BAUDELAIRE AND THE SONNET
ON THE THRESHOLD OF MODERNITY

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This Master's thesis is affectionately dedicated to JoAnne Lalonde and Gaétan Soucy.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with a problem of literary history. It shows how the inscription of Baudelaire's sonnets in the field of literary discourse is inseparable from their inscription in the general context of mid-nineteenth century social discourse. Baudelaire's sonnets are first examined in terms of the French sonnet tradition, and seen to constitute a formal departure from the Classically defined sonnet. His sonnets are then considered against the background of the opposition of Classicism and Romanticism in order to show that they represented a synthesis of opposed poetic values. In Chapter 3, a close examination of the sonnets reveals a balance of formal, rhetorical, and thematic elements consistent with the synthetic tendencies identified earlier. The study of the poetics of Baudelaire's sonnets is followed by a review of his general aesthetic orientation. This review leads to the problem of the sonnets' relation to contemporary social discourse. By reading Baudelaire's sonnets in terms of the nineteenth-century discourse of progress, and in terms of Benjamin's theory of historical consciousness, I show that their aesthetics and Petrarchism, as well as their rhetorical and thematic features, had a definite counter-discursive significance.

RÉSUMÉ

Ce mémoire traite d'un problème relevant de l'histoire littéraire. Nous y montrons comment l'inscription des sonnets baudelairiens dans le champ du discours littéraire est inséparable de leur inscription dans le contexte général du discours social du milieu du XIXe siècle. Les sonnets de Baudelaire sont d'abord examinés en fonction de la tradition poétique française en tant qu'ils constituent une innovation par rapport aux formes classiques du genre. Les sonnets sont alors considérés relativement à l'opposition Classiques/Romantiques, opposition surmontée du fait que ces sonnets représentent justement une synthèse de valeurs poétiques opposées. Au chapitre 3, un examen serré des sonnets rèvèle une combinaison d'éléments formels, rhétoriques et thématiques qui participent de l'effort de synthèse identifié précèdemment. Cet examen de la poétique baudelairienne est suivie d'un survol général de ses orientations esthétiques, ce qui nous amène au problème de la relation entre ces sonnets et le discours social qui leur est contemporain. En les confrontant au discours du dix-neuvième sur le progrès, et à l'aide de la théorie de Benjamin sur la conscience historique, nous démontrons que l'esthétique et le "pétrarquisme" de ces sonnets, aussi bien que leurs aspects rhétoriques et thématiques, ont une résonance critique significative.

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CHAPTER 1: BAUDELAIRE AND THE FRENCH SONNET

1. A Glance at the French Sonnet Tradition

The sonnet has twice been a focal point of French poetry and poetics: at other times, it has been associated with minor verse and usually minor poets. The original period of the sonnet's "high-literary" ascendancy began in mid-sixteenth century when a series of poets created an idiom that would remain intact for over one hundred years. The form inevitably lost its charm, and after the mid-seventeenth century, with few exceptions, the sonnet was no longer a viable vehicle for profound lyrical expression. This eclipse persisted through the Baroque and Classical periods, and into the early years of French Romanticism. From 1829 to the final decades of the last century the sonnet was once again at the centre of highbrow poetic attention. This second great period of sonnet writing in France began with an initial phase of uncertain reaffirmation and ended in an abrupt decline: the second flowering was thus much shorter than the first. Baudelaire's sonnets, appearing mid-way through this revival, represent a pivotal stage in the nineteenth-century return to, and transformation of, the French sonnet tradition. As Jasinski noted in his Histoire du Sonnet en France, 1857, the year of the first edition of the Fleurs du Mal, "fut d'une importance capitale" in the history of the French sonnet (207).

The sonnet's original prominence in France is usually attributed to the group of poets known as La Pléiade. But this group of second generation sonneteers actually consolidated and extended the accomplishments of a series of poets writing in Lyon, a city with close Italian connections. Labé, Saint Gelais, Pelletier, Philieul, working through the 1530's and 1540's, introduced the sonnet form into France, and established a thematic repertoire for it. The most important feature of the form's acclimatization was its association with the work of Petrarch. Maurice Scève introduced Petrarchism to France in 1544 by publishing his very Petrarchan collection Délie, which consisted, however, not of sonnets, but of dizains. The introduction of Petrarchism, signaled by Scève's imitations, and by the translation in 1548 of 196 of Petrarch's sonnets, represents a watershed in French letters. The subsequent adoption of both the sonnet and Petrarchan conventions, first by du Bellay

and then by Ronsard, the two greatest poets of La Pléiade, established the sonnet so quickly and so firmly at the Parisian epicentre of French poetry that the previous "vingt années de tâtonnements, d'avortements ou de résultats médiocres restèrent définitivement dans l'ombre" (Jasinski 58). Long after the initiatives in Lyon, Sainte-Beuve, a historian of sixteenth-century French literature and a signal figure in the Romantic revival of the sonnet, would note erroneously in a famous sonnet on the sonnet, "Du Bellay le premier l'apporta de Florence" (Delorme 77).

But if du Bellay was the first important sonneteer, it was Ronsard who had the greater influence on posterity. Ronsard, with his successful development of the sonnet in his Cassandre and his Marie, "modela ce genre nouveau pour plus d'un siècle (...). Le poème amoureux en sonnets demeura parmi nos Français tel qu'il le conçut." (Jasinski 69) These collections were above all Petrarchan in inspiration, and this Italian heritage would be kept alive in France well into the seventeenth century. This is not to say that Petrarchism went unchallenged--the period's anti-Petrarchan poems are notorious--or that other horizons were not opened to sonneteers. To the contrary, just as du Bellay had been the first Frenchman to write sonnets with consistent success, so his Regrets of 1558 "frayèrent des voies imprévues au poème en sonnets" (Jasinski 83). Soon whole collections would be devoted to satirical, political, moral, and religious themes. Along with the Petrarchan and the various other thematic employments devised by poets, the sonnet also gained currency in the fashionable world. Polite or risqué gallantry, occasional verses of all sorts, epitaphs, elegies, dedications, railery, riddles, anagrams, the sonnet could accomodate them all. So that much later when Baudelaire wrote that "[t]out va bien au Sonnet, la bouffonerie, la galanterie, la passion, la rêverie, la méditation philosophique" (Corr. 3: 39), and when he put the sonnet to a wide variety of uses, he was being perfectly consistent with the practice of the earliest French sonneteers. In its versatility and popularity, its currency among both professionals and amateurs, the sonnet attained a rare status in the Renaissance. Jasinski noted that it had ranked among "des connaissances indispensables à l'homme du monde, en même temps que la danse, l'escrime et l'art de se bien vêtir" (114).

The sonnet's popularity lasted until 1660. Thereafter, though the

sonnet would never completely disappear, among more self-conscious poets its appeal waned drastically. Its unpopularity did not, though, diminish its literary status. To the contrary, Boileau devoted a full twenty lines of L'Art poétique to describing the sonnet's rigours, pointing out both that "un sonnet sans défauts vaut seul un long poème," and that "cet Phénix est encore à trouver" (67), thereby confirming the degree to which the very idea of the sonnet had secured a place in the Classical canon. Curiously enough, Boileau also helped demolish the once formidable reputation of Ronsard, the greatest and most influential of all French sonneteers: "Ronsard (...) Réglant tout, brouilla tout (...) / Ce Poëte orgueilleux trébuché de si haut" (42).

The respect the sonnet commanded is evident in the quarrel over Isaac Benserade's "Job" and Vincent Voiture's "Uranie" that took place in December 1649. These sonnets were the focus of a famous debate about their separate merits and the nature of the sonnet itself. "Deux sonnet partagent la ville,/ Deux sonnet partagent la cour/ Et semblent vouloir à leur tour/ Rallumer la guerre civile", Corneille would spoof. But, the authority the sonnet had acquired is noteworthy. Jasinski writes:

> deux sonnets avaient mis en mouvement, et un mouvement très excité, la cour, la province lettrée, l'Académie française et l'Université de Caen. Des poètes, des critiques, des princes et princesses du sang avaient écrit, cabalé et agi pour l'un ou pour l'autre, et personne n'avait cru le sujet indigne de ces efforts et de ces débats (...). [T]ous étaient un hommage indirect à la forme même du sonnet. (143)

After a century of energetic dissemination, the form had become a distinguished fixture in the prosodic encyclopedia of French poetry, and what is more, an important focus of literary debate. Nonetheless, as we saw with Boileau, "le sonnet devient un tour de force d'une perfection irréalisable, digne d'un respect infini. Aussi le plus prudent est de s'en abstenir, et on s'en abstiendra" (Jasinski 147). In spite of the lip-service of the poetic manuals and prosodic treatises, after 1630 "[le sonnet] n'existe plus à proprement parler" (Jasinski 159). Still, the era's extremely high theoretical regard for the sonnet persisted long after the sonnet itself had ceased to play anything but an incidental role in French letters.

Such then were the history and status of the sonnet as the nineteenth-century received it: an original period of pre-eminence and wide dissemination when several more or less complex idioms, most importantly that of Ronsard's Petrarchism, became associated with the sonnet; a universally acknowledged canonization of the sonnet as one of the supreme forms of French poetry, and a concomitant sanctioning of the sonnet's conventions as a topic worthy of vital aesthetic debate; and finally a prolonged period of neglect in Paris and confinement to unfashionable provincial circles. So when Sainte-Beuve wrote, "moi, je veux rajeunir le doux sonnet en France" (Delorme 77), his task was to show that the highly conventional out-of-date sonnet was suitable to nineteenth-century diction and ambitions. Sainte-Beuve's situation can be compared to that of his English contemporaries, whose sonnets he emulated. In England, the sonnet had never suffered a decline as complete as it had in France; poets like Milton had kept the sonnet in the limelight well after the original Renaissance and Petrarchan vogue had faded away. Even in eighteenth-century England, the form was never out of favour for long. Thus, though Sainte-Beuve paraphrased Wordsworth's "Scorn not the sonnet" ("Ne ris point des sonnets, ô Critique moqueur"), the re-introduction of the sonnet in France involved something quite different than it did in England. As D.H.T. Scott observes, "the French Romantics (...) had a far broader gap of years to bridge before they could re-establish contact with their own sonnet tradition" (18). An important factor in the revival in France, then, was the decidedly archaic associations that the sonnet evoked.

Before considering Baudelaire's interest in the sonnet, and the ends to which he employed it, it is worth noting that, much like Ronsard during the Renaissance, Baudelaire became a prime reference in the period of intensive sonnet writing which began as his own career was ending. Mallarmé, Verlaine, Rimbaud, and scores of others, drew upon the work of Baudelaire to create an extremely significant corpus of sonnets. That "[the sonnet's] very popularity (...) made any unified trend of development an impossibility" (D.H.T. Scott 88), that its post-Baudelairian vogue would peter out in the late 1880's, that its integrity would be challenged by its most accomplished practitioners even before its definitive decline (cf. Rimbaud's prose poem entitled "Sonnet"), is

not surprising, but rather indicative of fundamental changes in the literary institution since the Renaissance. Whereas Petrarchism could serve as a "training in poetic diction" (Forster 61) for over a century after Ronsard, in the modern context where literary developments succeed one another at a rate dictated as much by market forces as by the dynamics of literary innovation and aesthetic vision, the fact that the Baudelairian sonnet could exercise a direct influence on poets for even twenty years is remarkable. If Baudelaire is as seminal a figure in French and modern poetry as literary historians claim, this is due in no small part to the audience his sonnets found among the poets who were his immediate heirs. Scott concludes his study of the nineteenth-century French sonnet by suggesting that "it is doubtful whether the revolution that converted the language of French poetry after the 1830's and 40's from the discursive and narrative verse of the Romantics into the imaged and concentrated medium of the Symbolists could have been achieved without the sonnet." (89-90) Such are the considerations to which a study of the influence of Baudelaire's sonnets on the development of French poetry would soon lead. Our own problem will be to see how Baudelaire's sonnets figured first in the contemporary field of literary trends, and second, in their original social discursive context.

2.1 Critical Reactions to Baudelaire's "Irregular" Sonnets

One way to assess Baudelaire's handling of the sonnet is to look at the critical reaction they provoked. This is especially informative since we find here a degree of consensus and continuity unusual in Baudelaire criticism. From the very beginning a frequent concern among those who have written on Baudelaire's sonnets has been to show that they are, in fact, not sonnets at all.

In his introduction to the first posthumous edition of the Fleurs du Mal in 1868, Théophile Gautier drew attention to the collection's "sonnets libertins". These poems "ont la disposition apparente et comme le dessein extérieur du sonnet, bien que [Baudelaire] n'ait écrit 'sonnet' en tête d'aucune d'elles", a reticence, Gautier surmised, arising "sans doute d'un scruple littéraire et d'un cas de conscience prosodique" (Baudelaire 143). Nor does Gautier miss the opportunity to make it clear that he finds "sonnets libertins (...) particulièrement désa-

gréables" (Baudelaire 144). His criticisms of Baudelaire's sonnets sound the only dissonant note in Gautier's praise for both Baudelaire's poetry and the dead Baudelaire himself. Another contemporary shared Gautier's dogmatism: "[l]es sonnets de Baudelaire sont de beaux poèmes (...) mais ce ne sont pas de sonnets" (Hérédia, cited in Potez: 596). And in his influential study of Baudelaire's poetic technique, Cassagne reinterated Gautier's disapprobation when he observed, "la plus grande irrégularité, une fantaisie presque incohérente règnent parmi les sonnets de Baudelaire" (90-91). He attributed this chaos in part to Baudelaire's wilful independence and characteristic desire to be provocative, but essentially to his mediocrity as a rhymer: "Baudelaire, médiocre rimeur, ne l'oublions pas, s'est trouvé porté naturellement, afin de diminuer d'autant ce qui constituait pour lui la difficulté du poèm, à augmenter le nombre des rimes" (92).

The harshness of these critics towards Baudelaire's sonnets derived from their narrow conception of what exactly a sonnet could be. Their position had been defined by Boileau, and they would have concurred with him that "[s]ur tout de ce Poème il [Apollon] bannit la licence" (67). They judged the sonnet above all according to the criteria of rhyme, and sanctioned few variations on the official French rhyme schemes of ABBA ABBA CCD EED or EDE. From such a point of view, they are right to protest against Baudelaire's extreme irregularity, for it has been calculated that his sonnets exhibit no less than forty-one different rhyme schemes (Schofer 61). In contrast, among the sonnets of Sainte-Beuve, Gautier, Musset, Barbier and Nerval only ten, six, fourteen, ten and eight respectively can be distinguished. As a consequence of this Baudelaire's sonnets have been classified not only as "sonnets libertins" and "sonnets irréguliers," but as "faux sonnets" (Morier 392) and even as mere "quatorzains" (Pommier 265).

It is true that poems such as "Bien Loin d'Ici" or "L'Avertisseur," with rhyme schemes respectively as AAA BBB ACAA CACC and ABBA CCD EED FGGF, seem to be simply the most extreme cases of an arbitrary use of the sonnet's standard conventions. In 1961 Henri Morier carried the condemnation of the sonnets far beyond what one might have anticipated. Comparing Baudelaire's sonneteering unfavourably to that of "l'hirsute, le sauvage Verhaeren" and of Verlaine who addressed "tous les mâles,"

he remarked that "il existe chez [Baudelaire] le désir de faire parler de soi, une sorte de coquetterie d'artiste, assez féminine. Quelque préciosité, quelque manièrisme limitent le caractère mâle de ce grand poète." (393) Morier concluded that "[l]e sonnet ainsi traité (ou maltraité) semble être un signe de la schizophrénie." To be sure, few critics have shared Morier's preoccupations with manliness or his quick identifications of formal with psychological phenomena. Nor have all been such rigid poeticians as Gautier: Banville even went so far as to contend that an irregular sonnet could still be a good poem (Traité 202). However, among French commentators, disapproval of Baudelaire's irregularities has been the rule, not the exception.

2.2 An Initial Defense

Baudelaire himself provided some muted protestations in defense of his sonnets. In his study of Gautier published in 1859, Baudelaire recalled their first interview when he had presented Gautier with an anthology of his circle's verse. Flipping through the volume, Gautier is said to have remarked "que les poètes en question se permettaient trop souvent des sonnets libertins." Baudelaire then proceeds to define these as "non orthodoxes et s'affranchissant volontiers de la règle de la quadruple rime" (CE 664-65). Such a definition implies that rather than being a sign of pure arbitrariness or of an inability to rhyme, there might indeed be some valid motivation or happy reason for adopting a unorthodox attitude and freely altering a sonnet's rhyme scheme.

We noted that after Boileau a peculiar and controversial 'untouchability' had been associated with the sonnet, and the comments of writers from Gautier to Morier attest to the persistence of this association. Baudelaire could not but have been aware of the censure his sonnets would elicit from the representatives of the Classical tradition. Nor can we dismiss what by today's standards seems merely a bothersome pedanticism, for its authority must have had an influence on the sonnets of someone as sensitive to literary controversy as was Baudelaire; even if this influence was largely negative, appearing solely as a literary norm to be played with and subverted. Walter Mönch's comment that "la libération du sonnet se fit avec Baudelaire" ("Valéry" 165) seems hyperbolic, only if we ignore the confusion between

correctness and perfection (Killick "Gautier" 25), between a sonnet that conformed to a strict formal scheme and a successful poem, that dominated the literary scene in which Baudelaire's sonnets appeared. Baudelaire's violations of the canonical rules of rhyme constituted a real challenge to an established aesthetic norm, and a large part of the original poetic force of his sonnets derived from the way they flaunted their transgressions of the normative poetics of Classicism. However, if Baudelaire freed the sonnet from the pedantic confusion of correctness and perfection, we should not therefore cease to wonder about his use of sonnet conventions or about whether, and why, his sonnets succeed as poetry. Baudelaire's insouciant abandonment of the rule of quadruple rhyme must be shown to have been part of a new aesthetics of the sonnet.

In spite of himself, Gautier offers some insight into the motivation of Baudelaire's unorthodox sonnets. "Pourquoi," he asked, "si l'on veut être libre et arranger les rimes à sa guise, aller choisir une forme rigoureuse qui n'admet aucun écart, aucun caprice? L'irrégulier dans le régulier, la manque de correspondance dans la symétrie, quoi de plus illogique et de plus contrariant?" (144) Gautier's concerns were not foreign to Baudelaire for whom "la régularité et (...) la symétrie (...) sont un des besoins primordiaux de l'esprit, au même degré que la complication et l'harmonie" (Oeuvres 1254). Unlike Gautier, though, Baudelaire also recognized that in aesthetic experience regularity and symmetry alone were not sufficient: "Ce qui n'est pas légèrement difforme a l'air insensible; - d'ou il suit que l'irrégularité, c'est-à-dire l'inattendu, la surprise, l'étonnement sont une partie essentielle et caractèristique de la beauté" (Oeuvres 1254). The notion of the unexpected element in beauty means that for Baudelaire prosodic prescriptions could never be as binding as Gautier would have them. Rather, true prosody must embrace regularity and irregularity, predictability and unpredictability: "le rythme et la rime répondent dans l'homme aux immortels besoins de monotonie, de symétrie et de surprise" (Fleurs, ed. Adam: 248). This is why Baudelaire commended Poe's efforts to increase "le plaisir de la rime en y ajoutant cet élément inattendu, l'étrangeté, qui est comme le condiment indispensable de toute beauté" (CE 668). Such ideas lay behind Baudelaire's methodical deformations of sonnet conventions. And their resistance to these deformations is the

source of the insensitivity of so many French critics to Baudelaire's intentions and accomplishments in his sonnets.

Baudelaire's remarks about poetic technique are relatively rare, perhaps because he regarded such discussions as superfluous. Why explain, he wrote, "comment j'ai fait ce livre, quels ont été mon but et mes moyens, mon dessein et ma méthode" (Fleurs, ed. Adam: 251) when "ceux qui savent me devinent, et pour ceux qui ne peuvent ou veulent pas comprendre, j'amoncellerais sans fruit les explications" (248). Luckily, though, Baudelaire was willing to raise these matters privately, and in a letter to Armand Fraise left us some suggestive remarks about the sonnet. The letter reads:

> Quel est donc l'imbécile qui traite si légèrement le Sonnet et n'en voit pas la beauté pythagorique? Parce que la forme est contraignante, l'idée jaillit plus intense. Tout va bien au Sonnet, la bouffonerie, la galanterie, la passion, la rêverie, la méditation philosophique. Il y a là la beauté du métal et du minéral bien travaillés. Avez-vous observé qu'un morceau de ciel, aperçu par un soupirail, ou entre deux cheminées, deux rochers, ou par une arcade, etc... donnait une idée plus profonde de l'infini qu'un grand panorama vu du haut d'une montagne? Quant aux longs poèmes nous savons ce qu'il faut en penser; c'est la ressource de ceux qui sont incapables d'en faire de courts. Tout ce qui dépasse la longueur de l'attention que l'être humain peut préter à la forme poétique n'est pas un poème. (Corr. 3: 39).

The confidence Baudelaire expressed in the sonnet's versatility is born out by the example of earlier sonneteers and by his own work. According to Baudelaire, what sustains this versatility are not so much the details of the sonnet's formal perfection as its facilitation of the appearance of "l'idée." If we are to appreciate Baudelaire's conception of the sonnet, form and content must both be taken into account. With Baudelaire, Mönch contends, "[wird] jedes Sonett (...) gleichsam eine Monade" (Sonett 205): each sonnet's formal properties are individual and stand in intimate relation to the poem's significance. This re-evaluation of the sonnet's conventions does not imply that they became secondary and wholly subordinate to content. It is still its special

density of convention which for Baudelaire gave the sonnet its unique capacity to disclose a glimpse of infinity.

Baudelaire's insistence on the form's Pythagorean rigour and peculiarly demanding plasticity proves that he too felt deeply about the sonnet's purely formal features. But where Gautier in accordance with Classical concerns restricted attention to rhyme schemes, Baudelaire looked at formal problems differently. In a letter to Joséphin Soulary, Baudelaire praised Soulary's sonnets as follows: "Vous savez imiter les élans de l'âme, la musique de la méditation; vous aimez l'ordre; vous dramatisez le sonnet et vous lui donnez un dénouement" (Corr. 3: 45). A final reference confirms Baudelaire's freedom from the common confusion of correctness and perfection, from the notion that the sonnet's rhyme schemes are either an end in themselves or a sufficient condition for an excellent sonnet. A sonnet, contends Baudelaire, "a besoin d'un plan, et la construction (...) est la plus importante garantie de la vie mystérieuse des oeuvres de l'esprit" (CE 633). His concerns for decorum and composition are expressed in the letter to Fraisse as well: "je suis de ceux (et nous sommes bien rares) qui croient que toute composition littéraire, même critique, doit être faite et manoeuvré en vue d'un dénouement. Tout, même un Sonnet; jugez de labeur." (39) The formal matters at issue here clearly are of a different nature than those that concerned writers like Gautier.

We can conclude both from his own remarks about the sonnet, and from the condemnation his sonnets provoked, that Baudelaire made a definite break with the tradition that had made of the sonnet's conventions, particularly its rhyme schemes, something inviolable and sancrosanct. Within the tradition of French poetry and within a Classical horizon of expectation (to adopt Hans Robert Jauss's terms), his sonnets had a pronounced transgressive force. This was due in part, no doubt, to a characteristic desire to exploit whatever possibilities of poetic shock presented themselves. But the use Baudelaire made of sonnet conventions was guided by a number of other aesthetic principles as well. First, it should be remarked that in breaking with the Classical sonnet tradition, Baudelaire was not opening up new horizons for the genre so much as restoring an earlier flexibility. For we have seen that the sonnet's canonization and the imposition of absolute regularity was

in the history of the form a relatively late development. The dozens of variations on the strict rhyme scheme of the traditional sonnet were part of a comprehensive aesthetic practice. On the one hand, there is his thesis about the tension between regularity and irregularity, symmetry and asymmetry, about the essential part that surprise plays in the production of beauty. Beyond this, Baudelaire made the notion of content a basic consideration of his sonnet theory; something that none of his detractors seems to have done. Baudelaire praised the sonnet first and foremost because of its expressiveness: its rigour did justice to ideas and its brevity suited the poetics of the human mind. Far from substituting a gratuitous freedom from constraints for a too rigid pedanticism, Baudelaire's real innovation was to have perceived the need and possibility of a meaningful poetics of the sonnet based on the union of thematic and formal properties.

So far I have been considering Baudelaire's sonnets from a diachronic perspective, that is, from the point of view of their inscription within a poetic tradition and of their relation to criteria established by this tradition. This has allowed us to identify some original features of Baudelaire's sonnets and led us to conclude that they challenged the authority of certain canonic norms. There is, however, another perspective within which we must learn to situate and read Baudelaire's sonnets. This is the synchronic horizon of poetry and poetic discourse of mid-nineteenth century France.

CHAPTER 2: THE SITUATION OF BAUDELAIRE'S SONNETS

1. A Romantic Sonneteer

> Le sonnet, monsieur, est une des oeuvres les plus difficiles de la poésie. Ce petit poème a été généralement abandonné. Personne en France n'a pu rivalser Pétrarque, dont la langue, infiniment plus souple que la nôtre, admet des jeux de pensée repoussées par notre positivisme (pardonnez-moi ce mot). Il m'a donc paru original de débuter par un recueil de sonnets. Victor Hugo a pris l'ode, Lamartine le discours en vers par ses Méditations, Béranger la chanson, Casimir de Lavigne la tragédie. (Balzac, Les Illusions perdues, 1839)

To understand what was going on when Baudelaire became interested in the sonnet in the mid-nineteenth century, one must examine the intellectual and artistic milieu from which he emerged. Baudelaire's critical writings make it clear that the Romantic movement was the essential reference in his understanding of the possibilities open to him as a poet. As regards the sonnet, its exceedingly minor role in the work of the great Romantics had much to do with Baudelaire's attraction to it. Of the early Romantics, Sainte-Beuve alone found in the sonnet an appropriate vehicle for his creative efforts, single-handedly initiating a revival of sonneteering in France. But, though Sainte-Beuve had published fourteen sonnets as early as 1829, interest in the form remained spotty. Gautier, Musset and Barbier all included the odd sonnet in their various collections of the 1830s, and in the 1840s Banville joined the ranks of these occasional sonneteers. Nonetheless, Jasinski wrote that "le procès n'était pas gagné (...) en 1840 un 'Recueil des poésies contemporaines' (...) n'en admettait qu'un [sonnet] de Sainte-Beuve" (203). Moreover, though between 1829 and 1850 its "progrès eussent été grands, [le sonnet] avait encore contre lui des méfiances et des dédains; un lettré homme du goût (...) pouvait même en 1853 prétendre 'qu'il était peu en faveur, malgré de nombreuses tentatives de restauration'" (Jasinski 206). So from about the time that Baudelaire began to mature as a poet through to the publication of the Fleurs du Mal in 1857, the sonnet remained a marginal verse form, and one which would have been adopted

with the self-consciousness of the innovator.

"Une création neuve", argues Gérard Genette, "n'est ordinairement que la rencontre fortuite d'une case vide (s'il en reste) dans le tableau des formes (...). Ce qui paraît nouveau le plus souvent n'est qu'un retour à une forme délaissé depuis longtemps (...), une rotation semblable à celle de la Mode." (Figures 263) It is as a relatively blank formal space that the sonnet must have appeared to those poets from Sainte-Beuve to Baudelaire who first began to revive the form. One need not, however, trivialize the novelty of the sonnet by associating it with mere fashion. Donald Wesling reasesses the significance of Genette's blank space and of formal innovation from the point of view of "form as transgression" (112-18), insisting that form is a means not simply of conspicuous self-differentiation, but also of challenging the authority of other forms and poets.

In chapter 1, I investigated the transgressive character of Baudelaire's sonnets with respect to Classical poetic prescriptions, but clearly the sonnet provided an opportunity for an equally radical transgression of a second set of poetic norms. If Baudelaire's sonnets violated the strictures of Classicism and the canon, their relationship to the poetics of the great reigning Romantics is just as significant and problematic. Together the Romantic triumvirate of Lamartine, Vigny, and Hugo wrote only a half dozen sonnets, four of which appeared after Baudelaire's death. Jasinski reviewed the reasons why to them "le sonnet devait (...) paraître méprisable," concluding that the highly conventional and precious nature of the sonnet was inimical to their common "prédilection pour les grands morceaux simples de plans et de lignes" (193). Lamartine's, Vigny's and Hugo's long discursive poems--"epic" was a favourite epithet--stood in diametrical opposition to the slightness of the sonnet.

The issue of length is not an incidental one. It has often been noted that Baudelaire is essentially a poet "de courte haleine," and he would have defended this aspect of his poetry by refering to the argument of Poe's Poetic Principle, and by granting what is arguably only an individual preference the status of an aesthetic principle. "Quant aux longs poèmes, nous savons ce qu'il faut en penser; c'est la ressource de ceux qui sont incapables d'en faire de courts. Tout ce qui

dépasse la longuer de l'attention que l'être humain peut prêter à la forme poêtique n'est pas un poème" (Corr. 3: 39), Baudelaire wrote to Fraisse, essentially advocating a rejection of Romantic poetic practice. And whatever the ultimate value of these speculations, they are clearly a reflection of Baudelaire's situation as a poet and an important aspect of his struggle to effect a rupture within the discursive configuration of French Romanticism.

Critics have always been sensitive to the dilemmas imposed on Baudelaire by his position within a synchronic topology of poetic discourse. When Baudelaire solicited Sainte-Beuve's assistance in his fight against the suppression of the Fleurs du Mal, the latter wrote:

> Tout était pris dans le domaine de la poésie.
>
> Lamartine avait pris les cieux. Victor Hugo avait pris la terre et plus que la terre. Laprade avait pris les fôrets. Musset avait pris la passion et l'orgie éblouissante. D'autres avaient pris le foyer, la vie rurale, etc.
>
> ...Que restait-il? Ce que Baudelaire a pris. Il y a été comme forcé. (cited in Baudelaire, Oeuvres, ed. Ruff: 724)

In the "Projets de Préface" for the Fleurs du Mal, Baudelaire concurred with Sainte-Beuve's evaluation of his situation, writing that "des poètes illustres s'étaient partagé depuis longtemps les provinces les plus fleuries du domaine poétique. Il m'a paru plaisant, et d'autant plus agréable que le tâche était plus difficile, d'extraire la beauté du Mal" (Fleurs, ed. Adam; 127). Valéry pursued this line of reasoning in his celebrated "Situation de Baudelaire." There Valéry argued that given the situation of "l'empire des Lettres", Baudelaire's "existence littéraire (...) est nécessairement suspendue à la négation: (...) En somme, il est amené, il est contraint (...) à s'opposer de plus en plus nettement au système que l'on appelle le romantisme." (599) For his part, Benjamin understood Baudelaire's negativity in terms of the need to carve out a niche in a highly competitive literary marketplace. From such a perspective the novelty associated with the sonnet would appear as a key element in a sophisticated (though initially not very successful) marketing strategy. Whether this is a just evaluation of Baudelaire's motives, the citation from Les Illusions perdues (published in 1839, when Baudelaire was eighteen years old) that introduces this

chapter, confirms with the uncanniness of prophecy the inevitability which Valéry discerned in Baudelaire's creative decisions: "Victor Hugo a pris l'ode, Lamartine le discours en vers (...);" "il m'a donc paru original de débuter par un recueil de sonnets." In 1839 Balzac perceived that the scene was set for someone to take up the sonnet; and it seems Baudelaire, the young Romantic poet who had to contend with the likes of Lamartine and Hugo, seized the opportunity fortune offered him.

Baudelaire's relation to the Romantics was problematic both because of his need to distinguish himself as original within a field that they had already staked out, and because of real aesthetic differences with them. But Baudelaire did not fundamentally reject Romanticism; indeed, he identified with Romanticism through his whole career. In the late and sardonic sonnet "Le Coucher du soleil romantique," Baudelaire presented himself as a late-comer hoping to "attraper au moins un oblique rayon" of the setting sun of Romanticism, but being left instead to tread upon "des crapauds imprévu et de froids limaçons" of the approaching post-Romantic night. "Qu'est-ce que le Romantisme?" he had asked in the Salon de 1846; and in his answer one easily recognizes affinities with his own aesthetic program: "pour moi, le romantisme est l'expression la plus récente, la plus actuelle du beau (...). Le romantisme ne consistera pas dans une exécution parfaite, mais dans une conception analogue à la morale du siècle. Qui dit romantisme dit art moderne. C'est-à-dire intimité, spiritualité, couleur, aspiration vers l'infini." (CE 103) Romanticism here has a double character. It is presented both as simply contemporary; and as reflecting a specifically Baudelairean aesthetic. What is important for us is that Baudelaire the sonneteer located himself, however problematically, both early and late within a Romantic context.

2.1 A Classical Romantic

This does not mean that the critics who have argued that in Baudelaire's poetry and aesthetics there is some break with Romanticism, even a return to Classicism, have been entirely without justification. Gérald Antoine's complaint remains pertinent:

> sur les trésors de hardiesse et de modernité que recèlent Les Fleurs du Mal nous possédons déjà une littérature non certes

> exhaustive, mais copieuse. Sur leur fond de laborieuse et classique sagesse, et sur l' amalgame de ces ingrédients hétérogènes la critique est démeurée presque silencieuse - comme retenue par une certaine gêne et aussi par quelque incompréhension. (108)

So Zola thought in 1878, when he wrote of Baudelaire, "C'est toujours du romantisme", even though "c'était au fond, un esprit classique, de travail très laborieux, ravagé par un monomanie de purisme" (172). With respect to Baudelaire's preferred verse form, Ténint enphasized its Classical identity: "Le sonnet (...) a dû lutter péniblement pour renaître (...), car, outre son exiguité, on savait que quelques classiques l'avaient encore cultivé." (Ténint 23). The Classicist aspects of Baudelaire's poetry need to be understood, for they were one of his principal means of differentiating himself from other Romantics and a large part of his technical means as a poet.

Valéry, in his review of those qualities in Baudelaire which are especially associated with Classicism--allusions, imagery, phrasing, the foregrounding of convention, a concern for order, composition, artifice, and form--generalised his analysis of the Romantic and Classical aspects of Baudelaire's work as follows:

> Baudelaire, quoique romantique d'origine, et même romantique par ses goûts, peut quelquefois faire figure d'un <u>classique</u>. Il y a une infinité de manières de définir (...) le classique. Nous adopterons aujourd'hui celle-ci: <u>classique est l'écrivain qui porte un critique en soi-même, et qui l'associe intimement à ses travaux (...). Tout classique suppose un romantisme antérieur (...). L'essence du classicisme est de venir après</u>. (604)

This definition of the classical is consistent with a series of arguments made by Paul de Man in a much different context. An interrogation of the critical and historical paradigms of certain schools of literary theory led de Man to postulate a necessary split in literature and literary consciousness. Pointing out that "the spontaneity of being modern conflicts with the claim to think and write about modernity" (<u>Blindness</u> 142), de Man went on to argue that "an examination of the opposition of history and modernity soon [forces one] to paradoxical formulations, such as defining the modernity of a literary period as the

manner in which it discovers the impossibility of being modern" (Blindness 144). This discovery deprives the present of its ostensible immediacy as its repressed historicity returns and imposes itself. And this is a dilemma for a writer, because he can neither relinquish his modernity nor deny his dependence on predecessors (Blindness 162). Even those who, like Rimbaud, will want to be absolutely modern will be unable to escape their origins in, or their re-absorption into, culture and history. Such a dilemma initiated the process by which the Romantic Baudelaire tended to become Baudelaire the Classic: for Baudelaire's historical situation predisposed him to experience the temporality of literature, that is, the split in literary consciousness between being modern and writing about modernity, between modernity and history, in terms of the antinomies of Classicism and Romanticism.

It should not be forgotten that the epoch's official literary culture was still a Classical one. The Classicism inherited from the previous century was maintained by the schools and the Academy, and retained an effective hegemonic status within French culture. All through the period, "les classiques [étaient] enseignés, édités, réédités, annotés, commentés" (Pichois Romantisme 73), and remained a central and omnipresent cultural reference. It is misleading to think of the Romantic movement without an awareness of this official Classical culture, in contradistinction to which the Romantics defined themselves. Both Classical and Romantic elements are manifest in Baudelaire's work, and Baudelaire's understanding of their relationship is complex. But that his attitude towards official Classicism was antagonistic cannnot be doubted. In this respect, there is no more revealing text than his "Exposition Universelle de 1855," a short work less frequently commented on than some of Baudelaire's more ambitious or more eccentric essays. There, in the course of a few pages, he deployed almost all the familiar slurs--académique, scolaire, universitaire, systématique, pédantique--in a polemic against the authority of "les modernes professeurs-jurés d'esthétique" and the official Classicizing institutions of culture.

More often, Baudelaire fights a fight on two fronts, simultaneously challenging key tenets of Romanticism and Classicism in a context where literary culture itself was split into a Romantic avant-garde and a hegemonic Classicism. Baudelaire was well-versed in the debates between

the two rival aesthetic and ideological camps. In fact, he has long been considered as one of the premier French theoreticians of the sea-change from Classicism to Romanticism with which he was contemporary. Like other issues of importance to Baudelaire, the debate between Classicists and Romantics finds its way into the most diverse texts, since Baudelaire usually managed to relate whatever subject happened to be at hand to those larger issues which consistently preoccupied him. The clearest expression of Baudelaire's position regarding the Classical and Romantic alternatives is also found in the "Exposition universelle de 1855".

Aside from an introductory "Méthode de Critique," Baudelaire limits his discussion of the exhibition to two contemporary figures who stood at opposing poles in the controversy over Classical and Romantic ideals, Ingres and Delacroix:

> Depuis longtemps, l'opinion a fait un cercle autour d'[Ingres et Delacroix] comme autour de deux lutteurs. Sans donner notre acquiescement à cet amour commun et puéril de l'antithèse, il nous faut commencer par l'examen de ces deux maitres français, puisque autour d'eux, au-dessus d'eux, se sont groupées et échelonées presque toutes les individualités qui composent notre personnel artistique. (CE 230)

By restricting attention in the "Exposition Universelle de 1855" to Delacroix and Ingres, Baudelaire was trying to come to terms with the schism dividing contemporary art and aesthetic thought.

In other texts, Baudelaire displayed a certain indulgence toward, even affinity for, "le dur et pénétrant talent de M. Ingres d'autant plus agiles qu'il est plus à l'étroit" (CE 446); or sought to correct distortions arising from simplistic reductions of the artist's work: "c'est du reste une qualité qu'il [Delacroix] partage avec celui dont l'opinion publique a fait son antipode, M. Ingres" (CE 119). The debate about Ingres and Delacroix involved the essential criteria of colour and line themselves the focus of much artistic debate, and statements such as "on peut (...) être à la fois coloriste et dessinateur" (CE 110) are proof of Baudelaire's recognition that the impression conveyed by critical rhetoric of a rigid antithesis of colour and line or Delacroix and Ingres was indeed a false one. Obviously, Baudelaire could rise above superficial polarities and his own predilections to see the merits

in artists from whom he was temperamentally far removed. They show as well that in some respects Baudelaire felt the great contemporary controversy was prone to degenerating into facile polemics. Nonetheless, in the "Exposition universelle," Baudelaire not only opposed Delacroix to Ingres in accordance with received wisdom, but, arguing that Ingres' aesthetic led to an impasse, he openly declared himself to be of Delacroix's Romantic party. Here, more than anywhere else, Baudelaire revealed what he felt was at stake in the great debate, and the depth of his sympathy with Romanticism.

Ingres as the chief representative of artistic and aesthetic ideals which Baudelaire criticized is presented as an advocate of "quelque chose d'analogue à l'idéal antique" (CE 226). "Ses préoccupations dominantes sont le goût de l'antique et le respect de l'école" (CE 228), and consequently Ingres sacrificed his imagination in favour of tradition. Ingres' Classicism condemned him to "errer d'archaïsme en archaïsme" (CE 228), and inhibited him from manifesting the subjective energy and fatality characteristic of genius, resulting in a deplorable "absence totale de sentiment et de surnaturalisme" (CE 229). Delacroix, on the other hand, embodied all the qualities which Baudelaire championed and to which he aspired. Baudelaire always celebrated Delacroix's accomplishments in the most uneqivocal terms beginning in the Salon de 1846, and culminating in 1863 with the elegiac L'Oeuvre et la vie d'Eugène Delacroix. Furthermore, Delacroix is evoked at the climax of the enumeration of artists in Baudelaire's eulogy of the artistic vocation, "Les Phares": "Delacroix, lac de sang hanté des mauvais anges,/ Ombragé par un bois de sapins toujours vert,/ Où, sous un ciel chagrin, des fanfares étranges/ Passent, comme un soupir étouffé de Weber." What Baudelaire admired in Delacroix was Romanticism in painting. This was above all a matter of a superabundant subjective synthetic capacity reminiscent of Shakespeare, and of native spiritual grandeur. Delacroix's spiritual grandeur made him "le mieux doué pour exprimer la femme moderne" (CE 236), that is, to express a specifically modern beauty, and ensured that he do so not like Ingres by calculation and "la tricherie de moyens (...); mais par l'ensemble, par l'accord profond, complet, entre sa couleur, son sujet, son dessin" (CE 239).

No text better reveals Baudelaire's understanding of the Classical/

Romantic schism. He clearly preferred the imaginative daring and modernity of the Romantics and eschewed the Classical deference for tradition. An artist should not submit to the rules and ideals of tradition, as Baudelaire thought Ingres had done. Baudelaire, though, did not go on to argue that the modern artist should or could ignore tradition. To the contrary, he described even Delacroix as an amalgam of the various talents of Rembrandt, Rubens, Lebrun, Véronèse and others (CE 240). Artists, like the greatest modern artist of all, should appropriate the tradition for their own creative ends. Thus the definition of Romantic or modern art as "intimité, spiritualité, couleur, aspiration vers l'infini," concludes with the essentially classical provision "exprimée par tous les moyens que contiennent les arts" (CE 103). The balance identified with Delacroix in 1855 between colour, line, and subject, involved the same balance between Romantic and Classical concerns that Baudelaire had identified in 1846. And the ideal of such a balance informed Baudelaire's whole aesthetic orientation, in particular his approach to the sonnet, where the Classical preoccupation with line and rhyme is integrated into a Romantic concern for the colours of subjectivity. The return to Classicism evident in Baudelaire's work is accomplished within a Romantic poetic. I shall show in the next chapter that Baudelaire's adoption of the sonnet involved more than the subversion either of Classical or Romantic norms--more than a play of fashionable or gratuitous negativity; that it was part of a truly insightful and individual appropriation of the sonnet, its conventions, and its formal rigour.

2.2 The Sonnet in the "Fleurs du Mal"

The situation of Baudelaire within contemporary aesthetic thought and poetic discourse was such that the opposition of Classicism and Romanticism must be born in mind as we read Baudelaire's sonnets. From our own perspective we can see that the opposition of Delacroix's Romanticism and Ingres' Classicism functioned in the aesthetic discourse of the day as an early avatar of oppositions still current today. Delacroix and Ingres, colour and line, Romanticism and Classicism, all these antinomies conform to a paradigm defined by a persistent binary logic. There have been several variations of this binary paradigm. Following

the lead of Donald Wesling (11), some of the more important or influential of these variations are presented below as a series of isomorphic oppositions. In the case of oppositions drawn from Baudelaire, I have indicated the relevant texts, and for the others, I identify the author with whom they are particularly associated. Thus we have:

Romanticism	Classicism	"Exposition Universelle de 1855"
Delacroix	Ingres	
colour	line	
temperament	tradition	
intimacy/ spirituality/ colour	artistic means	"Salon de 1846"
novelty	repetition	
liberty	austerity	
imagination	craft	"Salon de 1859"
the poet	the critic	"Richard Wagner et Tannhaüser"
modernity	myth	
imagination	reason	"Prométhée délivré"
Romanticism	Classicism	Valéry
original	secondary	
modernity	history	de Man
being modern	writing about modernity	
individual talent	tradition	Eliot
organic form	mechanical form	Coleridge
form as proceeding	shape as superinduced	Coleridge
modernity	device	Wesling
sincerity	convention	

Wesling believes the task of poetics since the end of the eighteenth century has been to explain how and why the terms of each opposition remain in necessary rapport (11-12).

Many of the writers mentioned here have tried to reconcile the categories which concerned them by arguing that one of the two terms embraces the other. The same is true of Baudelaire. "Il est évident,"

he argued,

> que les rhétoriques et les prosodies ne sont pas des tyrannies inventées arbitrairement, mais une collection de règles réclamées par l'organisation même de l'être spirituel. Et jamais les prosodies et les rhétoriques n'ont empèché l'originalité de se produire distinctement. Le contraire, à savoir qu'elles ont aidé l'éclosion de l'originalité, serait infiniment plus vrai. (CE 328)

Here Baudelaire argued not the incompatibility, but the complementarity of originality and convention. This is reminiscent of the rapprochement of colour and line, Romanticism and Classicism, already noted; and, more generally, it can be read as one possible response to the divisions within literarture which are theorized by Valéry and de Man. It is a response which recognizes and internalizes the inevitability of the contradictions between the different components of literary consciousness.

Now, besides indicating a balanced approach to poetic controversies, Baudelaire's efforts to reconcile ostensible contraries is part of a tendency evident in both his critical and poetic writings. Attention has often been drawn to the importance in Baudelaire's work of the oxymoron and cognate conceptual and rhetorical structures of duality--antithesis, antinomy, contradiction, paradox, and so on. André Ughetto suggests that Baudelaire's endorsement of Sainte Beuve's quip that "Pour deviner l'âme d'un poète, ou de moins sa principale préoccupation, cherchons dans ses oeuvres quel est le mot ou quel sont les mots qui s'y représentent avec le plus de fréquence. Le mot traduira l'obsession" (CE 765), applies to an author's preferred rhetorical figures as well. He remarks that "si nous entreprenions pour notre étude stylistique, d'énumérer les antithèses baudelairiennes, nous serions peu ou prou obligés de relever la quasi-totalité du recueil" (49). By any standard Baudelaire was preoccupied with duality, or rather, bipolarity. For often the emphasis is laid on the overcoming of oppositions in oxymora, in a coincidentia oppositorum or dynamic tension, in a synthetic vision of a bipolar, rather than a dual, reality: "A la vision polarisée succède une phase où les contraires, sans se concilier véritablement, sont rapprochés comme à dessein d'exprimer quelque chose d'ineffable" (Cellier Parcours 7). Jules Lemaitre thought this union of contraries was

the essential rhetorical tendency in Baudelaire's work (30).[1]

The sonnet offered Baudelaire an opportunity to exercise this aptitude for the synthesis or engagement of opposites. Baudelaire's sonnets had a transgressive significance with respect to Romanticism, as critics from Sainte-Beuve to Benjamin and Valéry have held; however, as the critical reaction to the sonnets showed, it was no less incompatible with Classical poetic prescriptions. Still, according to the logic of our paradigm, the sonnet, being highly conventional, is properly classical. Yet Baudelaire's flagrant violations of canonic prescriptions to which Boileau, Gautier and others adhered, was provocatively unClassical. His approach was ultimately based on the desire to render its conventions meaningful, to imbue form with an intellectual or imaginative authenticity, and as such exhibits a Romantic poetics. Baudelaire's sonnets are at once Classical and Romantic. Rather, though, than a stable reconciliation of opposites, what Baudelaire accomplished with the sonnet was a paradoxical union of contraries.[2] "L'âme lyrique fait des enjambées vaste comme des synthèses" (CE 769), wrote Baudelaire. As Morier sensed, Baudelaire's sonnets do after all reveal a schizophrenic condition; but it is a literary schizophrenia--a function of Baudelaire's simultaneous assimilation and transgression of both Classical and Romantic ideals.

Valéry who found it curious that Baudelaire, "au milieu du romantisme, fait songer à quelque classique" (605), also thought Baudelaire's poetry was "exactement complémentaire" to that of Hugo. Valéry resembled Sainte-Beuve when he argued that Baudelaire "a recherché ce que Victor Hugo n'avait pas fait" (602). Baudelaire's attitude toward Hugo was not a simple one. We know that for Baudelaire Hugo was at once the greatest Romantic of all, and the most prone to the poetic excesses which Baudelaire scorned. Aside from Balzac, Hugo was for Baudelaire the only contemporary writer who even approached the stature of the irreproachable Delacroix: "C'est ici le lieu de rappeler que les grands maîtres, poètes ou peintres, Hugo ou Delacroix, sont toujours en avance de plusieurs années sur leurs timides admirateurs" (CE 431).

So it is out of admiration that, in those poems from the "Tableaux Parisiens" which Baudelaire dedicated to Hugo, he also emulated the latter's prosodic and thematic mannerisms. Nor are Baudelaire's imit-

ations of Hugo restricted to these poems. As Léon Cellier remarks, "[dès] que Baudelaire renonce à une forme condensée, il se rapproche de Hugo. Ce n'est pas du reste dans les pièces en alexandrins à rimes plates que ce rapprochement est le plus sensible, mais dans les grandes suites de quatrains." (Hugo 109) After the sonnet, the poem in quatrains is the most common form in the Fleurs du Mal. Indeed, the collection would be unrecognizable without "Au Lecteur", "Les Phares", "Une Charogne", "Spleen IV", "Le Vin des Chiffoniers", "Le Voyage", and the many other important poems written in four-line stanzas. All of these poems exhibit definite Hugolian and Romantic prosodic features--"le rejet," dislocation of the alexandrine, enjambement from line to line and stanza to stanza, and generally a disruption of Classical conventions. So that through the repeated juxtaposition of the longer Hugolian poem in quatrains with the highly conventional, short sonnet, Baudelaire was able to incorporate into his book the very antithesis which so exercised and divided poeticians of his day. The opposition is also implicitly inscribed in the juxtaposition of Hugo and the Parnassian Gautier, the poet to whom the collection is dedicated. With a little imagination, the sonnet's very structure, with its octave as a truncated series of quatrains and with its usually denser tercets as the mechanism of a more or less abrupt closure, can appear an emblem of the Fleurs du Mal's quatrain-sonnet, Romantic-Classical opposition.

At the very least, the sonnet's status as a locus of controversy in Baudelaire continues the tradition of making it a focus of debate that began in the seventeenth century with the form's canonization. But, whereas debates about the sonnet had usually been confined to questions about the status of its conventions, in the case of Baudelaire's sonnets, the controversies engaged are of a far broader scope and significance.

1. Emblematic of the meeting of opposites found throughout Baudelaire's worh is Samuel Kramer, Baudelaire's alter ego in the autobiographical Fanfarlo, who is both hermaphroditic and a marriage of the mystic North and the sensual South, "le produit contradictoire d'un blême Allemand et d'une brune Chilienne" (Fanfarlo 79).

2. There are many examples of such a union of contraries. For instance, Baudelaire used the eminently Classical technique of inversion--described in Ténint's Romantic Prosodie de l'école moderne, as "une mutilation de la phrase" (190) and "une faut très grave" (188), and categorically proscribed by Banville's "il n'en faut jamais" (Traité 64)--alongside the Romantic device which compensated for the abandonment of inversion, enjambement--"indispensable pour le mouvement du vers, la rapidité de l'action, la concision du style" (Ténint 198). This combination is evident in "Recueillement"'s conspicuous inversions (1.4, 1.5, 1.9, 1.11,) and enjambements (1.8-9, 1.9-10):

Sois sage, ô ma Douleur, et tiens-toi plus tranquille.
Tu réclamais le Soir; il descend; le voici:
Une atmosphère obscure enveloppe la ville,
Aux uns portant la paix, aux autres le souci.

Pendant que des mortels la multitude vile,
Sous le fouet du Plaisir, ce bourreau sans merci,
Va cueillir des Remords dans la fête servile,
Ma Douleur, donne-moi la main; viens par ici,

Loin d'eux. Vois se pencher les défuntes Années
Sur les balcons du ciel, en robes surannées;
Surgir du fond des eaux le Regret souriant;

Le Soleil moribond s'endormir sous une arche,
Et, comme un long linçeul traînant à l'Orient,
Entends, ma chère, entends la douce Nuit qui marche.

CHAPTER 3: A POETICS FOR THE SONNET

1 The Relations of Rhetoric

Valéry's definition of the classical was "classique est l'écrivain qui porte un critique en soi-même, et qui l'associe intimement à ses travaux (...). Tout classique suppose un romantisme antérieur (...). L'essence du classicisme est de venir après." (604) Rudimentary though it is, this definition identifies something basic in Baudelaire's work. And it neatly complements Paul de Man's investigations of the nature of certain rhetorical figures. In "The Rhetoric of Temporality," De Man investigated the intentionality of allegory and irony, two rhetorical figures particularly prominent in Baudelaire. De Man was interested in the "enigmatic link between allegory and irony which runs through the history of rhetoric" (Blindness 208), and Baudelaire stands out as a principal reference, so that de Man's investigation of allegory and irony has a special pertinence to Baudelaire's work. De Man's basic conclusion is that the link between allegory and irony, which "appears in history as a casual and apparently contingent fact in the form of a common concern of some writers with both modes" (Blindness 209), like Valéry's notion of the classical, is to be understood in terms of "their common discovery of a truly temporal predicament" (Blindness 222).

De Man contrasts allegory, as has been done since the late eighteenth century, to the concept of the symbol. But de Man rejects the Romantic valorization of symbol over allegory, as a result of which "the supremacy of the symbol, conceived as an expression of unity between the representative and the semantic functions of language, [became] a commonplace that underlies literary taste, literary criticism, and literary history" (Blindness 189). Instead he sets out to analyze the conceptual implications of the two rhetorical terms, concluding that "whereas the symbol postulates the possibility of an identity or identification, allegory designates primarily a distance in relation to its own origin, and, renouncing the nostalgia and the desire to coincide, it establishes its language in the void of this temporal difference" (Blindness 207). So conceived the temporality of allegory involves a necessary anteriority of meaning (Bermann 103). As de Man explains, the "relationship between signs necessarily contains a constitutive temporal element"

because "it remains necessary, if there is to be allegory, that the allegorical sign refer to another sign that precedes it" (207). De Man's approach to allegory is compatible with Valéry's definition of Classicism since both involve the temporal categories of anteriority and posteriority. Both describe aspects of the split in literature and/or literary consciousness encountered in Chapter 2; though what Valéry depicts as the intrusion of a critical classical consciousness, de Man understands in terms of a necessary allegorization of poetry (144).

In contrast to allegory, which explicitly refers to an anterior moment and sign, irony is first described as a synchronic structure (Blindness 226). De Man analyzes the structure of irony by paying close attention to Baudelaire's "De l'essence du rire." There Baudelaire writes of the reflective individual's cultivation of "la force de se dédoubler rapidement et d'assister comme spectateur désintéressé aux phénomènes de son moi" (CE 251). This doubling is a necessary condition for the comic, of which irony is a species. Because of irony's origins in a splitting of the self into observer and observed, irony belongs "dans la classe de tous les phénomènes artistiques qui dénotent dans l'être humain l'existence d'une dualité permanente, la puissance d'être à la fois soi et un autre" (CE 262).

De Man, adapting the language of "De l'essence du rire", describes the relation of the ironic and the empirical selves into which a human being divides as follows:

> The ironic, twofold self that the writer or philosopher constitutes by his language seems able to come into being only at the expense of his empirical self, falling (or rising) from a stage of mystified adjustment into the knowledge of his mystification. The ironic language splits the subject into an empirical self that exists in a state of inauthenticity and a self that exists only in the form of a language that asserts the knowledge of this inauthenticity. (Blindness 214)

This passage contains de Man's essential insight into irony's association with allegory, for it reveals irony's tendency to translate itself into a temporal structure, the before and after of mystification and self-knowledge. De Man's essay emphasizes, against those who see in the temporal structure of irony the promise of an escape from inauthen-

ticity, that the movement from inauthenticity to demystification by way of irony is never completed. Just as allegory implied a renouncement of unity, irony leads not to authenticity itself but only to an ironic awareness of inauthenticity. This is why in L'Irrémédiable" Baudelaire described "[l]a conscience dans le Mal" of the divided human condition as "[u]n phare ironique, infernal", and why the insatiability of irony is one of the themes of "L'Héautontimorouménos": "Ne suis-je pas un faux accord/ Dans la divine symphonie,/ Grâce à la vorace Ironie/ Qui me secoue et qui me mord?" Given its unsurpassable origins, the voraciousness of irony is inevitably insatiable. Ironic consciousness can guard against the fall back into mystification only "by reasserting the purely fictional nature of its own universe and by carefully maintaining the radical difference that separates fiction from the world of empirical reality" (217).

These last comments suggest that irony, through its capacity to underscore the fictional nature of responses to empirical reality, could serve as a corrective to allegory. The production of allegorical meaning will always involve privileging a prior allegorical sign, and irony will always tend to expose the fictional qualities of this earlier sign. This critical potential may be the key to the association of allegory and irony in the work of Baudelaire. For though as de Man argued a temporal relation is of the essence of both, the nature of this relation in the two figures is not the same. Allegory preserves and re-asserts the integrity of an earlier moment. Perhaps this is why in the poem "Allégorie" the figure of Allegory "rit à la Mort et nargue la Débauche" and their "jeux destructeurs"; and why even at the hour of death she appears insouciant and untouched by time: "Elle regardera la face de la Mort,/ Ainsi qu'un nouveau-né". In a sense allegory denies time by insisting on the persistence of an earlier moment or the permanent relevance of an earlier revelation. In contrast, irony works to destroy illusions of revelation and knowledge, and to prevent the return to a deluded inauthentic state. We could call this irony which counteracts the claims of allegory the irony of allegory. Benjamin postulated "a double movement in allegorical representation in that allegory at once redeems and debases things" (Jennings 172); as he wrote of Baroque allegory: "Das Bild im Feld der allegorischen Intuition ist Bruchstück,

Rune. Seine symbolische Schönheit verflüchtigt sich, da das Licht der Gottesgelehrtheit drauf trifft. Der falsche Schein der Totalität geht aus. Den das Eidos verlischt, das Gleichnis geht ein, der Kosmos darinnen vertrocknet." (Schriften: 1, 352) In Baudelaire it is irony which replaces "das Licht der Gottesgelehrtheit," and the critical turning point in allegory's double movement becomes the turn of an irony that will not allow "das Eidos" of allegory to be re-established itself.

The destructiveness of the ironic impulse is made explicit in "A Celle qui est trop gaie":

Quelquefois dans un jardin
Où je trainais mon atonie,
J'ai sentie comme une ironie,
Le soleil déchirer mon sein,

Et le printemps et la verdure
Ont tant humilié mon coeur,
Que j'ai puni sur une fleur
L'insolence de la Nature.

Irony in Baudelaire is not always this malicious, but its extreme negativity and destructive tendency are indisputable. Benjamin read the sonnet "La Destruction"--

Sans cesse à mes côtés s'agite le Démon;
Il nage autour de moi comme un air impalpable;
Je l'avale et le sens qui brûle mon poumon
Et l'emplit d'un désir éternel et coupable.

Parfois il prend, sachant mon grand amour de l'Art,
La forme de la plus séduisante des femmes,
Et, sous de spécieux prétextes de cafard,
Accoutume ma lèvre à des philtres infâmes.

Il me conduit ainsi, loin du regard de Dieu,
Haletant et brisé de fatigue, au milieu
Des plaines de l'Ennui, profondes et désertes,

Et jette dans mes yeux pleins de confusion
Des vêtements souillés, des blessures ouvertes,
Et l'appareil sanglant de la Destruction!

- as a poem about the destructive function of allegory in Baudelaire's work. "Dieses Gedicht", wrote Benjamin of "La Destruction," "enthält von allen Baudelaireschen wohl die gewaltigste Beschwörung des allegorischen Ingeniums. Der appareil sanglant de la Destruction, den es ausbreitet, ist das Werkzeug, mit dem die Allegorie selber die Dingwelt zu den zertrümmerten und entstellen Bruchstücken macht Über deren Bedeutungen sie dann Herrin ist." (Schriften 1, 1147) The terms of Benjamin's reading are just as relevant to Baudelaire's irony, the other dominant feature of his rhetoric.

Of course, as its original title "La Volupté" suggests, the sonnet is as easily read as a poem dealing with onanistic and/or sadistic sexuality. But whether one holds that the poem is about sexuality or poetic rhetoric, it is the poem's ambiguity itself which suggests the link between the spleen-driven destructiveness of both sexual perversion and of the involuted rhetoric of the Fleurs du Mal. This is also an important connection, along with the further association of perversion and rhetoric with death, in poems like "A Celle qui est trop gaie," "L'Héautontimorouménos," and "Allégorie." In the last poem, we saw "Allégorie" dominating debauchery and death; and according to "Les deux bonnes soeurs", "La Débauche et la Mort sont deux aimables filles" who serve as the special tutors of the ironic "poète sinistre." I am inclined to accept as pertinent Benjamin's intuitions regarding "La Destruction," since they enables us to appreciate why the poem merits its place as the introductory piece of the section entitled "Les Fleurs du Mal." In this section, we also find the poem "Allégorie," and some of Baudelaire's most audacious combinations of allegorical materials and ironic iconoclasm ("Un Voyage à Cythère," "La Béatrice," or "Les Métamorphoses du Vampire"): making the section "Les Fleurs du Mal" a special forum for the display of important rhetorical and poetic underpinnings of the whole volume; and establishing the sort of mise en abime relation that their common title seems to intend.

1.2 A Sonnet's Plan

De Man's analyses of the temporality of irony and allegory can enrich our appreciation of Baudelaire's use of the sonnet form. We saw in Chapter 1 that Baudelaire insisted on the importance of the dénouement

in a sonnet's composition. This insistence, along with the principle of asymmetry in symmetry, is the most significant statement Baudelaire left us concerning the poetics of the sonnet. He violated virtually every accepted sonnet convention, but repeatedly drew attention to these two principles. The crucial thing to note about Baudelaire's concern for the dénouement is how it makes temporality, the time of and in a sonnet, an essential issue. For a dénouement is, if nothing more, the conclusion of a movement or development in time. This concern of Baudelaire's is not wholly unexpected. Descriptions of the sonnet often emphasize its basic two-part structure of octave and sestet, and how the sestet functions to resolve problems introduced in the first eight lines. Baudelaire's remarks do, however, differ markedly from those of virtually all French commentators who, from Gautier to Morier, were incapable of going beyond the question of rhyme. Thus, Baudelaire's approach to the sonnet does seem to have been somewhat unique within the French tradition. In its orientation to temporality, it is also consistent with other poetic and rhetorical aspects of his work, notably with its ironic and allegorical characteristics.

Some comments of David Scott's concerning Baudelaire's sonnets suggest the degree to which Baudelaire's handling of the sonnet reflects his general rhetorical orientation:

> The relationship between the poet and the poem is mirrored in the relationship between the sestet and the octave, since the poet is obliged by the very form of the verse to look back critically at his own work, to gaze with objective lucidity at his own lyricism. And just as to do this he is obliged to distance himself from his verse, similarly, the distance is symbolically incorporated in the poem itself: it is visible in the spacing between the octave and the sestet (...). [T]he sestet does not merely follow the octave· it becomes a kind of <u>criticism</u> of the octave in which the former's lyrical expansiveness and ratiocination are reassessed. (51-52)

These comments bring us back to Valéry's notion of an original romanticism giving way before a classical and critical spirit as well as to de Man's discussions of the temporal dilemmas of modernity, of the temporal dimensions of irony, and of the allegorization of poetry as it

strives for meaning.

In fact, De Man's oppositions of symbol to allegory, of the empirical to the ironic self, can be taken as additions to the set of antinomies identified in Chapter 2, in this case involving oppositions where the relation between the terms opposed is specifically temporal. I speculated at the end of Chapter 2 that the sonnet's structure, with its pairs of quatrains and tercets, seems an emblem of the collection's quatrain-sonnet opposition, an especially creative re-inscription of the epoch's Classical and Romantic antithesis. With Scott's comments about the temporal movement in Baudelaire's sonnets in mind, we can see that the sonnet's double structure made it an opportune site not only for the creative rapprochement of the poetics of Classicism and Romanticism but also for the circumscription and playing out of the other mutually implicating terms of Chapter 2's paradigm. For the turn usually located between the octave and the sestet corresponds from a structural perspective to the discontinuity in literary signification which can manifest itself and/or be understood variously as a shift from the lyrical to the rational, from imagination to reason, from sincerity to convention, from the spontaneously Romantic to the critically Classical, from symbol to allegory, or from inauthenticity to ironic authenticity. This does not mean that the structural turn will always coincide with these turns in sense, but it does mean that the sonnet has a special structural potential to embody or enact perennial literary problems, and that it will have a corresponding theoretical (and poetic) interest.

2 "Je te donne ces vers afin que si mon nom"

The most spectacular example of Baudelaire's exploitation of the two-part structure of the sonnet for his larger rhetorical purposes is "Je te donne ces vers afin que si mon nom," the sonnet which closes the Fleur du Mal's first cycle of love poems:

> Je te donne ces vers afin que si mon nom
> Aborde heureusement aux époques lointaines,
> Et fait rêver un soir les cervelles humaines,
> Vaisseau favorisé par un grand aquilon;
>
> Ta mémoire, pareille aux fables incertaines,
> Fatigue le lecteur ainsi qu'un tympanon,

Et par un fraternel et mystique chaînon
Reste comme pendue à mes rimes hautaines;

Etre maudit à qui, de l'abîme profond
Jusqu' au plus haut du ciel, rien, hors moi, ne repond!
- O toi qui, comme une ombre à la trace éphémère,

Foules d'un pied léger et d'un regard serein
Les stupides mortels qui t'ont jugée amère,
Statue aux yeux de jais, grand ange au front d'airain!

Benjamin cites this poem as evidence that "Baudelaire will gelesen werden wie ein Antiker" (Schriften 1: 593), but it would be more precise to say like a poet of the Renaissance.[1] Certainly, Baudelaire endorses the Renaissance theme of the posthumous glory that a poet's verses can bestow on the love and the beloved that they celebrate. But it is obvious that Baudelaire invokes this theme only to distort it almost beyond recognition. For the poetic effect which dominates this sonnet is unquestionably the violent iconoclastic turn at line nine.

After the impeccable gallantry of the octave, the loveliness of its diction and vision, the first words of line nine and the sestet's general rhetorical intensification shatter conventional expectations, and force a complete re-evaluation of the poem. So great is the shift that occurs between octave and sestet that one can imagine that the two parts were composed separately--as has been suggested of poems such as "Spleen II"--and only later juxtaposed. This hypothesis serves chiefly to remind us of the violence of the rupture at the heart of this sonnet; a rupture with which de Man's discussion can help us come to terms.

First, we can point out the prominence of allegory in the sonnet. This nineteenth-century poem goes back to the sixteenth century to find an appropriate idiom. Hardly has its ostensible purpose been announced--"je te donne ces vers"--but the poem turns back to the Renaissance to explain the significance of this purpose. Baudelaire's identification of his name with the "vaisseau" that sails to the distant shores of the future is so manifestly allegorical, deriving its significance so directly from Renaissance thematics and topoi, that no one would think of describing it in terms of the identity of subject, object, and expression postulated by the theory of the symbol. This is surely a case of

allegorical language, that is, of a sign referring to an earlier sign.

But if the allegorical nature of the octave's metaphors is evident, this does not mean that their significance is not problematic. In fact, the sestet's disruption of the octave's confident allegory and genteel vision is the sonnet's very raison d'être. And this disruption is accomplished in several ways. First, the reference shifts from the future back to the present. The vagueness of the vision of the "époques lointaines" is reflected in the references to "fables incertaines", to the dreaming of anonymous "cervelles humaines", by the indefiniteness of "un soir". All this in contrast to the intersubjective precision of the sestet: "toi"; "moi"; "O toi qui (...) foules(...) les stupides mortelles"; "les stupides mortelles qui t'ont jugée amère". Those distant epochs and what they imply about the duration and worth of culture (and a fortiori of the poet's own work) are wholly under the sign of the "si" of the first line, contrasting sharply with the sestet's forceful apostrophes and its focus on the here and now of the ephemeral and the actual. This contrast signals a shift from the realm of possibility and fiction to that of a more immediate and resistant reality.

The sonnet, then, divides into two moments--just as de Man reminded us irony does. Furthermore, the shift of temporal horizon from octave to sestet coincides with an ironic shift from absorption with the poet and the destiny of his verses to the supposed object of his attentions and his relationship to her. The octave is so dominated by the poet that only twice is the recipient of the verses actually referred to: in the form of a meagre objective pronoun ("Je te donne") overwhelmed by the generosity of the poet's act; and as a memory suspended in the rigging of the poet's name and rhymes. But in the sestet the "Etre maudit" is the object of successive apostrophes and the sole reference of all figurative language. Now it is the first person who is forgotten. From a celebration of the poet and his poetry's claim to glory we pass to his virtual annihilation in the presence of the figure his verse pretends to commemorate. The consequences of this shift conform to the implications of irony's division of time into a before and after. The inauthenticity of the subject's self-image in the octave is revealed as the focus in the sestet becomes his actual helpless, subservient status and the monstrousness of his mistress. The incongruity of the two parts

of the sonnet reflects a keen awareness of the gap that can exist between the self and its representations of itself, and between reality and the representaions of reality. Just as irony can work to reveal the fictional nature of representations of reality, so in the movement of this sonnet we see an ironic strategy functioning as a corrective to the easy production of allegorical significance in the octave.

Most commentators agree that "Je te donne ces vers" closes the Black Venus or Jeanne Duval cycle (cf. Fleurs, Adam, 45n.1; Fleurs Crépet/Blin, 364). This seems significant given Baudelaire's preoccupation with dénouements and endings. For the poem's savage irony is directed especially at the poet's artistic pretensions, so that the irony challenges not only the octave's Petrarchan idealism and the poet's efforts to invest his life and work with significance, but puts the entire sequence of love poems and the allegorical tendencies of all poetry into question. To be sure, the irony of "Je te donne ces vers" is not unique in the Jeanne Duval cycle. One also finds it in "Une charogne", and in the extreme bathos of "Je t'adore à l'égal de la voûte nocturne," where the woman is transformed into an immense night sky and the adoring star-struck poet stands in relation to her as a maggot to a corpse. However, its position at the conclusion of the cycle gives "Je te donne ces vers" it a special resonance beyond the Jeanne Duval cycle.

Nicolas Ruwet argues that a comparison of "Je te donne ces vers" with other poems in the Fleurs du Mal might reveal some interesting parallels. For instance, the distance from "l'abîme profond" to "[le] plus haut du ciel" echoes the first line of "Hymne à la Beauté": "Viens-tu du ciel profond ou sors-tu de l'abîme, O Beauté?" And in the two poems both beauty ("Tu marches sur des morts, Beauté, dont tu te moques") and the "Etre maudit" ("O toi qui (...)/ Foules d'un pied léger et d'un regard serein/(...) les stupides mortels") are cruel and insouciant. The poet's subservience and the monumentality of the "grand ange" in our sonnet also find their echo in the sonnet "La Beauté": "Les poétes, devant mes grandes attitudes,/ Que j'ai l'air d'emprunter aux plus fiers monuments,/ Consumeront leurs jours en d'austères études." Such monumental attributes are evident too in "L'Idéal"'s description of the poet's feminine ideal. However, the echoes found in these three poems, which immediately precede the Black Venus cycle, indicate that

"Je te donne ces vers" has a special significance not only as the conclusion to its cycle, but as a comment on the idealism which introduced and motivated the first cycle of love poems, and which, having been frustrated by the Black Venus, will be revived in the poems inspired by Mme. Sabatier. As Ruwet notes, "Tout ce qu'on pourrait sans doute conclure d'une telle étude comparative, c'est que le 'tu' énigmatique du sonnet XXXIX participe à la fois de la femme aimée et maudite, de la Beauté, de l'Ideal, et de l'Ange Déchu cher à la littérature romantique et post-romantique" (397). All of which suggests that the ramifications of the ironic undoing of allegorical vision in "Je te donne ces vers" do reach considerably beyond the first cycle of love poems, and make this poem and the implications of its rhetoric central to "Spleen et Idéal" and to the Fleurs du Mal as a whole.

In sonnet 39 Baudelaire exploited the sonnet's two-part structure in a particularly dramatic fashion, but the question of the "turn" from octave to sestet is central to Baudelaire's sonnet poetics. Rhyme was also important, but rhyme scheme (for many, the principal criterion in sonnets) was not binding; instead, the "turn" and the dénouement it precipitated became for Baudelaire the fundamental things. As we have seen in "Je te donne ces vers," Baudelaire's exploitation of the rhetorical possibilites of the turn was closely related to the temporal implications of the two rhetorical strategies discussed by de Man.[2]

3. Irony and Anticlosure

A second feature of Baudelaire's sonnets is as significant as the prominence of the two-part structure, the turn, and the dénouement. This is the way his sonnet's resist the neat closure, through the sestet's resolution of the octave's problem(s), which has often been presented as fundamental to the sonnet. There are a number of ways that this resistance to closure is effected. As we have seen in "Je te donne ces vers," notwithstanding the emphatic closing lines, the incommensurability of octave and sestet precludes any satisfactory final equilibrium. The same is true of "La Cloche fêlée" where the respective visions of octave and sestet hold out no hope of their reconciliation. Elsewhere it is the closing line or lines themselves which counter any sense of a stable conclusion: "Duellum" ends with a remorseless inten-

sification of the poem's original struggle, "Roulons-y sans remords, amazone inhumaine,/ Afin d'éterniser l'ardeur de notre haine"; the last line of "Bohemiens en voyage" evokes the enigmatic "empire familier des ténèbres futures"; the ending of "La Mort des amants" counteracts the poem's melodramatic fatalism by promising a joyous, but not very convincing, rebirth; in "La Vie antérieure" a "secret douloureux" intrudes at the last moment to trouble the luxurious scene the rest of the sonnet paints; and in the Fleurs du Mal's penultimate poem, "Le Rêve d'un curieux," the anticlimactic reward for the impatient dreamer's wait--

> J'étais comme l'enfant avide du spectacle,
> Haïssant le rideau comme on hait un obstacle...
> Enfin la vérité froide se révéla:
>
> J'étais mort sans surprise, et la terrible aurore
> M'enveloppait. - Eh quoi! n'est-ce donc que cela?
> La toile était levée et j'attendais encore--

is simply to learn he must wait some more.

There are many ways for Baudelaire's sonnets to frustrate expectations of closure. "Le Vin des amants" ends by putting its own rhetoric into question:

> Aujourd'hui l'espace est splendide!
> Sans mors, sans éperons, sans bride,
> Partons à cheval sur le vin
> Pour un ciel féerique et divin!
>
> Comme deux anges que torture
> Une implacable calenture,
> Dans le bleu cristal du matin
> Suivons le mirage lointain!
>
> Mollement balancés sur l'aile
> Du tourbillon intelligent,
> Dans un délire parallèle,
>
> Ma soeur, côté à côté nageant,
> Nous fuirons sans repos ni trêves
> Vers le paradis de mes rêves!

The last line refers to "le paradis de mes rêves" [my emphasis], even

though the pretense of the first person plural imperatives, of the lovers' parallel delirium and shared divinity, has been that their exhilaration is mutually comprehensible. Should we not expect to hear of our dreams, and does the poem's rhetoric remain convincing after we detect the note of deluded egocentricity in "le paradis de mes rêves"?

Sandra Bermann analyzes how in "Le Flambeau vivant", a syntactic pattern heavily dependent on anaphora--

> Ils marchent devant moi, ces Yeux pleins de lumières (...)
> Ils marchent, ces divins frères qui sont mes frères (...)
> Ils conduisent mes pas dans la route de Beau;
> Ils sont mes serviteurs et je suis leur esclave--

is complicated in the sestet by the sudden interjection of a confusing play of pronouns--

> Charmants Yeux, vous brillez de la clarté mystique
> Qu'ont les cierges brûlant en plein jour (...)/
> Ils célèbrent la Mort, vous chantez le Réveil;
> Vous marchez en chantant (...)--

so that the sonnet's "anaphoric structure suggests a refusal of fixed reference and escapes, not only from a firm grounding in conventional codes, but even from a stable grammatical framework" (113) to produce an effect of strangeness at just the point where the reader would be looking for the assurance of an intelligible conclusion.

Baudelaire could work his disenchanting magic without going to the trouble of juggling pronouns. In "Le Cadre" a single rhyme sufficed:

> Comme un beau cadre ajoute à la peinture,
> Bien qu'elle soit d'un pinceau très vanté,
> Je ne sais quoi d'etrange et d'enchanté
> En l'isolant de l'immense nature,
>
> Ainsi bijoux, meubles, métaux, dorure,
> S'adaptaient juste à sa rare beaute;
> Rien n'offusquait sa parfaite clarté,
> Et tout semblait lui servir de bordure.
>
> Même on eût dit parfois qu'elle croyait
> Que tout voulait l'aimer; elle noyait

Sa nudité voluptueusement

Dans les baisers du satin et du linge,
Et lente ou brusque, à chaque mouvement
Montrait la grâce enfantine du singe.

The comparison of a well-framed painting and the woman framed by the usual feminine accoutrements concludes with a bizarre reference to woman's "grace enfantine du singe." "Singe" rhymes with "linge", and "linge" is in perfect harmony with the other accessories which conspire to isolate the woman from "l'immense nature." But the reference to the childish grace of the monkey intrudes into the picture at the very last moment to send the reader back, looking for its source or motivation earlier in the poem. It derives, of course, from that same nature which the artifice of the frame, quite characteristically dwelt upon at some length by Baudelaire, was meant to exclude. In the poem's final rhyme, we hear and see the poem's basic opposition of nature and culture reiterated, but now the antithetical terms are brought dangerously close, in the manner of an oxymoron, through the mechanism of rhyme.[3] The rhyme "linge"/"singe" acquires an even more suggestive resonance, if we recall that Baudelaire made a connection between the grotesque and "le comique absolu", and the following remarks: "Il faut ajouter qu'un des signes très-particuliers du comique absolu est de s'ignorer lui-même. Cela est visible (...) dans certains animaux du comique desquels la gravité fait partie essentielle, comme les singes" (CE 262). The bizarre ending of "Le Cadre"'s discussion of artifice reveals the ironic situation of the woman's unknowing participation in a grotesqueness that Baudelaire identified with an unselfconscious bestiality, and re-opens the whole nature/ artifice question to which the poem has been a response.

Even more subtle is the tropological interference disturbing the syntactic and rhetorical assurance of "Correspondances" (de Man, "Anthropomorphism"). In this poem the word "comme" occurs seven times, and is the key to the playing out of the central themes of synesthesia and of the "totalizing power of metaphor as it moves from analogy to identity, from simile to symbol and to a higher order of truth"("Anthropomorphism": 131). However, the "comme" of the final couplet is no longer a "comme" of synaesthetic transport or of metaphoric transcendence, but is rather a simple such as of enumeration. The final enumeration of

scents is never anything more than an enumeration, and as such interrupts and ends the process of tropological substitution which had to this point dominated the poem. "L'ambre, le musc, le benjoin et l'encens" lie therefore outside the argument of "Correspondances," beyond the analogical intelligibility celebrated in the first twelve lines, and thus contradict the poem's central thesis, and frustrate the desire for unproblematic closure. Not unlike the first person singular possessive of "Le Vin des amants," the poem's final "comme" signals the exhaustion of the imaginative impulse with which the poem apparently began. According to this reading then, the real theme of "Correspondances" is, not a variation on the idea of universal analogy, but rather "Le Gouffre"'s despairing "Ah! ne jamais sortir des Nombres et des Etres!"

But in most cases, Baudelaire's sonnets effect their anti-closure simply by introducing into the sestet unknown quantities, or unanswerable questions: "Le Mauvais Moine" closes with "O moine fainéant! quand saurai-je donc faire/ Du spectacle vivant de ma triste misère/ Le travail de mes mains et l'amour de mes yeux?"; in "Les Aveugles", the subject wonders "Que cherchent-ils au Ciel, tous ces aveugles?"; and in "L'Ennemi" we read "qui sait si les fleurs nouvelles que je rêve/ Trouveront dans ce sol lavé comme une grève/ Le mystique aliment qui leur ferait vigueur?" just before the poem's final despairing outcry. One is tempted to say that Baudelaire reversed the usual formula: instead of resolving the problems posed by the octave, he would introduce unresolved or unresolvable issues into the final lines of a sonnet to give it a characteristic sense of irresolution and disturbing incompleteness. This sense is typical of the "conclusions" of individual poems, and is reiterateded at the level of the Fleurs du Mal as a whole. For the end of the last section, "La Mort", and of the whole collection, is heralded by the inconsequential "rêve d'un curieux"; and the expected conclusion is in the end indefinitely postponed with "Le Voyage"'s desperate recommencement of the search for something new and genuine--a macrological example of anti-closure par excellence.

The anticlosure of Baudelaire's sonnets can be related to his remarks to Armand Fraise. When he wrote, "Avez-vous observé qu'un morceau de ciel, aperçu par un soupirail, ou entre deux cheminées, deux rochers, ou par une arcade, etc... donnait une idee plus profonde de

l'infini qu'un grand panorama vu du haut d'une montagne?" (Corr. 3, 39), Baudelaire was comparing the sonnet to a small space like a window. This is reminiscent of the line "Je ne vois qu'infini par toutes les fenêtres" in "Le Gouffre," and if one recalls the paranoia and panic of that sonnet, one realizes that a glimpse of infinity through a window is not necessarily a comforting occurence. In "Le Gouffre" it immediately engenders the vertigo ("mon esprit, toujours du vertige hanté,/ Jalouse du néant l'insensibilité") which Baudelaire associated with the "comique absolu": "ce vertige (...) C'est le comique absolu" (CE 260). Irony is, of course, a species of the "comique absolu," and the vertigo it can cause derives from the fact that it "engenders a temporal sequence of acts which is endless" (de Man Blindness 220) The fact that the movement of irony is never completed, that the price of demystification through irony is a permanently unsettled state, enables irony to reveal a glimpse of an infinite condition. The anti-closure typical of Baudelaire's sonnets is then an aspect of the destructive and demystifying ironic movement central to so many of them.

We would be mistaken to read Baudelaire's comment about the apprehension of infinity through the window of a sonnet as indicative of a mystical enthusiasm or serenity in the face of the sonnet's special capacities. Infinity in his sonnets is a matter of ironic doubling and of the lack of satisfying closure. In "Les Sept Vieillards," the crisis of enumeration and infinite seriality de Man discovered at the end of "Correspondances" is explicitly associated with irony. There, having told of his encounter with seven sinister old men, the poet asks;

> Aurais-je, sans mourir, contemplé le huitiéme,
> Sosie inexorable, ironique [my emphasis] et fatal,
> Dégoutant Phénix, fils et père de lui-même?
> - Mais je tournai le dos au cortège infernal.

The poem goes on to conclude:

> Vainement ma raison voulait prendre la barre;
> La tempête en jouant déroutait ses efforts,
> Et mon âme dansait, dansait, vieille gabarre
> Sans mâts, sur une mer monstrueuse et sans bords!

The pure negativities of irony, anticlosure, and mere unending seriality

all, frightened Baudelaire with the spectre of unintelligibility.

4. The Fissured Sonnet

The use Baudelaire made of the sonnet's formal features and conventions is consubstantial with some of the most important and original aspects of his poetry. The sonnet, it would seem, provided Baudelaire with an almost perfect formal opportunity to reinforce and fuse his poetry's aesthetic, rhetorical, and prosodic central tendencies. Far from involving a gratuitous, or merely audacious, tinkering with arbitrary conventions, Baudelaire's sonneteering reveals a serious and successful attempt to make certain fundamental sonnet conventions serve specific rhetorical ends. His attitude toward the sonnet's rhyme schemes derived in part from the principles of surprise and asymmetry in symmetry. But beyond the restricted question of rhyme, Baudelaire's sonnets reveal a coherent and thoughtful poetics. The temporality of the sonnet's structure, its before and after, conforms to the temporal structures basic to both allegory and irony, and which correspond to the contradictions within literature and literary consciousness collated Chapter 2's paradigm. Baudelaire was able to use the sonnet as one of the principal vehicles of his allegory and especially of his irony in such a way that these two major rhetorical figures could be played off one another, and off the sonnet's formal characteristics. His irony, as we saw in "Je te donne ces vers," tends to counteract the constructive allegorical tendencies manifest in much of his poetry. Baudelaire also exploited the sonnet's two-part structure to produce effects of anti-closure which are themselves closely related to the disruptive nature and critical ends of Baudelaire's irony and allegory.

Baudelaire's exploitation of the rhetorical possibilities of the sonnet's turn was intimately associated with all of these rhetorical strategies. So it is no accident that when the poet of "La Cloche fêlée" complains, "Moi, mon âme est fêlée", comparing his self-divided soul's feeble voice to that of a more vigourous clock, the announcement coincides with the sonnet's own internal division as it turns from the octave to the sestet:

> Il est amer et doux, pendant les nuits d'hiver,
> D'écouter, près du feu qui palpite et qui fume,

Les souvenirs lointains lentement s'élever
Au bruit des carillons qui chantent dans la brume,

Bienheureuse la cloche au gosier vigoureux
Qui, malgré sa viellesse, alerte et bien portante,
Jette fidèlement son cri religieux,
Ainsi qu'un vieux soldat qui veille sous la tente!

Moi, mon âme est fêlée, et lorsqu'en ses ennuis
Elle veut de ses chants peupler l'air froid des nuits,
Il arrive souvent que sa voix affaiblie

Semble le râle épais d'un blessé qu'on oublie
Au bord d'un lac de sang, sous un grand tas de morts,
Et qui meurt, sans bouger, dans d'immenses efforts.

Though the turn here is not so violent as it is in "Je te donne ces vers," its effect is to open up the same unbridgeable, never-to-be-closed gap between the world of the octave and that of the sestet.

It is interesting to note the echoes of "Les Phares" in "La Cloche fêlée". There Delacroix was also associated with a lake of blood, and the dominion of the great beacon Delacroix was announced by "des fanfares étranges." In contrast, the voice of the claustrophobic poet of "La Cloche Fêlée" is an unremarked death rattle. Delacroix shines forth where spleen smothers the Baudelairean bell. In the original 1857 edition, "La Cloche Fêlée" bore the title "Spleen," introducing the four other Spleen poems and the central crisis of "Spleen et Idéal", the Fleur du Mal's most important section. Thus the theme of self-division, and its articulation in the sonnet form, stood forth as a basic element of the presentation of this essential crisis. And we can read "La Cloche fêlée"'s themes of splenetic self-divided impotence, so memorably expressed in the contrast between the poem's two parts, in terms of the impossibility of getting beyond literature's inherent divisions; of the impossiblity of reversing the self-splitting movement of irony; of the impossibility of irony ever allowing the return to a sense of fullness and comfortable authenticity; of the impossibility of ever overcoming the senselessness of seriality in a convincing sense of closure and of, even metaphorical, wholeness.

1. Incidentally, in Banville's Petit traité de poésie française, this poem is cited as a successful irregular sonnet "en raison de la disposition ingénieusement contrarié des rimes dans les quatrains" (56).

2. Since the sonnet was by far Baudelaire's preferred verse form (nearly half of the "Fleurs du Mal" are sonnets), and since the two-part structure and the turn are pre-eminent in Baudelaire's use of the sonnet form, it is not surprising to discover in the Fleurs du Mal a thoroughgoing "sonnetization" of other verse forms. This is evident not only in the many poems divided into a first and second section such as "Rêve Parisien" or "Le Cygne," whose divisions correspond to important thematic developments, but also in poems in which there is a sonnet-like turn even though their form is not so obviously binary. Thus, "Le Masque" involves the unmasking of illusion at a central turn, followed by a discussion of the relationship of the original illusion and the statue's true face; or, "Les Bijoux" whose "eight-quatrain design with its turn in meaning after line 24 suggests an expansion of the sonnet form, as if Baudelaire wished to 'write large' his daring departure from previous idealizing conventions" (Bermann 116). The most remarkable examples of the transfer of sonnet conventions to other verse forms are probably "A une Malabaraise" and "Les Métamorphoses d'un vampire." "A une Malabaraise" consists of fourteen rhymed couplets. And just as it is exactly twice as long as a sonnet, it divides at a very obvious turn--a shift in geography, climate, imagery, tone, and rhetoric--into exactly the same proportions as a sonnet, 16 to 12. As for "Les Métamorphoses d'un vampire," it too consists of twenty-eight lines of rhymed couplets with a turn at line 17 signalled by the poem's only stanzaic division. Here too the turn coincides with significant thematic developments, marking the before and after structure we associate with irony as the poem's original erotic daydream turns to a nightmare of debauchery. These and many other poems indicate the degree to which Baudelaire found in the sonnet a formal model for poetic and rhetorical effects central to his work.

3. Let us recall that Baudelaire associated the pleasure of a rhyme with its strangeness (cf. Chapter 1).

CHAPTER 4: A GENERAL AESTHETICS: MODERNITY, BEAUTY, AND THE PAST

> Longtemps négligée la somme des écrits journalistiques et critiques de Baudelaire (Réflexions sur quelques-uns de mes contemporains, Salon de 1845, 1846 et 1859, L'Exposition universelle de 1855, Le Peintre de la vie moderne, et autres Curiosités esthétiques) apparait aujourd'hui décisive pour la bonne intelligence d'une oeuvre poétique que chronologiquement, et en tout cas ontologiquement, elle précède pour une bonne part. (Rincé 115)

We have seen how important Baudelaire's conception of modern art is in his aesthetics. By now the association of modernity with Baudelaire is a given of literary history and a reflex of critical rhetoric; and no doubt the association is justified. However, it is also true that the idea of modernity occupies an extremely complex, even unstable, position in Baudelaire's texts. The question of modernity is raised at several important junctures in Baudelaire's critical writings, and nowhere more persistently than in the various reflections on the nature of beauty.

1.1 The Twofold Beautiful

Probably the most frequently cited and commented upon of these reflections is in "Le Peintre de la vie moderne" where we find a brief propaedeutic to the aesthetic problems posed by the work of Constantin Guys. Though few commentators have drawn attention to this, it is curious that Baudelaire believed that Guys, an artist working in media usually ignored by criticism, provided "une belle occasion (...) pour établir une théorie rationelle et historique du beau, en opposition avec la théorie du beau unique et absolu" (CE 455). Baudelaire recognized the unusualness of his approach to Guys' work, and defended his interest in minor artists by arguing that "tout n'est pas dans Raphaël, que tout n'est pas dans Racine, que les poetae minores ont du bon, du solide et du délicieux" (CE 453). What is curious about this essay is not that a minor artist should have prompted a digression on the philosophy of beauty: the real curiosity resides in the incongruity between Guys' work and the concepts Baudelaire brought to its analysis.

Baudelaire's essential thesis concerns the twofold composition of

beauty: "le beau est fait d'un élément éternel, invariable, dont la quantité est excessivement difficile à déterminer, et d'un élément relatif, circonstantiel qui sera, si l'on veut, tour à tour ou tout ensemble, l'époque, la mode, la morale, la passion" (CE 455-56). With reference to the particular case of Guys, Baudelaire identified the circumstantial element of beauty by means of the neologism "la modernité." Guys' pursuit of "la modernité," argued Baudelaire, involved the ambition to "dégager de la mode ce qu'elle peut contenir de poétique dans l'historique, de tirer l'éternel du transitoire" (CE 466). Elsewhere Baudelaire recognized other sources of the circumstantial part of beauty. A second letter to Fraisse is important for what it reveals about Baudelaire's understanding of the circumstantial part of beauty: "Vous n'avez pas assez distingué la qualité de beauté éternelle qui est dans Hugo d'avec les superstitions comiques introduites en lui par les événements, c'est-à-dire la sottise ou sagesse moderne, la croyance au progrès, le salut du genre humain par les ballons" (Corr. 3: 132). In the Exposition universelle, he had emphasized the cultural relativity of beauty--"que dirait un Winckelmann moderne (...) d'un produit chinois, produit étrange, bizarre, contourné dans sa forme, intense par sa couleur, et quelquefois délicat jusqu'a l'évanouissement?"(CE 226)--as evidence against the dogma of aesthetic absolutes. In the essay on Guys, the eternal and absolute are said to be in necessary collusion with contingent and temporal elements such that "sans ce second élément qui est comme l'enveloppe amusante, titillante, apéritive, du divin gateau, le premier élément serait indigestible, inappréciable, non adapté et non approprié à la nature humaine" (CE 356). Ultimately, the second element could never exist alone. Baudelaire made it clear that he considered the hypothesis of absolute beauty to be a mirage emanating from ahistorical and irrational theories which fail to take into account circumstantial and cultural determinations of beauty and aesthetic experience.

These mistaken theories of beauty preoccupied Baudelaire throughout his career, and, in so far as he thought in reaction to them, defined his approach to aesthetics. We noted in Chapter 2 that in his attempt to come to terms with contemporary art, contemporary aesthetic problems, and his own sensibility, he attacked the inadequate and pedantic theor-

ies of "les modernes professeurs-jurés d'esthétique". It is both easy and instructive to place the idea of "le beau unique et absolu" in Chapter 2's series of analogous oppositions. Quite clearly it would belong to an aesthetic which privileges ideals found in the schema's right-hand column, and expresses Baudelaire's version of the dead end of Classicism. Whether or not "la théorie du beau unique et absolu" which Baudelaire invoked in his polemic accurately describes any particular contemporary aesthetic theory, in "Le Peintre de la vie moderne" it played a strategic role as a critical fiction by means of which he dissociated himself from a whole complex of Neo-Classical themes. Just as "la modernité" in the Guys essay represents an aspect of aesthetic phenomena which Baudelaire investigated elsewhere under other rubrics, so "le beau unique et absolu" represents a further articulation of a theoretical problematic investigated over the course of Baudelaire's career. In different essays the timelessness of beauty is described in different terms--for instance, as mythical in "Richard Wagner et Tannhaüser"--and it is discussed in sometimes more, sometimes less, detail. In the discussion of Guys, however, Baudelaire's attention is almost exclusively absorbed by the relative, contingent elements of beauty.

"Le Peintre de la vie moderne"'s description of beauty as an intersection of time or the present and eternity sought to solve the aporia of a sensiblity excited by the modernity and novelty of Guys' work but concerned to measure its excitement against the most rigourous standards. In "Le Peintre de la vie moderne," argues Jürgen Habermas, "nimmt deshalb das moderne Kunstwerk im Schnittpunkt der Achsen von Aktualität und Ewigkeit einen merkwürdigen Platz ein" (17) because

> Die aktuelle Gegenwart kann ihr Selbstbewusstsein nicht einmal mehr aus der Opposition zu einer abgestossenen und überwundenen Epoche, zu einer Gestalt der Vergangenheit gewinnen. Die Aktualität kann sich allein als Schnittpunkt von Zeit und Ewigkeit konstituieren. Mit dieser unmittelbaren Berührung von Aktualität und Ewigkeit entreisst sich die Moderne zwar nicht ihrer Hinfälligkeit, aber der Trivialität. (18)

The idea that the eternal is only half of beauty allows one to conserve the authority associated with the right hand column of my schema, while

avoiding the illusion of aesthetic absolutes. Hans Robert Jauss writes of Baudelaire's solution to his theoretical dilemmas: "Denn éternel nimmt hier die Stelle ein, die in der frÜheren Tradition von der Antike oder vom Klassischen besetzt war: wie das Idealschöne (le beau unique et absolu) hat auch das Ewige (l'éternel et l'immuable) als Antithese der modernité für Baudelaire den Charakter einer abgeschiedenen Vergangenheit." (Provokation 56) Baudelaire, though a Romantic or modern (the two, as we saw in the Salon de 1846, being for him synonymous), recognized the concerns of Classicism and in "Le Peintre de la vie moderne" salvaged what theoretical rigour and cultural legitimacy he could through reference to an eternity emptied of historical content.

1.2 Eternity and Antiquity

Jauss makes the above observations while arguing that "[d]ie moderne Kunst kann in Baudelaires Theorie die Antike als autoritative Vergangenheit entbehren" (Provokation 60); and this does reflect Baudelaire's understanding of the work of Constantin Guys. But this hypothesis does not do away with the need to explain the significance of the past and Antiquity in both Baudelaire's critical and creative work. For, though the relationship of Antiquity to modernity may have been put into question, it is still an essential element in Baudelaire's aesthetics and poetry. As regards the Fleurs du Mal, where "près d'un tiers des poèmes (...) contiennent au moins une référence à l' Antiquité" (Hérisson 99) the problem of the relationship of modernity to Antiquity, and to the past in general, can neither be ignored, nor adequately dealt with on the basis of "Le Peintre de la vie moderne."

Much of the secondary literature on Baudelairean modernity is misleading on this point. Prompted by the sort of re-evaluation of Classical Antiquity that Jauss describes, some commentators are led to outlandish conclusions. Many misconceptions arise, I feel, when "Le Peintre de la vie moderne" is read as a poetic manifesto, and not as an analysis of the peculiar aesthetic qualities of the work of Guys. Matei Calinescu's comments that modernity is characterized by a "newly discovered but deep hostility to the past," and that "Baudelaire means by modernity the present in its 'presentness,' in its purely instantaneous

quality" (49), are representative of a common and facile interpretation of Baudelaire's theory of modernity. To my knowledge, Baudelaire nowhere expressed any sort of hostility towards the past, let alone a deep one. His youthful love of antiques and his intimacy with and fondness for literature and art of bygone times are signs rather of a deep empathy with the past. As Baudelaire wrote of Victor Hugo:

> Depuis longtemps déjà il avait montré, non pas seulement dans ses livres, mais aussi dans la parure de son existence personelle, un grand goût pour les monuments du passé (...). Le critique dont l'oeil négligerait ce détail, ne serait pas un vrai critique; car (...) [ce goût] apparaissait comme complément indispensable d'un caractére poétique universel. (CE 730)

In contrast, his hostility was often directed at contemporary France (and Belgium, and the U.S.A.). And he did object to an unimaginative Classicism devoted to an inappropriate imitation of the past. "Que faites-vous," he challenged the antiquity-exalting Neo-Pagans, and answers, "Pastiche, pastiche! Vous avez sans doute perdu votre âme quelque part, dans quelque mauvais endroit, pour que vous couriez ainsi à travers le passé comme des corps vides pour en ramasser une de rencontre dans les détritus anciens?" (CE 578-79) It is only in "Le Peintre de la vie moderne" that Baudelaire is primarily absorbed by the fleetingness, the instantaneous quality, of the present, by that special feature of modernity which is "la modernité." "La modernité," defined as "le transitoire, le fugitif, le contingent" and illustrated by reference to Guys' renderings of contemporary fashions, is only one element of that jumble of cultural phenomena we call modernity, and in other essays Baudelaire turns his attention to other aspects of modernity.

Contrary to what Jauss and Calinescu and many lesser commentators suggest, it would be a mistake to rely solely on the Guys essay to understand Baudelaire's general aesthetic orientation. One cannot even say that Baudelaire's solution is satisfying with respect to the problems posed by his friend's sketches and water-colours. It yields little in the way of critical categories operative in the analysis of the eternal side of Guys' work. It certainly does not promise many insights into the significance of Classical and archaic elements in Baudelaire's

own work, and it only goes a small way to meeting the challenge of the intellectual re-orientation at stake in the rejection of Classicism and the formation of a new historical and aesthetic consciousness.

In marked contrast to Jauss and Calinescu's emphasis on "Le Peintre de la vie moderne" and on the abandonment of Antiquity as model, Walter Benjamin insisted on the importance of Baudelaire's engagement with the past. Habermas establishes the difference between the Baudelaire of "Le Peintre de la vie moderne" and Benjamin in the following terms: "Während sich Baudelaire bei dem Gedanken beruhigt hatte, dass sich die Konstellation von Zeit und Ewigkeit im authentischen Kunstwerk ereignet, will Benjamin diese ästhetische Grunderfahrung in ein historisches Verhältnis rückübersetzen" (20). Benjamin's desire for this translation was not an arbitrary one. It had its origins in his own acute historical sensibility and was part of an original critical project. But what was for Benjamin an aspect of a whole complex of provocative philosophical and historical questions also has a plausible motivation in Baudelaire's critical work as a matrix of intellectual and rhetorical dilemmas whose final resolution is never seriously attempted, and whose interpretation is not consistently maintained in different contexts. The means for a Benjaminian reading of Baudelaire's rapprochement of time and eternity as a historical relationship are present precisely in the terms of the problems from which Baudelaire's analyses proceeded and which his theoretical speculations were intended to, but did not, resolve.

Baudelaire's most important early art criticism is to be found in the Salon de 1846. Comparing this text and the Salon de 1845, one cannot but be struck by the quantum leap of rigour that separates them. The earlier Salon amounts to little more than a catalogue: only in its closing paragraph do we get a glimpse of the critical and imperatives which would inform the following year's endeavour:

> Au vent qui soufflera demain nul ne tend l'oreille; et pourtant l'héroïsme de la vie moderne nous entoure et nous presse. -- Nos sentiments vrais nous étouffent assez pour que nous les connaissions. -- Ce ne sont ni les sujets ni les couleurs qui manquent aux épopées. Celui-là sera le peintre, le vrai peintre, qui saura arracher à la vie actuelle son côté épique, et nous faire

> voir et comprendre, avec de la couleur ou du dessin, combien nous sommes grands et poétiques dans nos cravates et nos bottines vernies. (CE 85)

The idea of "l'héroïsme de la vie moderne", and of the "côté épique [de] la vie actuelle" have something of the audacity of paradox; and through their union of contraries, they are like the theory of twofold beauty.

Strictly speaking there need be no special connection between the heroic or the epic, and eternity. That they can both be set in opposition to modernity, does not necessarily imply that they should be considered indissociable; but given the Classical paradigm within which Baudelaire still largely wrote and thought, it was perfectly orthodox for the antique ideals of heroism and the epic to assimilate the concept of eternity. This text reveals the persistence of Classical norms in Baudelaire's early criticism; only by invoking the Classical values of the epic and heroic could Baudelaire render an interest in "la vie moderne" valid. At this point, even a break with the strictures of official Classicism had to be justifed through the latter's vocabulary.

The theme of the heroism of modern life emerges again to conclude the Salon de 1846. There too "la vie moderne" appears as the equal of "la vie ancienne." Both have a "côté épique", and the modern epoch is no less "féconde que les anciennes en motifs sublimes" (CE 195). That there is "une beauté et un héroïsme modernes" (CE 198) is presented as a necessary consequence of the twofold composition of beauty:

> toutes les beautés contiennent, comme tous les phénomènes possibles, quelque chose d'éternel et quelque chose de transitoire, -- d'absolu et de particulier. La beauté absolue et éternelle n'existe pas, ou plutôt elle n'est qu'une abstraction écrémée à la surface générale des beautés diverses. L'élément particulier de chaque beauté vient des passions, et comme nous avons nos passions particulières, nous avons notre beauté. (CE 195)

Thus, the Salon de 1846 not only contains Baudelaire's first sustained examination of the specific poetic possibilities of modernity, it provides us with an early formulation of the doctrine of the twofold beautiful. Prior to this Baudelaire's interest in the beauties of modernity had been expressed only through catachrestic locutions such as "le côté

épique de la vie moderne," where Baudelaire still speaks in the accents of antiquity. But though Baudelaire now espouses a theory of beauty granting modern life an aesthetic legitimacy of its own, his case for the aesthetic potential of modernity continues to depend upon a rhetoric emanating from the Classical fetishization of Antiquity. Thus, the relationship of time and eternity remains bound to history simply because the dominant aesthetic discourse tended to dress eternity up in the garb of Antiquity. As Jauss himself points out, "[a]uch was uns ewig schön erscheint, musste erst hervorgebracht werden: das zeitlos Schöne (...) ist nichts anderes als die vom Menschen selbst entworfene und ständig wieder aufgegebene Idee des Schönen im Status des Vergangenseins" (56). The past assumes the look of eternity, and visa versa.

1.3 Other Translations

If Baudelaire himself wrote in "Le Peintre de la vie moderne" that the quantity of the eternal element of beauty would be "excessivement difficile à déterminer", the divergent interpretations of this element commentators have offered are proof that even its nature remains enigmatic. René Galand reviewed several interpretations of the eternal aspect of the twofold beautiful. These ranged from Neo-Platonic notions of an intelligible idea, and versions of a Hegelian union of idea and sensual appearance to Gonzague de Reynold's straightforward identification of the immutable and transitory elements as functions respectively of the Classical and Romantic components in Baudelaire's work (cf. de Reynold 400-04). De Reynold's idea is particularly interesting since it conforms, no doubt too rigidly, to Chapter 2's paradigm. It also bears out the hypothesis of the union in the Fleurs du Mal of the Romantic and Classical, and makes this union a key feature of Baudelairean beauty.

For his part, Galand, while acknowledging that Baudelaire provided detailed and satisfactory definitions of the contingent elements of beauty, agrees with Baudelaire that "il n'est pas aussi aisé de préciser ce qu'est l'élément éternel et immuable où Baudelaire voit l'autre moitié de l'art" (162). He proceeds to argue, almost exclusively on the basis of a single article, "Richard Wagner et Tannhäuser", that in "la théorie baudelairienne du beau double, l'élément éternel et invariable

de l'art n'est autre que son contenu mythique, tandis que l'élément relatif, circonstanciel peut se ramener à la forme particulière que l'époque, la mode, la morale, la religion ou le tempérament de l'artiste lui imposeront (...) [N]ous voyons dans l'élément éternel et invariable non pas le type, mais l'archetype." (164-65) Galand's isolation of the Wagner essay is just as contentious as Calinescu and Jauss's bias towards "Le Peintre de la vie moderne." Any account of Baudelaire's aesthetics based on only one of these texts can be at best incomplete. Galand is, of course, an avowed myth-critic, but his thesis is instructive even for those who reject the theoretical context in which it is articulated. When Galand sets the contingent inflections of an epoch against the self-identity of the archetype, he misconstrues as eternal, immutable, and foundational one of the terms of a relationship between historical moments or elements. Galand's move is the inverse of Benjamin's: he takes a historical relationship and cloaks it in the illusion of eternity, while Benjamin wants to strip away this illusion and arrive at a historical understanding of Baudelairean beauty.

Not that Benjamin was wholly successful. I would agree with Jauss that Benjamin was apt to let the shapes of Antiquity overshadow other historical elements in the Fleurs du Mal. We saw this in Chapter 3 when Benjamin linked "Je te donne ces vers" not to the Renaissance, but to Antiquity. As Jauss puts it, often in Benjamin's reading of Baudelaire what we get is "ein Anblick der Stadtlandschaft in den Fleurs du mal (...) wie ihn vornehmlich die Hugosche Brille sehen lässt" (61). Benjamin was explicit on this point: "In Hugos 'Anden Triumphbogen' (...) ist die gleiche Inspiration zu erkennen, die für Baudelaires Idee der Moderne entscheidend wurde." (Schriften 1: 589-90). Earlier he had faulted Baudelaire because none of his reflections on aesthetics "hat die Moderne in ihrer Durchdringung mit der Antike dargestellt, wie das in gewesen Stücken der 'Fleurs du mal' geschieht." (585) But though in Hugo's "A l'Arc de triomphe" we may indeed find the interpenetration of Parisian modernity with Antiquity which Benjamin valued, I do not feel that the opposition of Antiquity to modernity is as fundamental to either Baudelaire's criticism or poetry as Benjamin thought.

I have stressed the persistence of Classical norms in the 19th

century in order to acknowledge the discursive and cultural context in which Baudelaire's work is embedded, and to be able to emphasize in what respects his work can be said to be truly innovative. Baudelaire who often returned to Classicism in matters of diction, form, and prosody, nevertheless broke with the Classical tradition in one decisive and perhaps original respect. As the cultural hegemony of Classicism became unacceptable for the Romantics and their followers, so, it seems in retrospect, should the idea of an exemplary, authoritative Classical past have begun to unravel. But Classicism's domination of aesthetic and critical paradigms did not, any more than its hold on officialdom and cultural institutions, suddenly give way before Romantic alternatives. The idealization of Antiquity was as consistent among the Romantics, and Hugo is a case in point, as it was in official academic circles. But, though Baudelaire by no means dismissed antiquity (we have seen how the early Salons conformed to Classical norms), he did seek to break the spell it still cast over both his Classical and Romantic contemporaries. His scorn for those mesmerized by Antiquity could be remorseless. This is one reason why he was enthusiastic about caricature:

> Il y a quelques années, Daumier fit un ouvrage remarquable, l'Histoire ancienne (...). Daumier s'est abbatu brutalement sur l'antiquité et la mythologie, et a craché dessus. Et le bouillant Achille, et le prudent Ulysse, et la sage Pénélope, et Télémaque, ce grand dadais, et la belle Hélène (...), et la brulante Sappho, cette patronne des hystériques, et tous enfin nous apparurent dans une laideur bouffonne qui rappelait ces vieilles carcasses d'acteurs classiques qui prennent une prise de tabac dans les coulisses. Eh bien! j'ai vu un écrivain de talent pleurer devant ces estampes, devant ce blasphème amusant et utile. Il était indigné, il appelait cela une impiété. Le malheureux avait encore besoin d'une religion. (CE 578)

Clearly, Baudelaire wanted to distance himself from this "déplorable manie" so inimical to art (CE 578). By ridding himself of the essential bias of Classicism, Baudelaire truly assumed a post-Classical literary consciousness to which the rhetoric of other Romantics was, in so far as it remained bound by Classical historical precepts, merely a prelude.

And Benjamin's fixation on the interpenetration of Antiquity and modernity in Baudelaire does not quite do justice to Baudelaire's post-Classical attitude.

We have already noted that there can be no doubts about the past's, and Antiquity's, relevance to Baudelaire's creative and critical endeavours. Statements such as Calinescu's are misleading because they imply that the relationship of past and present does not remain a central concern in Baudelaire's poetics, aesthetics and thought. It is true, though, that having rejected the notion of a definitive Classical past, the poet's attitude towards the past must change in fundamental ways. In this respect, Baudelaire's reflections on his attraction to the least Classical of the Classics are significant: "Ne semble-t-il pas au lecteur, comme à moi, que la langue de la dernière décadence latine,- suprême soupir d'une personne robuste, déjá transformée et préparée pour la vie spirituelle, - est singulièrement propre à exprimer la passion telle que l'a comprise et sentie le monde poétique moderne?" (Fleurs, ed. Adam: 66-67) Baudelaire's interest in the past springs from its special compatibility with what he regarded as the situation of modern poetry. Where Classicism imposed Antiquity as a model, Baudelaire heard in the Latin decadence a far echo of modernity.

2 Allegory, Beauty, and the Dialectical Image

In these respects, Baudelaire was like the Robespierre of Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History" who "[eine] korrespondierende Vergangenheit zitierend herbeigerufen hat, um das träge Kontinuum der Geschichte aufzusprengen (...). [E]ine zur Aktualität verflüchtigte Moderne (...) [muss] ihre Normativität aus Spiegelbildern herbeigezogener Vergangenheiten schöpfen. Diese werden nicht mehr als von Haus aus exemplarische Vergangenheiten wahrgenommen." (Habermas 20-21) The correspondence between past and present which serves to ground modernity in something other than the merely ephemeral and trivial remains crucial, but it is no longer a given of cultural history. Benjamin's attempt to rethink the correspondences between the past and present led to the concept of the "dialectical image," a sort of precipitate of the fusion of past and present moments. A dialectical image is

formed, he wrote, "worin das Gewesene mit dem Jetzt blitzhaft zu einer Konstellation zusammentritt. Mit andern Worter: Bild ist die Dialektik im Stillstand. Denn während die Beziehung der Gegenwart zur Vergangenheit eine rein zeitliche ist, ist die Gewesen zum Jetzt eine dialektische nicht zeitlicher sondern bildlicher Natur." (Schriften 5: 578) The relationship is not a temporal one. Benjamin had in mind neither a relation of succesion or causation, nor that of a lesser moment to a model, but rather one of affinity and reciprocal illumination, such as the correspondence Baudelaire perceived between the Latin decadence and modernity.

The concept of the dialectical image can help us come to terms with the problem of translating the intersection of eternity and time in the twofold beautiful into a relation of historical elements. It is curious to note that both the dialectical image and the twofold beautiful are reminiscent of the definition of allegory introduced in Chapter 3 to help explore the poetics of Baudelaire's sonnets. De Man defined allegory as a case of a sign referring to an anterior sign, and this definition enabled us to read the evocation of the Renaissance in the poem "Je te donne ces vers" as allegorical. The historicized version of the twofold beautiful and the dialectical image involve a similar relation of one present historical moment or element to an earlier one. And as Benjamin wrote, "[d]as Widerspiel zwischen Antike und Moderne"--basic to his understanding of both Baudelairean beauty and the dialectical image-- must "in den allegorische [Zusammenhange] zu überführen" (Schriften 1: 661). The correspondences between the theory of the twofold beautiful and Baudelaire's allegory are multiple. Baudelaire's theory of beauty attacked the notion of a "unique and absolute beauty" by calling attention to a necessary circumstancial element in beauty. This second element was explicitly associated with the present or modernity. Thus, it is in the nature of modernity to prevent the eternal beauty of the past from being transmitted wholly intact to the present. The present's historical uniqueness frustrates the transmission of eternal beauty through time; conceived in other terms, the present is resistant to the allegorical imposition of an earlier sign and anterior meaning. Irony, we saw, can serve as a corrective to allegory by high-

lighting the incongruity of allegory's two moments. This irony I called the irony of allegory; like beauty itself, it is a function is of the present's collision with the past. We shall see how the theory of the dialectical image can enrich our understanding of these correspondences between allegory and the twofold beautiful.

Since the relationship of Antiquity, or more generally the past, and modernity is central to all three, it seems reasonable to surmise that Benjamin's theory of the dialectical image might shed some light on the concepts of allegory and of the twofold beautiful. It should not be forgotten either that the theory of the dialectical image was articulated in Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History", and that these theses not only constitute a set of corollaries essential to Benjamin's own criticism and historiography, they also arose directly out of his studies of Baudelaire as "eine gewisse Etappe meiner Reflexionen zur Fortsetzung des ‚Baudelaire'" (Briefe 850). Given their origins, it is not surprising that the theses can help us appreciate and articulate problems specific to Baudelaire's work. Furthermore, in so far as the theses are intended to describe universal features of historical consciousness, their pertinence to Baudelaire would tend to verify their utility as hypotheses about the nature of historical knowledge.

Benjamin's interest in the dialectical fusion of past and present was restricted to the question of images, but this preoccupation with the image represents only one aspect of our own concerns. I would like to extrapolate from his notion of the dialectical image so that we can discern in certain characteristics of Baudelaire's work a poetic logic similar to that of the logic of the dialectical image. A basic technique of Baudelaire's poetry is the anachronistic juxtaposition of elements and allusions from the present and the past. Charles Hérisson analyses tendencies in Baudelaire's combinations of "figures antiques, chrétiennes, modernes et contemporaines" (105), of "les vocables antiques" (101) in modern contexts, and argues that the introduction of these anachronisms "est un des procédés constant de sa technique poétique" (101), and that it "accentue la force de percussion spirituelle des vers de Baudelaire" (111).[1] According to Jules Lemaitre, such a technique is of the very essence of the Baudelairism: "Oui, je crois que c'est bien

là l'effort essentiel du baudelairisme; unir toujours deux ordres de sentiments contraires et, au premier d'abord, incompatibles, et au fond, deux conceptions divergentes du monde et de la vie, la chrétienne et l'autre, ou, si vous voulez, le passé et le présent [my emphasis]." (30-31) It is a procedure which is the source of much of the aesthetic appeal of Baudelaire's poetry, and which is a feature of Baudelaire's actualization of the theory of the twofold composition of beauty. It is also a basis of much of Baudelaire's allegory.

The historico-temporal provenance of the components of this allegorical aesthetics and poetics makes translating the intersection of time and eternity in beauty into a historical relationship of the present to the past possible. Habermas correctly identifies this translation as a crucial move in Benjamin's reading of Baudelaire. And Jauss is correct to point out that Benjamin relied too exclusively on Classical Antiquity as the source of the eternal component in Baudelaire's work. But this shortcoming in Benjamin's reading does not cancel the pertinence of the dialectical image to Baudelaire's allegory, nor preclude a more flexible approach to deciphering the temporal constitution of beauty in Baudelaire. The translation of the relationship of the eternal and the temporal into historicity will remain an important critical possibility in any commentary on Baudelaire's work. And of all the pasts which Baudelaire enlisted to serve in his poetry, it is the Renaissance which is most important in the Fleurs du Mal. The Renaissance stands out not because it had an a priori exemplary status as Antiquity did for Classicism. The alignment of modernity and the Renaissance in Baudelaire is motivated by its special capacity to reveal the decrepitude of modernity.

1. This technique is evidence of Baudelaire's development of a post-Classical poetics, for it violates the Classical demand for historical verisimilitude, a demand Baudelaire countered with "[d]'où tirez-vous le soupçon que [l'anachronisme] est un infraction aux regles (...) Car peut-on commettre un anachronisme dans l'éternité?" (CE 789)

CHAPTER 5: Poetry and Progress

> [A] vrai dire (...) Baudelaire ne fait que traverser l'art, et (...) ne s'intéresse qu'a la vie. (Meschonnic Modernité 119)

1. The Historicity of the Dialectical Image

Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History' represent an attempt to revitalize the experience of time and history. Habermas places it among other attempts by modern thinkers from the Young Hegelians through Nietzsche to the Existentialists and beyond, and argues that Benjamin was trying to radically re-orient the self-understanding of modern historical consciousness (13). In contrast to the typically modern orientation towards the future, Benjamin insisted above all that the past must be at the centre of any authentic present.

For Benjamin, the relationship between past and present is revealed in the dialectical image. This image is not simply accidental, rather "[j]ede Gegenwart ist durch diejenigen Bilder bestimmt, die mit ihr synchronistisch sind: jedes Jetzt ist das Jetzt einer bestimmten Erkennbarkeit" (Schriften 5: 578). As Michael W. Jennings points out, for Benjamin the "two historical moments [contained in a dialectical image] are themselves intrinsically related to one another (...). [A] correspondence obtains between certain images from certain epochs, and (...) this correspondence reveals itself to human cognitive capacity only at certain times." (36) But the knowledge reflected in the dialectical image goes beyond the mutual illumination of past and present moments. One's whole understanding of what the future might hold is contained in the historical memory activated by the dialectical image: "Die Erwartung des Künftigen Neuen erfüllt sich allein durch das Eingedenken eines unterdrückten Vergangenen" (Habermas 21). The dialectical image allows us to recover the content of hopes addressed to the future, and it does so precisely by recognizing and reviving the frustrated hopes of the past. By way of these frustated hopes the constellation formed by the present and the past in the dialectical image ultimately refers to the horizons of the future. Only through rememberance's vicarious redemption of the past's oppression can the present sustain a hope for the future.

Benjamin thought of the present as a Messiah. The historian who recognizes the claim the past makes on the present as Redeemer "erfasst

die Konstellation, in die seine eigene Epoche mit einer ganz bestimmten früheren getreten ist. Er begründet so einen Begriff der gegenwart als der >Jetztzeit<, in welcher Splitter der messianischen eingesprengt sind." (Schriften 1: 704) Here the present is raised to the level of a philosophical concept as Jetztzeit, unique and historical "now-time," distinct from the one-dimensional illusion of what Benjamin called "die homogene und leere Zeit" (Schriften 1: 701). Jetztzeit resembles in its urgency and singularity the existential moment of choice, but involves an essential "Erfahrung mit [der Vergangenheit], die einzig dasteht" (Schriften 1: 702). The present's unique experience of the past derives from the present's specific character: "Nur als Bild, das auf Nimmerwiedersehen im Augenblick seiner Erkennbarkeit eben aufblitzt, ist die Vergangenheit festzuhalten." What the present can know about past epochs is a function of its unique epistemological possibilities. And that image from and of the past which comes to illuminate a given present will be uniquely capable of revealing the historical features and possibilities of the present moment. For Benjamin the present has above all a threatening quality so that "[Vergangenes historisch artikulieren] heisst, sich einer Erinnerung bemächtigen, wir sie im Augenblick einer Gefahr aufblitzt." The epistemological possibilities of the present derive from the dangers with which it is beset. Thus the present has a messianic role not only with respect to the unredeemed hopes of the past, but because of its own situation as a moment of danger. "Der Messias kommt ja nicht nur als der Erlöser; er kommt als der Überwinder des Antichrist" (Schriften 1: 695). Not only must the present redeem the past, it must overcome the Antichrist tyrannizing the present.

Benjamin's "Theses" constitute one of many attempts to rethink historical experience, and, given his ambitious incorporation of past, present, and future into a vital time-consciousness, I would say, one of the most complete. But his reflections were prompted by more than a merely speculative, or even partisan, desire to salvage the hopes of the past and re-affirm the present's historical responsibilites. Benjamin was also conducting an intense polemic against the modern doctrine of progress. He argued that "[d]ie Vorstellung eines Fortschritts des Menschengeschlechts in der Geschichte ist von der Vorstellung ihres eine homogene und leere Zeit durch laufenden Fortgangs nicht abzulösen." The

concept of homogeneous, empty time may be an appropriate model in Newtonian physics, but it is inimical to historical understanding. Benjamin concluded that "[d]ie Kritik an der Vorstellung diese Fortgangs muss die Grundlage der Kritik an der Vorstellung des Fortschritts überhaupt bilden" (Schriften 1: 701), and his concepts of Jetztzeit and of the dialectical image were his principal means of criticizing the concepts of temporal progression and of progress.

Of all the characteristics of Baudelaire's thought, it is probably his distrust of the idea of progress which most appealed to Benjamin and which Benjamin took most seriously: "Dass Baudelaire dem Fortschritt feindlich gegenüberstand, ist die unerlässliche Bedingung dafür gewesen, dass er Paris in seiner Dichtung bewältigen konnte" (Schriften 1: 693). Baudelaire too was quite emphatic on this point: "La poèsie et le progrès se haïssent d'une haine instinctive, et, quand ils se rencontrent dans le même chemin il faut que l'un des deux serve l'autre" (CE 319). It is by means of their shared hostility towards the ideology of progress, and their emphasis on the opposition of poetry to progress, that I first want to bring the concepts of the dialectical image and of Jetztzeit to bear of Baudelaire's poetry. Of course, one does not find in Baudelaire historical thinking of the quality of Benjamin's. Yet it is possible to transfer the feel for the dense weave of past, present, and future, of danger and hope, evident in Benjamin's theses, to important features of Baudelaire's thought and poetics, for Benjamin's theses deal with the epistemological and ontological origins of complexes motivating Baudelaire's rhetorical and ideological manoeuverings.

I shall examine in the next section Baudelaire's hostility towards the ideology of progress. This hostility can be thought of as a reaction to the threat which Benjamin held to be characteristic of Jetztzeit and our experience of the present. For Baudelaire, this threat was most fully embodied in the nineteenth-century ideology of progress. Undoubtedly, Baudelaire's apprehensions had something to do with the connection that Benjamin perceived between catastrophe and progress--"Der Begriff des Fortschritts ist in der Idee der Katastrophe zu fundieren. Dass es 'so weiter' geht, ist die Katastophe" (Schriften 1: 683)--and which Baudelaire articulated so well in poems such as "Le Cygne." We shall see that like Benjamin Baudelaire also considered the doctrine of progress

to be the source of an erroneous vision of the future, but in contrast to Benjamin, Baudelaire had no real concern for the future itself. ("Rêve Parisien" is not only exceptional in his work, but the conclusion of this futuristic dream of a "terrible paysage" emphasizes the vision's irrelevance to the poet's life and to this "triste monde engourdi.") Baudelaire's only interest in the future arose negatively, as part of his reaction to the ideology of progress and the vision of the future it promoted. The real source of his impatience with progressivism had less to do with what it said about things to come than with the lies it told about the present and the past. This is why nothing seems further from Baudelaire than the messianic spirit Benjamin assigned to the present. Baudelaire's struggle with the ideology of progress has little to do with the Messiah as Redeemer and bringer of a new future. It has everything to do with the overthrow of the forces perverting the present, with the Messiah's second task, that of "der Überwinder des Antichrist."

2.1 "Un Patois Incomparable"

> De toutes les branches de l'activité humaine, celles qui paraissent être le plus réfractaires au progrès sont les lettres, la poésie et les arts. (Larousse 226)

In earlier chapters I situated Baudelaire's sonnets within the restricted discursive field of contemporary French poetry. With the introduction of the idea of progress I am moving to a consideration of Baudelaire's work within the general context of social discourse, for nothing was more central to nineteenth-century ideology than the idea of progress. Volume twelve of Pierre Larousse's Grand Dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle reminded its readers, "la foi à la loi du progrès est la vraie foi de notre âge" (225). So universally accepted was the idea of progress that in 1848 Louis Blanc proposed the creation of a Ministry of Progress. The Larousse article "Progrès" went on: "De notre temps, si l'on exempte des chagrins ou aveugles, absolument ignorants de l'histoire ou qui rêvent d'impossibles retours vers un passé définitivement enterré, la croyance universelle est que le progrès est la loi même de la marche du genre humain" (225). Baudelaire figured among the "esprits chagrins ou aveugles."

In the light of widespread contemporary enthusiasm, we need to

remind ourselves of the tenacity of Baudelaire's resistance to the idea of progress. Sartre found Baudelaire's attitude remarkable: "On se rend mal compte aujourd'hui de la puissance de ce grand fleuve révolutionnaire et réaliste; aussi apprécie-t-on mal la force que Baudelaire dut déployer pour nager à contre-courant. S'il se fût abandonné, il était emporté, contraint d'affirmer le Devenir de l'humanité, de chanter le Progrès." (209-210) Baudelaire's opposition to the idea of progress was one of the few positions that he maintained throughout his career, but it is especially after 1852, the year that the Second Republic was crushed and the Second Empire established, that we find "une critique systématique du mythe du Progrès" (Williet 423). And the relentlessness and pessimism of Baudelaire's anti-progress polemic is doubtless not unrelated to the defeat of the republican, and Baudelaire's own confused, hopes of 1848. His systematic critique of the idea of progress in the years from 1852 to his death in 1867 coincided with the ascendancy of the bourgeoisie under Louis-Napoléon. Baudelaire's critique is therefore best read not as a simple attack on the idea of progress, but as a counter-discursive strategy that enabled him to challenge the hegemony of the Second Empire bourgeoisie.

The following passage, which constitutes an unexpected and surprisingly long digression in "L'Exposition Universelle", illustrates the nature, as well as the vehemence and energy, of Baudelaire's objections:

> Il est encore une erreur fort à la mode, de laquelle je veux me garder comme de l'enfer. - Je veux parler de l'idée du progrès. Ce fanal obscur, invention du philosophisme actuel, breveté sans garantie de la Nature ou de la Divinité, cette lanterne moderne jette des ténèbres sur tous les objets de la connaissance (...) Qui veut y voir clair dans l'histoire doit avant tout éteindre ce fanal perfide. Cette idée grotesque, qui a fleuri sur le terrain pourri de la fatuité moderne (...) Cette infatuation est le diagnostic d'une décadence déjà trop visible.
>
> Demandez à tout bon Français qui lit tous les jours <u>son</u> journal dans son estaminet ce qu'il entend par progrès, il répondra que c'est la vapeur, l'électricité et l'éclairage au gaz, miracles inconnus aux Romains, et que ces découvertes témoignent pleinement de notre supériorité sur les anciens; tant

> il s'est fait de ténèbres dans ce malheureux cerveau et tant les choses de l'ordre matériel et de l'ordre spirituel s'y sont si bizarrement confondues! Le pauvre homme est tellement américanisée par ses philosophes zoocrates et industriels qu'il a perdu la notion des différences qui caractérisent les phénomènes du monde physique et du monde moral. (CE 217)

Here Baudelaire read the discourse of progress as a species of decadent and technochratic sophistry. To be sure, he was willing to grant the notion of progress a strictly circumscribed value in particular spheres:

> Si une nation entend aujourd'hui la question morale dans un sens plus délicat qu'on ne l'entendait dans le siècle précédent, il y a progrès (...). Si un artiste produit cette année une oeuvre qui témoigne de plus de savoir ou de force imaginative qu'il n'en a montré l'année dernière, il est certain qu'il a progressé. Si les denrées sont aujourd'hui de meilleure qualité et à meilleur marché qu'elles n'étaient hier, c'est dans l'ordre matériel un progrès incontestable. (CE 218)

But Baudelaire insisted the idea of progress has no general validity: "Où est, je vous prie, la garantie du progrès pour le lendemain? Car les disciples des philosophes de la vapeur et des allumettes chimiques l'entendent ainsi: le progrès ne leur apparaît que sous la forme d'une série indéfinie. Où est cette garantie? Elle n'existe (...) que dans votre crédulité et votre fatuité." (CE 219) To this we can juxtapose Larousse's Dictionnaire: "[progrès], qui signifie marche en avant, designe (...) la marche du genre humaine vers sa perfection (...). L'humanité est perfectible et elle va incessament du moins bien au mieux, de l'ignorance à la science, de la barbarie à la civilisation." (224) Baudelaire it seems correctly assessed the position of the philosophers of steam.

The citations I have given suffice to establish Baudelaire's antagonism toward the ideology of progress. But the issue of progress also became an essential one for Baudelaire's poetic endeavours. This is easy to see in the cases of the late and satiric "Pauvre Belgique" and "Amoenitates belgicae". Belgium came to stand for everything Baudelaire detested in modernity, and that he associated with progress. In "Mon Coeur mis à nu" Baudelaire wrote, "[l]a croyance au progrès est une

doctrine de paresseux, une doctrine de Belges" (Oeuvres ed.Ruff, 113). Roger Kempf argues that Belgium represented for Baudelaire a European America, and that Baudelaire's relationship to Belgium should be considered as analogous to the fatal relationship of Poe to the U.S.A. (Kempf 105). Baudelaire, of course, saw Poe as a victim of a monstrous plutocracy cum democracy:

> Il sera toujours difficile d'exercer (...) l'état d'homme de lettres (...). Mais ce qui est difficile dans une monarchie tempérée ou dans un république régulière, devient presque impracticable dans une espèce de carpharnaüm, où chaque sergent de ville de l'opinion fait la police au profit de ses vices, - ou de ses vertus, c'est tout un (...). Brûler des nègres enchaînés (...), jouer du revolver dans un parterre de théâtre, établir la polygamie dans les paradis de l'Ouest, que les sauvages (ce terme a l'air d'une injustice) n'avaient pas encore souillés de ces honteuses utopies, afficher sur les murs, sans doute pour consacrer le principe de la liberté illimitée, la guérison des maladies de neuf mois, tels sont quelques-uns des traits saillants, quelques-uns des illustations morales du noble pays de Franklin, l'inventeur de la morale de comptoir, le héros d'un siècle voué à la matière. (CE 628)

Since the U.S. were the privileged site of modernity and the culture of progress, "Pauvre Belgique", a book about America in Europe, was to be read as "un avertissement pour France". A warning, at a time when "l'américanomanie est devenue presque une passion de bon ton" (CE 628), about what modernity and progress had in store for France.

Is it possible to read Baudelaire's other poetry in terms of the discourse and counter-discourse of progress? On the authority of several "Projets de Préface" sketched for the second and third editions of the Fleurs du Mal, it seems that Baudelaire himself understood his book in terms of its resistance to current social discourse. "Aucun respect humain," wrote Baudelaire, "aucune fausse pudeur, aucune coalition, aucun suffrage universel ne me contraindront à parler le patois incomparable de ce siècle" (Fleurs ed. Adam: 248). He stressed the principal source of his displeasure with his century and country: "La France traverse une phase de vulgarité. Paris, centre et rayonnement de bêtise

universelle (...). [O]n n'aurait jamais cru que la France irait si grand train dans la voie du progrès." (Fleurs ed. Adam: 247) Or again: "Malgré les secours que quelques cuistres célèbres ont apportés à la sottise naturelle de l'homme, je n'aurais jamais cru que notre patrie pût marcher avec une telle vélocité dans la voie du progrès" (Fleurs 248). In these fragmentary texts, all Baudelaire can manage by way of an alternative to the century's unbearable jargon is an exasperated, incredulous gesture towards the most offensive and intolerable catch-word of all. But ultimately in the Fleurs du Mal, Baudelaire did manage to articulate a kind of alternative to contemporary bourgeois discourse. In so doing he engaged and negated the most basic social discourses of his day, and ensured that his most important book met the ironic standard he had set in 1846 when he wrote, "C'est donc à vous, bourgeois, que ce livre est naturellement dédié; car tout livre qui ne s'adresse pas à la majorité (...) est un sot livre" (CE 100).

2.2 Three Counter-Arguments

Claude Pichois observes that "les arguments d'un refus opposé au credo du progrès" were generally borrowed "soit à la nostalgie du passé, soit au christianisme, soit aux sciences biologiques" (Romantisme 64). Both Baudelaire's poetic practice and his case against progress depended on elements from all three sources. From Christianity Baudelaire's most important borrowing was a de Maistrian emphasis on the doctrine of original sin. Clearly, the idea of original sin is incompatible with the optimism and utopianism characteristic of the ideology of progress. In the Grand Dictionnaire, the two ideas are presented as two possible interpretations of the human condition: "A la théorie de la chute de l'homme, inventée par les philosophes anciennes pour expliquer la coexistence de Dieu et du mal dans le monde (...), la philosophie moderne oppose le principe tout à fait contraire de la perfectibilité indéfinie de l'espèce humaine" (224). Baudelaire brings together the two ideas at the end of his review of Hugo's Les Misérables. In an ill-concealed attempt to undermine the engagé pretensions of Hugo's novel, Baudelaire laments, "Hélas! du Péché originel, même après tant de progrès depuis si longtemps promis, il restera toujours assez de traces pour en constater l'immémoriale réalité!" (CE 805) The theme of original sin is given its

fullest poetic treatment in "Abel et Caïn." There humanity is presented as irremediably divided into two races: the one, fruitful, multiplies in prosperity; the other "dans la fange/ Rampe et meurs misérablement."

Baudelaire's debt to Christianity is most evident in his poetry in his interest in the figure of Satan. Benjamin remarked of Baudelaire's Satanism that it "darf nicht allzu schwer genommen werden. Wenn er von einiger Bedeutung ist, so als die einzige Attitude, in des Baudelaire eine nonkonformistische Position auf Dauer zu halten imstande war." (Schriften 1: 524) Though not quite true (think of Baudelaire's dandyism, his eccentricities, his contemporaries' perception of him precisely as a non-conformist), this remark does stress that Baudelaire used a common enough Satanism chiefly to set himself apart from mainstream bourgeois life and discourse. According to the sonnet that served as the epigraph for the Fleurs du Mal's third editon--

> Lecteur paisible et bucolique,
> Sobre et naïf homme de bien,
> Jette ce livre saturnien,
> Orgiaque et mélancolique.
>
> Si tu n'as fait ta rhétorique
> Chez Satan, le rusé doyen,
> Jette! tu n'y comprendrais rien,
> Ou tu me croirais hystérique--

the anti-progressive spirit of Satan informed Baudelaire's very rhetoric. It is significant that Baudelaire explicitly associated irony, which is so fundamental to his work and which as we have seen governed his handling of the sonnet's two-part structure, with the satanic. His comments about the comic also apply to his irony: "Le comique est un des plus clairs signes sataniques de l'homme" (CE 247); "Le rire est l'expression d'un sentiment double, ou contradictoire (...) c'est pour cela qu'il y a convulsion" (CE 253); satanic laughter "accomplit perpétuellement sa fonction, en déchirant et brûlant les lèvres du rieur irrémissible" (CE 250). This aptly describes the role of irony in the rhetorical workings of the Fleurs du Mal.

As regards arguments from biology that could be marshalled to refute the principle of progress, Baudelaire embraced them all with his

insistence on a resolutely inhuman and mortal Nature as a source of corruption and decadence. One extreme formulation of this theme goes: "La nature entière participe du péché originel" (Corr. 7: 131). Baudelaire's well-known celebration of artifice and anti-Romantic denigration of nature--"la nature est laide" (CE 626)--are more evident in the Fleurs du Mal than the Satanic nature of his irony, and can also be seen as an expression of the aesthetic orientation defined by his opposition to the ideology of progress.

More interesting from our point of view, because directly related to Baudelaire's handling of the sonnet, are the uses he found in his poetry for nostalgia and the past. In Baudelaire's poetry, modernity always comes off looking worse in any encounter with the past. This is the case whether the present age is compared to Antiquity ("J'aime les souvenirs de ces époques nues"; "La Muse Malade"), to medieval times ("Le Mauvais Moine"; "La Muse Venale"), or even to the first dawn of Romanticism ("Le Coucher du Soleil Romantique"). The revelation of modernity's degradation by means of this procedure is hardly compatible with the notion of progress. For if the past is consistently found to be ethically, spiritually, and aesthetically superior to the present, the notion of progress in history is cancelled and revealed to be a sham.

This theme is found in one of Baudelaire's few perfectly regular sonnets, "La Lune offensée":

> O Lune qu'adoraient discrètement nos pères,
> Du haut des pays bleus où, radieux sérail,
> Les astres vont te suivre en pimpant attirail,
> Ma vieille Cynthia, lampe de nos repaires,
>
> Vois-tu les amoureux sur leurs grabats prospères,
> De leur bouche en dormant montrer le frais émail?
> Le poëte buter du front sur son travail?
> Ou sous les gazons secs s'accoupler les vipères?
>
> Sous ton domino jaune, et d'un pied clandestin,
> Vas-tu, comme jadis, du soir jusqu'au matin,
> Baiser d'Endymion les grâces surannées?
>
> " - Je vois ta mère, enfant de ce siècle appauvri,

Qui vers son miroir penche un lourd amas d'années,
Et plâtre artistement le sein qui t'a nourri!"

The movement from the facile deployment of cliché to startling dénouement is reminiscent of "Je te donne ces vers," except that the iconoclastic turn is here delayed until the final tercet. As well the violence of the turn is anticipated and thus mitigated by the incongruous, and somewhat morbid, references of the second quatrain. Well before the turn, the slight impertinence of "ma vieille Cynthia," the oxymoronic "grabats prospères," the juxtapositon through rhyme of the lovers and the coupling vipers, the exhaustion of the poet before his task, all disturb the traditional reverent attitude toward the moon. Still, the desolation of the moon's response reveals the inanity of the poet's efforts just as surely as did the shift in reference and rhetoric in the sestet of "Je te donne ces vers."

If in "La Lune offensée" there is a contrast between the discrete reverence of the poet and the moon's disappointment in the poet's impoverished century, a later sonnet depicts the lunar homage that modernity was actually capable of. The Belgium and the Belgians of "Les Belges et la Lune", it should be remembered, for Baudelaire incarnated modernity and the progress of americanization. And these Belgians let us hear modernity's true voice and see modernity's true stance:

Comme l'esprit, ils ont horreur des lumières;
Parfois sous la clarté calme du firmament,
J'en ai vu, qui rongés d'un bizarre tourment,

Dans l'horreur de la fange et du vomissement,
Et gorgés jusqu'aux dents de genièvre et de bières,
Aboyaient à la Lune, assis sur leurs derrières.

As often happens in Baudelaire's work, it is possible to read "La Lune offensée" and "Les Belges et la Lune" as a diptych. Its subject, the poet among the Belgians, is a late version of "L'Albatros"'s grounded "prince des nuées." In the later poems, though, it is not simply the mundane world which cripples the bird-poet, it is specifically his impoverished century--the world of modernity, progress, and Belgium.

3. The Petrarch of the Horrible

Baudelaire a choisi d'être ce Passé conscient. (Sartre 217)

"La Lune offensée" is especially interesting because it draws on the Renaissance for its diction and theme. The tone of its first quatrain calls to mind that of the octave of "Je te donne ces vers," but Crépet and Blin also point out allusions to Desportes in lines 10-11 and to the English Renaissance (Fleurs, ed. Crépet and Blin: 564). Implicit and explicit allusions to the Renaissance abound in the Fleurs du Mal, and the sonnet is not surprisingly one of the principal means by which the Renaissance is evoked. In his exhaustive study of the sonnet, Mönch wrote:

> Die Gedichte erscheinen in dem zeitlichen Abstand, den wir heute nach 100 Jahren von ihnen haben, als das einzige Liederbuch des Weltliteratur, das an Bedeutung und Einfluss Petrarcas "Canzoniere" vergleichbar ist. Die "Blumen des Bosen" sind inhaltlich wie formal das moderne Gegenstück des italienischen Liederbuchs. (Sonett 202)

This makes the Petrarchan tradition the principal literary reference of the Fleurs du Mal, and the Renaissance the most important of the pasts elected to stand in intimate, dialectical relation to the present.

Those who have studied the relationship of Baudelaire and the Fleurs du Mal to the Renaissance stress the pervasive influence of Ronsard and, if not necessarily Petrarch himself, the Petrarchan tradition. It is worth noting some of the more interesting discoveries regarding Baudelaire's closeness to these traditions. Though it is doubtful that Baudelaire's knowledge of Italian or his access to Petrarch's work in translation would have been sufficient for Petrarch's verse to become part of the actual texture of Baudelaire's work (Forsyth 195), Petrarchism had been so widely disseminated that Baudelaire could easily have become familiar with its main features elsewhere. Whatever the source, important parallels exist between Petrarch's and Baudelaire's work. Along with the sonnet itself, Baudelaire's use of antithesis and the oxymoron has been traced to Petrarch (J.A. Scott 559); as have his modes of thematizing eyes (Forsyth 190), his combinations of mysticism and profane love (Vivier 128), and even his preoccupation with spleen or, in Petrarch's vocabulary, acedia (J.A. Scott 550-53).

Easier to trace is the influence of the most important French Petrarchan, Ronsard. The resemblances and points of contact between Ronsard and Baudelaire are quite specific. Elliott Forsyth's intriguing comparison of Ronsard's and Baudelaire's vocabularies shows that "coeur," "amour," "ciel," and "oeil" are among the five most frequently employed nouns in both poets' work, and that in both "oeil" when taken together with its plural "yeux" occurs most often of all (191). The special intimacy suggested by a common vocabulary indicates the degree to which Baudelaire incorporated the work of Ronsard into his own. This is equally evident in certain thematic, generic, and formal features of the Fleurs du Mal. F.W. Leakey shows how poems as different as "Le Beau Navire," "Chanson d'apres midi," "Les Bijoux," "Ciel Brouillé," and numerous others all derive from Renaissance modes of celebrating a woman's charms and virtues in an "amorous tribute" (93-116).

Baudelaire's interest in the Renaissance was by no means unique. Hugo, Lamartine, and Vigny had all used the authority of the Renaissance to justify some of their departures from Classical prosodic norms. So that, though they did not themselves adopt the sonnet, their use of Renaissance metres and other conventions helped create am atmosphere conducive to its revival. It was Sainte-Beuve's Tableau historique et critique de la Poésie et du Thêatre Français au XVIe siècle in 1828 which established a historical and critical framework for contemporary interest in the Renaissance. The study was meant to stimulate contemporary poets: "Pour qui se donnera la peine de rapprocher les doctrines éparses dans ce commentaire et dans mon Tableau de la Poésie au XVIe siècle, il en sortira toute une poétique nouvelle" (404). The young Baudelaire, whom Asselineau described as "cherchant sa voie entre Villon et Ronsard, fou de vieux sonnets et jeunes peintres" (Baudelaire 5), and of whom another friend wrote, "Il ne craignait pas les vieux poètes, Ronsard, Desportes (...), un jour je le trouvai, au quai de Béthune, lisant Ronsard dans un immense volume" (Pichois, Etudes 19-20), seems to have taken Sainte-Beuve's recommendations to heart. In fact, the whole generation which came to maturity after the initial return to the Renaissance, furthered the revival with its appropriation of various Renaissance prosodic conventions, but especially with its adoption of the sonnet as a preferred form.

The adoption of the sonnet by Baudelaire and his contemporaries was not a simple outgrowth of the original Romantic return to the Renaissance. Whereas Hugo's use of older rhythms in Les Orientales (1829) had signaled "le commencement de la libération de la forme en poésie" (Henry 142) which led to the dislocation of the alexandrine, to free verse, and to prose poetry, second and third generation Romantics chose instead to use the Renaissance heritage to reaffirm a strict emphasis on convention. This development was carried furthest by Gautier and "Le Parnasse," but was characteristic even of those poets like Baudelaire who had important differences with the Parnassians. But for Baudelaire, in poems such as "Je te donne ces vers" and "La Lune offensée," the Renaissance became not only a stimulus to formal innovation, but a favourite source of images and themes.

In retrospect it might seem inevitable that the recuperation of the prosodic heritage of the Renaissance would lead to the revival of Petrarchism. But this was not so clear from a nineteenth-century perspective. Of Sainte-Beuve's Tableau, R.A. Katz writes "His motive in writing the work is generally conceded to be a desire to support the Romantic poets by discovering precursors for their theory and verse" (163). Neither Ronsard nor Petrarchism meant much to the early Romantics. Katz notes that "From 1674 until 1828, the date of Sainte-Beuve's resuscitation of Ronsard (...) the great Vendômois languished in complete obscurity" (13), and that it was not until 1857 that "Prosper Blanchemain brought out the first volume of his edition of the complete works of Ronsard, the first since 1630" (15). The republication of his works should not necessarily be read as a sign of Ronsard's successful rehabilitation. As late as 1891, a critic would write, "il semble que malgré les efforts d'illustres avocats, la condemnation contre lui [Ronsard] soit définitive" (Mellerio 138). Be that as it may, Jackson asks of Baudelaire's taste for the French Petrarchans (and anti-Petrarchans), "La sûreté de goût de Baudelaire ne lui aurait-elle pas permis de retrouver, fût-ce sur la foi de quelques vers cités, ses véritables prédécesseurs?" (47) 1857, the year of Blanchemain's edition of Ronsard, was the year of the publication of the Fleurs du Mal. In 1857 the Petrarchan characteristics of Baudelaire's poetry would have struck readers as eccentric.

Indeed, the sonnet became an important aspect of Baudelaire's most noted eccentricity, his dandyism, the aristocratic attitude in which he confronted the world. If we remember Baudelaire's preoccupation with fashion and his own toilette, the mystique of "l'homme du monde" in the Guys essay, and the portrait in "Le Soleil" of the poet's activity as a "fantasque escrime," then Jasinski's description of the sonnet's status in the Renaissance--"il fait partie des connaissances indispensables à l'homme du monde, en même temps que la danse, l'escrime et l'art de se bien vêtir" (114)--seems rather to have been tailor-made for the rakish young Charles Baudelaire who wrote that love was "la seule chose qui vaille la peine de tourner un sonnet et de mettre du linge fin" (Oeuvres, ed. Ruff: 265). To live dandyism meant to write it too; and for Baudelaire the sonnet with its sixteenth-century elegance became an essential means to that end.

An example of Baudelaire's use of Renaissance conventions is the early sonnet "A une dame créole":

> Au pays parfumé que le soleil caresse,
> J'ai connu, sous un dais d'arbres tout empourprés
> Et de palmiers d'où pleut sur les yeux la paresse,
> Une dame créole aux charmes ignorés.
>
> Son teint est pâle et chaud; la brune enchanteresse
> A dans le col des airs noblement maniérés;
> Grande et svelte en marchant comme une chasseresse,
> Son sourire est tranquille et ses yeux assurés.
>
> Si vous alliez, Madame, au vrai pays de gloire,
> Sur les bords de la Seine ou de la verte Loire,
> Belle digne d'orner les antiques manoirs,
>
> Vous feriez, à l'abri des ombreuses retraites,
> Germer mille sonnets dans le coeur des poëtes,
> Que vos grands yeux rendraient plus soumis que vos noirs.

Ronsard's influence is evident in the first tercet--"Le fleuve même de ce coin de France cher à Ronsard, 'la verte Loire', y est nommé" (Cassou-Yager 49), in the allusions to the Renaissance theme of glory, and to the thousand sonnets. But the poem is more than an imitation of Ronsard. Baudelaire skillfully superimposed Renaissance and African

topoi to create a charming union of the archaic and exotic. Baudelaire's exoticism and his "passéisme" operate according to a similar logic, for both involve the superimposition onto, or juxtaposition in, the present of images, semes, allusions, or topoi from different spatial or temporal co-ordinates. The dimension of reference involved in different cases is not an unimportant matter, but as is demonstrated by the combinations of images of both temporal and spatial provenance in "Le Cygne" ("Andromaque, je pense à vous"; "Je pense à la négresse"), the two are closely linked in Baudelaire and are based on a similar contrastive technique. In "A une dame créole," Baudelaire placed the poet's creativity at the exact intersection of spatial and temporal vectors. The structure of these superimpositions of exotic and/or archaic elements is akin to the temporal structures of allegory, the twofold beautiful, and the dialectical image.

A poem whose archaic quality is similar to "A une dame créole" is "A une mendiante rousse:"

Blanche fille aux cheveux roux,
Dont la robe par ses trous
Laisse voir la pauvreté
    Et la beauté,

Pour moi, poëte chétif,
Ton jeune corps maladif,
Plein de taches de rousseur,
    A sa douceur.

Tu portes plus galamment
Qu'une reine de roman
Ses cothurnes de velours
    Tes sabots lourds.

Au lieu d'un haillon trop court,
Qu'un superbe habit de cour
Traîne à plis bruyants et longs
    Sur tes talons;

En place de bas troués,
Que pour les yeux des roués
Sur ta jambe un poignard d'or

Reluise encor;

Que des noeuds mal attachés
Dévoilent pour nos péchés
Tes deux beaux seins, radieux
Comme des yeux;

Que pour te déshabiller
Tes bras se fassent prier
Et chassent à coups mutins
Les doigts lutins,

Perles de la plus belle eau,
Sonnets de maître Belleau
Par tes galants mis aux fers
Sans cesse offerts,

Valetaille de rimeurs
Te dédiant leurs primeurs
Et contemplant ton soulier
Sous l'escalier,

Maint page épris du hasard,
Maint seigneur et maint Ronsard
Épieraient pour le déduit
Ton frais réduit!

Tu compterais dans tes lits
Plus de baisers que de lys
Et rangerais sous tes lois
Plus d'un Valois!

- Cependant tu vas gueusant
Quelque vieux débris gisant
Au seuil de quelque Véfour
De carrefour;

Tu vas lorgnant en dessous
Des bijoux de vingt-neuf sous!
Dont je ne puis, oh! pardon!
Te faire don.

Va donc, sans autre ornement,
Parfum, perles, diamant,
Que ta maigre nudité,
O ma beauté!

Here Baudelaire took up the theme of the "belle mendiante." The poem's stanza and rhythms derive from Ronsard's "A la fontaine Bellerie," and the association is reinforced by archaic vocabulary and references to the Renaissance: to "le déduit" (16th-century amourous diversions); to "un Valois" (a reference to the dynasty that reigned in Ronsard's time); to Ronsard himself; and to the "sonnets de maître Belleau."

Oddly enough, explicit references to sonnets, like this last one to Belleau's sonnets, are exceedingly rare in the Fleurs du Mal. The lack of references to the sonnet in a collection containing so many examples of the form seems odd in the light of the contemporary practice of employing the word sonnet in a sonnet's title, and of the nineteenth-century vogue for sonnets on the sonnet (such as the one by Sainte-Beuve quoted in Chapter 1) wherein the sonnet was invariably named. Though the sonnet is mentioned in the two poems we have been considering, it is named again in the Fleurs du Mal only in the title "Sonnet d'Automne." Significantly "Sonnet d'Automne", like "A une dame créole" and "A une mendiante rousse", involves the imitation of conventions characteristic of the Pléiade,[1] confirming that the idea of the sonnet was tied to the evocation of the Renaissance. It is as if Baudelaire eschewed any reference to the sonnet, except when it might usefully serve as a reminder of the form's historical origins and identity.

The evocation of the Renaissance in "A une mendiante rousse" is basic to the poem's construction. The poem's first stanza finishes with a rhyme on "pauvreté" and "beauté," introducing an opposition elaborated in the course of the poem. This opposition develops into an alternation between a celebration of the woman's beauty by means of conventions typical of the Renaissance and of the evocation of its gallantry and decor, and an equally insistent presentation of the beggar's (and the poet's) experience of an impoverished modernity. Initially, the incongruity of the woman's beauty and her poverty prompts the "poète chétif" of the second stanza to seek out a more appropriate setting and language for his subject. Her rags, her clumsy footwear, her threadbare socks are

thus replaced by the rich wardrobe of an imaginary "reine de roman" in order that the beggar's charms and beauty may, as it were, appear in their native costume. Similarly, the "sonnets de maître Belleau;" the "rimeurs" who dedicate their "primeurs" to the woman; and all the "roués," "gallants," and versifiers contemplating her shoe and her breasts, caressing her arms or filling her bed with kisses are figures for the "poète chétif," also a devoted voyeur, who will reappear in the poems final stanzas. Unlike his Renaissance counterparts, he is unable to offer the girl even a tawdry "bijou de vingt-neuf sous." A sonnet-like turn and a flourish of pathos at stanza twelve bring the poem to a climax as the woman is torn from the fabric of the sixteenth-century daydream, and seen begging for scraps "Au seuil de quelque Véfour/ De carrefour," and ogling the cheap, but unattainable jewelry. Finally, the poet strips her of all "ornement,/ Parfum, perles, diamant" to leave her with nothing but the "pauvreté" and the "maigre nudité" which no longer seem opposed to, so much as synonymous with, her beauty. The attention to the contrast between the wardrobes of the beggar and her various Renaissance counterparts may be read in the light of Baudelaire's identification of fashion and "la modernité" as a privileged site of modernity. From this perspective the beggar becomes, in contrast to the imaginary "reine de roman," the emblem of the truth of modernity, a truth no elegant fictions can disguise, and stands as a testimony against the arrogance and vanity of "un siècle infatué de lui-même" (CE 625).

Throughout the Fleurs du Mal, as in "A une mendiante rousse," Baudelaire makes use of the Renaissance to reveal the poverty and degradation of modernity. Jackson discusses this strategy in relation to "Une Charogne," a poem which "contient à sa façon un art poétique" (69). He analyzes the poem's Petrarchan features, and observes that "[r]eprenant le ton et surtout la rhétorique d'un pétrarquisme éculé (...) le poème en contraste l'idéalisme implicite par le choix d'un objet, la charogne, qui en est la négation" (65). He concludes that this "parodie (...), qui peut fort bien passer pour un but en soi, indique à la fois l'épuisement d'un héritage poétique - en l'occurence la tradition idéaliste - et la nouvelle réalité à laquelle cet héritage est appelé à se confronter, sinon à faire droit" (66). We have seen variations of this technique in "Je te donne ces vers," "La Lune offensée," and "A une

mendiante rousse," and it is an important one. As Ainslie McLees writes, "[b]eyond the traditional theme of the memento mori, beyond 'Une Charogne's' strange versification, diction, obscene vocabulary and banter, lies an esthetic statement which ushers in modernity" (122). The monstrous mistress of "Je te donne ces vers," the corpse of "Une Charogne," the beggar of "A une mendiante rousse," are all emblems of a degraded world, and in each case the extent of the world's degradation is revealed by contrast to the idealism of the Petrarchan tradition. In all three the erotic transcendence promised by that tradition is frustrated, and in all three this is registered through an ironic shifting back and forth between past and present.

Modernity's relationship to the Renaissance is analogous to that of the relationship of signs in allegory. The contrast of the Petrarchan tradition and the modern world is, we have seen, the source of a great deal of the Fleurs du Mal poetic force; and in the gap between the incongruous images of the Renaissance and the nineteenth century Baudelaire's irony finds room to perform its critical deconstruction of allegory. Chapter 3's association of irony with destructive perversion gains a certain depth when seen as an aspect of Baudelaire's appropriation of Petrarchism. In Baudelaire's ironic modern allegory, the Petrarchan spiritualization of the erotic regresses into fetishism and violence.

The negation of an idealizing Petrarchan tradition through reference to modernity's new reality necessarily involves a revelation of the character of this new reality. We have seen Baudelaire's preoccupation with modernity and his abhorrence of its major tendencies. The world of fashion alone provoked in Baudelaire the desire to linger over modernity's charms. Otherwise Baudelaire's response to modernity is relentlessly negative. In both his prose and verse he fixes upon the degradation of the industrial worker and the urban poor, the emergence of technocracy, the arrogance of public opinion, the indecency of metropolitan life, the banality of commodification, and the sophisms of the ideology of progress. I have emphasized Baudelaire's opposition to the discourse of progress and the way his poetry can be read as counter-discursive because the ideology of progress dominated discursive paradigms of contemporary France. In 1865 Pierre Larousse heralded in the name of progress "l'avenement d'un âge nouveau (...) affranchi des

langes du passé." In poem's such as "A une mendiante rousse", Baudelaire, in diametrical opposition to Larousse's vision, retrieved the "langes du passé," and dressed the present up in the styles of the past the better to see modernity for what it was. And this holds true for the collection as a whole. Sainte-Beuve saw this at once: "Vous avez," he wrote to Baudelaire, "voulu arracher leurs secrets aux démons de la nuit. En faisant cela avec subtilité, avec raffinement, avec un talent curieux et un abandon quasi précieux d'expressions, en perlant le détail, en pétrarquisant sur l'horrible, vous avez l'air de vous être joué" (in Pichois Lettres 332). Modernity no longer convinces that "il y a une distance énorme entre l'homme des premiers âges (...) et l'homme qui vit en pleine civilisation, dans un centre où l'action du progrès se fait vivement sentir" (Larousse 226), instead, in Baudelaire it becomes the site of a catastrophe to be measured by the standards of the past.

The anti-closure of Baudelaire's sonnets can also be read in terms of the discourse of progress. In Chapter 3, this anticlosure was associated with the negativity of irony, and we can see that this ironic negativity was an aspect of the counter-discursive dimensions of Baudelaire's poetry. What appeared as a purely textual strategy frustrating the desire for closure and for the intelligibility of totality can now be appreciated in terms of a poetic whose restlessness had much to do with its opposition to dominant ideological and discursive paradigms. The unintelligible seriality to which the irony and anticlosure of Baudelaire's poems lead stands in stark contrast to the totalizing and teleological tendencies of the ideology of progress. Against the totalizing sophistry of the discourse of progress is opposed Baudelaire's catastrophe of seriality. At the end of "Les Septs Vieillards," we saw this seriality and unintelligibility explicitly thematized. So Victor Hugo's response to this very poem--

> En avant! c'est le mot du Progrès, c'est aussi le cri de l'Art. Tout le verbe de la Poésie est là. (...) Que faites-vous quand vous écrivez ces vers saisissants? Vous marchez. Vous allez en avant. (...) Le poète ne peut aller seul, il faut que l'homme aussi se déplace. Les pas de l'Humanité sont donc les pas même de l'Art. -Donc gloire au Progrès (Lettres, ed. Pichois: 187-88)

--is itself more than a little ironic. Could there have been a more

wrong-headed commentary on Baudelaire's poem and poetry?

The tenacity of Baudelaire's opposition to the ideology of progress was part of a deep unease about the empirical world of nineteenth-century modernity. At its most powerful, Baudelaire's poetry rose to the challenge of a threatening modernity: turning away from dreams of progress, in poems such as "Les Septs Vieillards," "Le Vin des chiffoniers," "A une mendiante rousse," "Recueillement," he sought beauty in the world of Paris at its most resistant. Just as often, however, we find Baudelaire taking up the theme of impotence. "La Cloche fêlée" was a key development of this theme. There the crisis of spleen is a crisis of artistic impotence. The fissured bell of the sestet appeared dismally inadequate in comparison to the Delacroix of "Les Phares" and to the bell of the octave's vigourous clock. And does that happy old soldier of a clock not resemble Hugo, mouthpiece of the doctrine of progress and the only living poet Baudelaire ever put on an equal footing with Delacroix? "La Cloche fêlée," the sonnet about self-division and the crisis of spleen, is also a poem about the differences between Victor Hugo, the clock and spokesman of his time, and Charles Baudelaire, speechless dissenting conscience of a time gone out of joint.

Benjamin's thesis that Baudelaire's hostility to progress was the source of his imaginative power over Paris, the premier city of modernity, was part of the larger argument that Baudelaire's position within the bourgeoisie was that of the discontented and dissident. Benjamin recuperated the negativity of Baudelaire's rhetoric and poetry--in particular, his use of the past and of nostalgia--by reading it as critical. It is interesting to consider the comments of another critic struck by Baudelaire's passéisme. Judging it a symptom of an existential pathology with origins in a flight from the exigencies of the present. Sartre argued that for Baudelaire "la dimension principale de la temporalité, c'est le passé. C'est elle qui donne son sens au présent (...) Le rapport du présent au passé c'est le Progrès à rebours." (211) Or again, "ce qui compte plutôt, c'est qu'une forme exquise et inégalable soit apparue une fois dans les brouillards reculés (...) de l'histoire et que (...) toutes les institutions de la société en soient des images indignes et coupables." (213) This describes the kind of Classicism which Baudelaire rejected in his attack on Neo-Paganism. But

I have tried to argue that Baudelaire does not exhibit these Neo-Classical tendencies. Though his verse is shot through with archaic allusions and constantly evokes the exquisite forms of the past, this is precisely what enables Baudelaire to find his real focus in the present and modernity. His procedure is a mirror image of Daumier's. Baudelaire valued Daumier's grotesque depictions of antique heroes as jaded modern actors because they broke the spell Classicism still cast over his contemporaries. In contrast, Baudelaire called forth the idealism of the Renaissance to shatter the self-image a narcissistic modernity had made for itself. The pervasive presence of the past in the Fleurs du Mal is not to be construed as an unrealistic, cowardly passéisme, it is rather part of a probing critique of the present.

Benjamin held that Baudelaire's hostility towards progress was a necessary condition for the success of his poetic endeavours. We should bear in mind that, for Benjamin, Baudelaire's poetic domination of Paris involved above all the integrity of his resistance to the phantasmagoria of capitalism. Baudelaire's opposition to progress was a condition sine qua non for the representation of life in the nineteenth century because the discourse of progress had become an apologetics for the confusion of human beings and society with commodities and technocracy. In his poetry, Baudelaire's chief means of criticizing modernity was through strategic recourse to nostalgia and the past. This procedure had pronounced ideological and counter-discursive implications, and was consistent with Baudelaire's penchant for allegory and his theory of beauty's temporal constitution.

Both the twofold beautiful and the use of allegory in Baudelaire are illuminated by Benjamin's theory of the dialectical image. The dialectical image is not primarily an aesthetic phenomena or a rhetorical practice. It is an epistemological concept intended to explain certain key features of historical consciousness. One of these features was the connection that Benjamin perceived between the possibility of historical understanding and the experience of threat. That Baudelaire experienced his time and his modernity as acutely threatening is made clear in texts such as the "Exposition Universelle de 1855" and "Notes Nouvelles sur Edgar Poe" that date from 1852. After the "coup d'état" of 1852, the political ascendancy of the bourgeoisie was announced by

the ideological and discursive domination of the idea of progress. We have seen that like his critical texts Baudelaire's allegorical poetics ran counter to the Second Empire's major discursive currents. In the theory of the dialectical image a correspondence exists between the present and a moment of the past, and this correspondence is a function of the identity of the present as a unique historical moment or Jetzt-zeit. Why did Petrarchism tantalize Baudelaire and become the prime historico-literary reference for the Fleurs du Mal? The correspondence between the Renaissance and the present in Baudelaire is extremely problematic. Clearly, modernity and the Renaissance are brought together only to reveal the extent of their incongruity and the finality of their separation. What flashed forth from their poetic fusion was the recognition of the impossibility of sustaining the Petrarchan idealism of the Renaissance in the context of nineteenth-century modernity. So it is that both the twofold beautiful and the allegorical rhetoric of the Fleurs du Mal come to be marked by the ironic movement of disenchanted self-knowledge. An extremely early poem such as "A Une Créole" could maintain its conceit to the end, but none of the allegorical poems of Baudelaire's maturity are spared the intrusions of irony. This irony is an expression of Baudelaire's experience of life in the Second Empire. And together, Baudelaire's allegorical recuperation of the Renaissance and the ironic deconstruction of his own allegory constituted an essential characteristics of his poetry. We have seen that the sonnet had a vital role to play in both the rallying of Baudelaire's allegory and deployment of his irony.

Unlike Benjamin's version of the present's redemption of the past, Baudelaire's recuperation of the historical images of Petrarchism was invariably negative; it did not lead to a revival of Petrarchan idealism. Thus, the present did not gain through the hopes of the past access to its future, as Benjamin thought it must. How could it have, when a decadent discourse of progress had already laid absolute claim to the whole future? For Baudelaire, the allegorical use of the Petrarchan tradition could only be critical. Jetztzeit is time fraught with danger, and heavy with a unique awareness of the present and the past. Baudelaire perceived that the Petrarchan tradition could speak about modernity in a unique way. And one thing it could help him articulate

was a worthy response to the discourse of progress.

1. ""Sonnet d'Automne" lui aurait paru dépourvu de valeur s'il n'avait à la façon des vers de Ronsard ou de Du Bellay, rapproché l'image de la femme aimée et la fleur dont elle portait le nom." (Baudelaire Fleurs du Mal, ed. Adam: 355.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has endeavoured to locate Baudelaire's sonnets historically. It should be evident from the amount of ground we have had to cover that this is an exceedingly complex project.

I first isolated the most significant aspects of the French sonnet tradition as Baudelaire received it. These were three: first, that the sonnet came to France in a Petrarchan context; second, that the sonnet had been subsequently claimed by a normative Classicist poetics which ensured it a canonical status while rendering it impracticable as a verse form; and finally, that the break in the sonnet tradition which occurred with the form's canonization meant that in France the sonnet remained especially closely identified with the Renaissance and Petrarchism. Much of the rest of my thesis has been concerned to show how the last two factors--the one formal, the other rhetorical and thematic--figured in Baudelaire's handling of the sonnet. When considering the formal characteristics of Baudelaire's sonnets in the context of the French tradition, I was guided by the Formalist notion that literary innovation and evolution are effects of deviations from a norm. Taking into account Shklovsky's principle that "a work of art is perceived against a background of, and by means of association with, other works of art" (Russian Formalism, ed. Bann and Bowlt, 53), and the heuristic concepts of the norm and of the transgression of a norm (automatization and ostranenie), I was able to locate Baudelaire's sonnets diachronically in terms of the persistent Classical sonnet tradition and synchronically in terms of nineteenth-century Romantic/ Classical antinomies.

The dialectic of norm and transgression turned out to be quite complex. Not only did critical reactions to his sonnets demonstrate that they had a transgressive force with respect to Classical norms, but a consideration of the synchronic situation showed that in the context of Romanticism the sonnet had a decidedly Classical significance. The transgression of Classical presciptions concerning rhyme was balanced by a preservation of the Classical insistence on convention and formal perfection. Because of this insistence and because of the incongruity of the sonnet's conventions with Romantic poetics, the sonnet's Classicist connotations had a definite un-Romantic status, and therefore transgressed a second, Romantic, set of poetic norms. Here too, howev-

er, the transgression of Romantic poetics was offset by Baudelaire's answer to the question of the significance of technique. In Baudelaire's understanding of modern art, conventions and technique were not rules, but poetic means to artistic expression. His recourse to Classical technical resources did not involve a renouncement of Romanticism's fundamental subjective orientation. The notions of norm and transgression thus revealed a double dialectic in Baudelaire's sonnets, in which two opposing prosodic and rhetorical norms were transgressed and preserved to create a peculiar aesthetic density and complex literary historical significance.

The Formalist notion of literary evolution helped situate Baudelaire's sonnets within the diachronic and synchronic horizons of French poetry. In the field of literary discourse, Baudelaire's formal decisions were inscribed in a dynamic to which the Formalist model was clearly relevant. Recently, though, literary historians have tried "to overcome the dichotomy of intrinsic (formal or literary) and extrinsic (social or thematic or ideological) values" (Frow 85) that characterized Formalism. Not content with a merely formalistic literary history, they search for ways to place literary phenomena in broader discursive contexts. This is the direction my own argument took. There are two ways to make the move from the formal to the discursive qualities of Baudelaire's sonnets.

Victor Hugo's name has been raised several times in the course of this thesis. Baudelaire's preoccupation with Hugo is well-known,[1] and just as the formal qualities of Baudelaire's verse can be seen as a reaction to Victor Hugo's Romantic poetry and aesthetic, so can Baudelaire's relation to the general discursive economy of his time be illuminated through reference to Hugo. Baudelaire's reaction against Hugo was not solely a matter of prosodic and aesthetic differences. Hugo also embodied the idea of progress which defined the social discourse of the day, and his evangelizing in the name of progress revolted Baudelaire. Consequently, Hugo provides a mediating term to bring together the restricted discursive field of poetic production and the general context of social discourse, so that the local literary dialectic of trangression and norm, examined in Chapters 1 and 2, stands in metonymic relation (cf. Frow 128) to the global dialectic of discursive

norms and their transgression. Baudelaire's formal rupture with Hugo the poet, including his adoption of the sonnet, cannot be isolated from his rupture with Hugo the ideologue. This is one way to see an otherwise purely formal literary problem such as Baudelaire's use of the sonnet in the light of ideology, one way to move from the intertextual literary relations of Hugo's and Baudelaire's poetry to an interdiscursive ideological problematic.

Baudelaire's recasting of the sonnet involved more than tampering with rhyme schemes. In Chapter 3, I investigated the poetics of Baudelaire's sonnets, and argued that de Man's analysis of the temporality of certain literary and rhetorical configurations also illuminates Baudelaire's achievements with the sonnet. The shared temporality of allegory and irony not only helped explain their association in Baudelaire's work, it shed light on the use he made of the sonnet's two-part structure. The "before and after" structure of irony was especially relevant to Baudelaire's exploitation of the sonnet's implicit temporality; and the restlessness of an endlessly renewed irony helped explain the anti-closure of many of Baudelaire's sonnets. Furthermore, the structure and temporality of the sonnet, and the ironic resistance to closure, were seen to have constituted a general formal and poetic model for much of Baudelaire's other poetry. "Je te donne ces vers" illustrated how allegorical, ironic, and formal tendencies of Baudelaire's work came together to startling effect.

Chapter 2 had introduced the problem of the modern in Baudelaire. There it was emphasized that Baudelaire's Romanticism involved the privileging of subjectivity in art. Baudelaire's designation of the subjective as the defining feature of <u>modern</u> art represents one of the most precise senses of modern in Baudelaire's whole oeuvre. Modern art, however, involved more than the subjectivity of "intimité, spiritualité, couleur, aspiration vers l'infini," it also depended on the mastery of artistic means (<u>CE</u> 103). This formula was an expression of Baudelaire's synthesis of Romantic and Classical aesthetic concerns. An artist achieved this synthesis through the harmony of "sa couleur," "son sujet," "son dessin" (<u>CE</u> 239). Here colour and design represent Romantic and Classical concerns respectively. In the case of Baudelaire's sonnets, I showed that the elements thought of as Classical (cf.

the right-hand column of Chapter 2's paradigm) were employed to ends that Baudelaire identified with Romanticism. The rhetoric and prosody of Baudelaire's sonnets reflected his understanding of modern, Romantic aesthetics.

But what of the third element in the synthesis of modern art--"le sujet?" In Chapter 4, I sorted through the other sense of "the modern" in Baudelaire's poetics. Misunderstandings of Baudelaire's concept of "la modernité" lead to one-sided interpretations and mystifications of his work. "La modernité" defined in the Guys' essay is a subset of the modern life which Guys painted, and which also constituted Baudelaire's subject matter. Henri Meschonnic reminds us that "[d]ans Le Peintre de la vie moderne, la vie est moderne. Pas le peintre. Ni l'art." (Modernité 115) And Meschonnic's comment--"[à] vrai dire (...) Baudelaire ne fait que traverser l'art, et (...) ne s'intéresse qu'à la vie" (119)--indicates the trajectory of my own thesis: both move from purely poetic concerns to the question of Baudelaire's attitude toward his time.

To sort through the implications of "Le Peintre de la vie moderne." I argued that this essay's analysis of the temporality of beauty is most illuminating when read not as the definitive expression of Baudelaire's aesthetics, but as a further articulation of the sensibility already encountered in Chapter 2. The tendency to bring about a synthesis of opposites was again evident in Baudelaire's notion of the twofold beautiful. The opposition at issue in the definition of the beautiful was that of time to eternity, and we saw how this opposition translates into the opposition of the present and the past. The temporal category of the present was basic to Baudelaire's understanding of the nature of beauty, but presentness, actuality, contemporaneity, are purely chronological senses of the term modern in Baudelaire's criticism. His definition of beauty proposes rather that beauty involves a dialectic of a substantial present and a substantial past.

A second way of overcoming the apparent dichotomy of the literary and the social is the one pursued in Chapter 5. There I focussed on the other aspect of the French sonnet, its association with the Renaissance, and read this connection in terms of the discourse of progress. Baudelaire's incorporation of Petrarchism into the Fleurs du Mal was seen to be so thorough that Mönch could describe the collection as the modern

counterpart of Petrarch's Canzoniere. We saw that Baudelaire's Petrarchism was as un-Romantic as were the formal characteristics of the sonnet. In the context of the discourse of progress, Baudelaire's exploitation of Petrarchan conventions for poetic effect was shown to have had a critical and counter-discursive significance. The shift in focus from Chapters 1 and 2 to Chapter 5 therefore represents a movement from the formal and purely poetic to the ideological and discursive. This movement from the poetic to the social discursive is repeated as I move from Chapter 3 to Chapter 5. In Chapter 5's discussion of contemporary social discourse, the rhetorical and temporal structures which de Man identified assume a distinctly critical force; and de Man's analysis of the temporality of allegory contributed importantly to my analysis of the discursive ramifications of Baudelaire's interest in the Renaissance and the significance of Petrarchan elements in his poetry.

The shift from Chapter 4 to Chapter 5, from the abstract notion of the modern as present in Baudelaire's theory of beauty to the explicitly historical sense of the modern as nineteenth-century Paris, concluded the shift from the formal to the ideological. This involved as well a shift from Baudelaire's understanding of the temporal origins of beauty to Baudelaire's historical consciousness. Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History" enabled us to see Baudelaire's experience of nineteenth-century modernity, in particular his attitude towards the utterly central discourse of progress, in terms of the structures of historical awareness. The notions of Jetztzeit, of threat, of the historical understanding implicit in the dialectical image, of the critical and redemptive potential of the present, served to bring together the investigations and conclusions of earlier chapters. Benjamin's concepts help us discern in the allegorical tendencies and the sharp irony of the Fleurs du Mal, in the appropriation of the sonnet and Petrarchism, and in the counter-discursive resonances of Baudelaire's poetry, a coherent and acutely historical response to his epoch.

Thus, the attempt to understand the historical position of Baudelaire's sonnets has led to the tracing of two concentric circles. First, it involved the problem--well-known from traditional literary history, but here developed on several levels--of moving from the significance of the sonnets in a diachronic and synchronic literary dynamic to the

ideological ramifications of the sonnets within contemporary social discourse. Second, it involved moving from that significance to an exploration of the nature of Baudelaire's experience of modernity, and of the relation of his poetry to nineteenth-century ideology. Benjamin's understanding of historical consciousness provided the terms for interpreting the negative aspects of this relationship as part of a critical response to nineteenth-century bourgeois discursive hegemony. Benjamin also provided a means of reading the rhetorical, formal, aesthetic, and thematic qualities of Baudelaire's sonnets as significant elements in the articulation of this historically symptomatic counter-discursive response.

1. We have seen Baudelaire praising and scoffing at Victor Hugo. It is not surprising to find Harold Bloom, the most insistent present-day theorist of poetic influence, writing of Baudelaire's remarks about "that victorious poetic father, the so-often reviled but never forgotten Victor Hugo" (Bloom 1) that "the whip of ambivalence lashed back and forth in Baudelaire" (Bloom 6). But leave aside the psychological aspects of their relationship, and Hugo is still a key to understanding Baudelaire's situation. Valéry wrote that "si l'on y mettait quelque malice et un peu plus d'ingéniosité qu'il ne convient, il ne serait que trop tentant de rapprocher la poésie de Victor Hugo de celle de Baudelaire, dans le dessein de faire paraître celle-ci comme exactement <u>complémentaire</u> de celle-la" (602). I have not compared Baudelaire's poetry to Hugo's, but I have argued that Baudelaire's interest in the sonnet is part of a turn away from the poetics of Hugo and the other Romantics. Though one can hardly say that Hugo's poetry had become automatized for the reading public, it had clearly achieved the absolute status of a norm for Baudelaire which he had to break with in order to create a radically different poetry.

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