled to the bone, and disoriented, he locks his door against the street. Thus the man who sees the "de-selfed men," recognizes them because he himself is "de-selfed." For whatever debates there are among philosophers and psychologists about the genesis of the "self," we know that it is inextricably related to the world around and to other "selves."

END FOOTNOTE