

APPEAL TO THE SENSES IN BAUDELAIRE'S

LES FLEURS DU MAL

A THESIS

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CHAPTER I

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate how Charles Baudelaire used the senses in his poetry. Baudelaire was a person whose sensory perceptions were extraordinarily keen. This unusual sensitivity manifested itself in his poems. In Les Fleurs du mal, the collection of poems that constitutes his major claim to renown, Baudelaire included a number of poems that are provocative to one or more of the five senses.

In this study, a chapter has been devoted to each of the five senses. Within the chapter devoted to the sense of smell have been placed some poems from Les Fleurs du mal that especially stir the olfactory sense. Each of the other four senses has been similarly treated. In some instances, a given poem evokes more than one of the senses, and has therefore been examined in two or more of the chapters. Sometimes the same poem, though never the same passage, appears two or more times in a single chapter. Not all of the poems in Les Fleurs du mal have been included in this study, but only those that especially appeal to one or more of the five sensory perceptions. Only a representative portion of the poems that appeal to a particular sense are presented in the chapter devoted to that sense.

The following chapter in this thesis has been devoted to the life of Charles Baudelaire. To this study, however,

the chapter on the life and experiences of the author has more than the customary importance. Charles Baudelaire was the product of his experiences. So also was his poetry. If his poetry was despondent, complicated, controversial, so was his life. An understanding of Baudelaire the man is imperative if one is to study his poetry successfully. Because this extraordinary man possessed such unusual ideas, a separate chapter has been devoted to Baudelaire's attitudes and poetic theories.

Now considered one of the greatest of French poets, Baudelaire was not greatly appreciated in his own nineteenth-century world. Baudelaire's contemporaries were shocked by his glorification of sordidness, ugliness, and evil. Baudelaire wanted to shock; partly because it enabled him to give vent to his hostilities; partly because he believed in the natural depravity of man, and he found beauty in ugliness.

Baudelaire was an unhappy man. His poetry is filled with his bitterness and his disillusion. One can only guess as to whether Baudelaire would have been a more contented person, had he been born in the twentieth century with its taste for the real, the unusual, the original. This, though, seems certain: his works would have been much more highly esteemed by his contemporaries, were he writing today.

CHAPTER II

LIFE AND WORKS OF CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

Charles Baudelaire was born in Paris April 21, 1821, in a turreted old home in the Rue Hautefeuille. His mother, Caroline, a woman in her mid-twenties, was thirty-four years younger than her husband, François. "Gallant et Lettré . . .,"¹ François Baudelaire was a private tutor at the Collège Sainte-Barbe. Later he became the private tutor for the family of the duc de Choiseul-Praslin. During the French Revolution, François Baudelaire had courageously stood by the Choiseul-Praslins; and when the latter regained their influence, they used it to make Baudelaire "chef des bureaux de la Préture du Sénat."²

François Baudelaire considered himself a connaisseur of the arts. He painted in his spare time, but his talent was very mediocre. The relationship between the gentle and understanding François and his son was good. His father's influence would later be shown in Charles' faultless manners, his dandyism, and his interest in the arts. When he was six, Charles lost his beloved father. This loss and his mother's subsequent remarriage were to have an unhappy

¹Georges Roth (ed.), Les Fleurs du Mal et Poésies divers (Paris: Librairies Larousse, 1927), p. 5.

²Ibid., p. 6.

influence on Charles' whole life.

For one year Charles was happy and pampered in the company of his young widowed mother. In poetry Charles was later to recall the brief period of contentment he knew in his mother's home at Neuilly:³

Je n'ai pas oublié, voisine de la ville,
Notre blanche maison, petite mais tranquille;
Sa pomone de plâtre et sa vieille Vénus
Dans un bosquet chétif leurs membres nus. . . .

When Charles was seven, his mother became Madame Jacques Aupick. A major at the time of their marriage, Jacques Aupick later became a general, served as ambassador at Constantinople, then in Madrid, and in 1853 was made a Senator. A "mama's boy," Charles greatly resented his mother's giving so much time to her new official duties. Aupick and his stepson were exact opposites. Aupick was down-to-earth, a dedicated worker, who would never be able to understand the sensitive, procrastinating Charles and his love for luxury and the arts. ". . . Aupick was a man of scrupulous integrity who did everything in his power to develop in Charles the strength of character which he himself possessed."⁴ Charles ". . . hated and insulted the kindly, honest Aupick."⁵

³Claude Pichois (ed.), Les Fleurs du mal (Paris: Editions Gallimard et Librairie Générale, 1965), p. 116.

⁴Lois and Francis Hyslop, Baudelaire: A Self-Portrait (London: Oxford University, 1957), p. 4.

⁵Ibid.

In 1832 Aupick was named chief of staff, and the family moved to Lyon, where Charles was placed in a military boarding school, and later in the Collège Royal de Lyon. The ". . . child poet, delicate, compulsive, and aristocratic to his fingertips, . . ." ⁶ found the rough, rigid atmosphere of the school completely foreign to his nature. His classmates, with whom he had nothing in common, mocked him. Charles himself later commented on his school days in Lyon: "Après 1830, le collège de Lyon, coups, batailles avec les professeurs et les camarades, lourdes mélancolies."⁷

With his family back in Paris in 1836, Charles became a boarder at the famous Collège Louis-le-Grand. In 1836 and 1837 he was recognized by his professors for achievements in Latin. His success at Louis-le-Grand was short-lived, however; for in 1839 he was dismissed from the school for misconduct. He was able to complete his preparation for the baccalauréat at the Pension Lévêque et Bailly; and in August, 1839, he received his diploma.

Baudelaire announced to his family that he wanted to be a writer. Appalled, the Aupicks persuaded him to prepare for the entrance examinations for the École des Chartes, where

⁶ Joseph D. Bennett, Baudelaire: A Criticism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), p. 2.

⁷ Pascal Pia, Baudelaire par lui-même (Bourges: l'Imprimerie Tardy, 1952), p. 17.

they hoped he would prepare for a diplomatic career. He was placed in a student lodging house in the Latin Quarter, where he began to live the Bohemian life. "Il partage inégalement son temps entre les bibliothèques, les musées, les amitiés littéraires et les filles."⁸ Here Baudelaire took his first mistress, an ugly prostitute named Sarah, whom Baudelaire called Louchette because of her squint-eyes,⁹ and whom he was later to immortalize in verse. Here, too, Baudelaire contracted syphilis, the disease that was to make his later life miserable and eventually to cause his death.

Upset by their son's lack of constructive work, his companions, his dissipation, the Aupicks took five thousand francs from Baudelaire's paternal inheritance and sent him on a voyage to India. There is controversy over whether Baudelaire ever reached India or not, but he left France in June, 1841, and returned the following February. The trip helped develop his sensibility and his imagination and provided him a wealth of images from which to draw.¹⁰ He returned to France with ". . . a more pronounced partiality for dark skins, tropical odours and tamarind trees."¹¹ Baudelaire spent some

⁸ Ibid., p. 21.

⁹ Hyslop, op. cit., p. 10.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 12.

¹¹ p. Mansell Jones, Baudelaire (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), p. 12.

time on the islands of Réunion and Maurice. On l'île Maurice his host's wife and her foster sister, a Malabar Indian girl, were to prove the inspiration of some lovely verses.

Upon his return to Paris, Baudelaire lived for a time with his parents. Friction between the Aupicks and the aspiring young poet led Baudelaire to seek private accommodations. He first rented a modest one-room apartment on the Quai de Béthune. By the autumn of 1843, Baudelaire had moved to an apartment in the Hôtel Pimodan, which was ". . . a kind of literary lodging-house where all Bohemia met."¹² Here he smoked hashish and opium with members of the Club des Haschischins. At this period, Baudelaire became acquainted with Théophile Gautier and Théodore de Banville.

In 1842 Baudelaire reached his majority and received his paternal inheritance, which amounted to about one hundred thousand francs.¹³ He lived in such a fashion that he was soon plunged into debt, a condition which continued the rest of his life. He found it hard to settle down to serious work. "He was a brilliant conversationalist and would spend hours entertaining his listeners with his knowledge of art and literature, his paradoxical ideas, and his habitual mystifications."¹⁴ Generous and reckless with his money, he often

¹²T. R. Smith (ed.), Baudelaire: His Prose and Poetry (New York: The Modern Library, 1925), p. 15.

¹³Pia, op. cit., p. 22.

¹⁴Hyslop, op. cit., p. 17.

squandered it on friends.

Baudelaire considered himself a dandy. He believed that the dandy ". . . n'a pas d'autre occupation que de courir à la piste du bonheur."¹⁵ He said further: "Le dandy doit vivre et dormir devant un miroir."¹⁶ In playing the role of the dandy, Baudelaire spent much time and money on his personal appearance. It was said that he spent two hours at his morning toilette. He was a gourmet, and he affected the manners of an eighteenth-century gentleman. "His excellent clothes, his immaculate cleanliness, his outmoded politeness, his carefully modulated voice, his precise and dignified movements, the hauteur of his visage, and the sarcasm of his remarks hid the stains of his vice."¹⁷

Though Baudelaire never knew a happy, fulfilling relationship with a female, women played an immensely important part in his life and in his works. His mother was the first woman to exert great influence on the poet. Baudelaire remained always deeply attached, perhaps to an unhealthy extent, to his mother. The next woman of much consequence in Baudelaire's life was a mulatto woman named Jeanne Duval, whom he met in 1842. Little is known of Jeanne's origin or early

¹⁵Pia, op. cit., p. 51.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Bennett, op. cit., p. 5.

history. Her real name was probably not Jeanne Duval. She changed her name several times in an effort to avoid her creditors. When Baudelaire met her, she was a minor actress appearing in a little theatre.

In looks Jeanne had ". . . une démarche triomphante, les cheveux d'un noir éclatant aux ondes crépélées, très grands yeux bruns, les lèvres sensuelles, une gorge aiguë. . . ." ¹⁸
 In character she was ". . . sournoise, menteuse, débauchée, dispensière, alcoolique, stupide." ¹⁹ In verse and in letters to his mother, Baudelaire mentioned Jeanne first with love, then with anger, and at last with remorse and pity. No other woman, not even his mother, had greater influence on his life. ²⁰

Jeanne was to prove a perpetual thorn in Baudelaire's side; but, though he left her many times, he could never bring himself to abandon her completely. She represented the only home and family the unhappy writer ever knew. She made his daily life so wretched that he was forced to leave home in order to write. Communication, other than sexual, was impossible between them. She was unschooled and refused to learn anything, though Baudelaire offered to teach her himself. She was unable to appreciate his talent. For some time Jeanne's

¹⁸ Pia, op. cit., p. 35.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Hyslop, op. cit., p. 19.

"brother" lived with them, paying none of the expenses. Baudelaire finally discovered the "brother" was actually a lover. Once Baudelaire cut Jeanne's head open with a table. However, in times of sickness or distress, Baudelaire always helped and even nursed his mistress. In 1859, when Jeanne suffered a paralytic stroke, Baudelaire paid her hospital expenses, then cared for her during her recuperation at home.

Jeanne, like Baudelaire, was plagued by chronic illness in her later years. Baudelaire demonstrated much sympathy toward her. He wrote in an 1853 letter to his mother:²¹

Elle souffre et elle est muette. N'y a-t-il pas la matière à remords? Et ne suis-je pas coupable de ce côté, comme de tous les côtés?

In an 1860 letter to Madame Aupick, Baudelaire claimed that the only thing that was keeping him from suicide was the thought of leaving destitute "cette vieille beauté transformée en infirme."²² What became of Jeanne after her poet-lover's death is not known. She was last seen by one of Baudelaire's friends in 1870, as she hobbled along the street on crutches.²³

Jeanne Duval is known to have been the inspiration for some of the poems included in Les Fleurs du mal, and is

²¹Jacques Crépet et Georges Blin (eds.), Les Fleurs du mal (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1942), p. 422.

²²Ibid.

²³Hyslop, op. cit., p. 202.

believed to be the inspiration of many of the others. The verses Jeanne inspired were beautiful, sensual, passionate, sometimes cruel. "Sed non satiata" was certainly describing Jeanne:²⁴

Bizarre déité, brune comme les nuits,
 Au parfum mélangé de musc et de havane,
 Œuvre de quelque obi, le Faust de la savane,
 Sorcière au flanc d'ébène, enfant des noirs minuits,

Je préfère au constance, à l'opium, au [sic] nuits,
 L'élixir de ta bouche où l'amour se pavane;
 Quand vers toi mes désirs partent en caravane,
 Tes yeux sont la citerne où boivent mes ennuis.

About 1847 Baudelaire met Marie Daubrun, a lovely green-eyed actress. For a time the young actress was an important force in the poet's life. She may have been his mistress for a brief period. Baudelaire did everything he could to help Mademoiselle Daubrun further her career, but she abandoned Baudelaire in favor of the poet Banville. Baudelaire's love for Marie was less sensual, more tender and affectionate, than his love for Jeanne. The poems Marie inspired were, accordingly, more subdued and tender than those to Jeanne. An example is "A une Madone":²⁵

Je veux bâtir pour toi, Madone, ma maîtresse,
 Un autel souterrain au fond de ma détresse,
 Et creuser dans le coin le plus noir de mon cœur,
 Loin du désir mondain et du regard moqueur,
 Une niche, d'azur et d'or tout émaillée,
 Où tu te dresseras, Statue émerveillée.

²⁴ Pichois, op. cit., p. 39.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 71.

Every poet needs a Muse to inspire him, and Baudelaire seemed for a time to have found his Muse in Madame Apollonie Sabatier. "In Madame Sabatier, Baudelaire found something which he had encountered in no other woman--kindness, thoughtfulness, and appreciative interest."²⁶ She was charming and beautiful; and, although not too scrupulous, she was generous, considerate, and extremely well-liked. Residing in an apartment supplied her by a lover, she was especially noted for her well-attended and delightful Sunday dinners. Baudelaire had made the acquaintance of Madame Sabatier by 1852.

In December, 1852, Baudelaire sent anonymously to Madame Sabatier the first of a series of poems he was to dedicate to her. Along with the verses he sent tender, flattering letters. Madame Sabatier soon guessed who her admirer was, and was pleased with the compliment. Baudelaire desired a purely platonic relationship with Madame Sabatier; he wanted to idolize her, to make her his Muse. Madame Sabatier must have misconstrued his attentions. Whether she actually gave herself to him is debatable; but she must have offered herself. As a result of an 1857 meeting between poet and "Muse," Baudelaire's quest for an idol was stifled, and their relationship cooled. "As long as he possessed nothing the image of Madame Sabatier watched over his genius and inspired

²⁶Hyslop, op. cit., p. 87.

it; but the instant he profanes the idol, all is over, and Madame Sabatier can do no more for him from the moment when she gives him everything."²⁷

Baudelaire may have suffered from the episode with Madame Sabatier, but poetry did not. "To that quest for a muse by a poet often mistaken as decadent and immoral, we are indebted for the purest love poetry in the French language."²⁸ It is known that nine of the poems in Les Fleurs du mal were dedicated to Madame Sabatier, and several others are attributed to her. "L'Aube spirituelle" demonstrates the type of poetry dedicated to Madame Sabatier:²⁹

Des Cieux Spirituels l'inaccessible azur,
Pour l'homme terrassé qui rêve encore et souffre,
S'ouvre et s'enfonce avec l'attirance du gouffre.
Ainsi, chère Déesse, Etre lucide et pur,

Sur les débris fumeux des stupides orgies
Ton souvenir plus clair, plus rose, plus charmant,
A mes yeux agrandis voltige incessamment.

When she realized that he had spent over half of his paternal inheritance within two years after receiving it, Madame Aupick took steps to aid her son in his financial distress. She first tried administering the estate herself, with Baudelaire receiving a monthly income. When this

²⁷ Henri Peyre (ed.), Baudelaire: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1962), p. 59.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 4.

²⁹ Pichois, op. cit., p. 59.

arrangement did not prove satisfactory, Madame Aupick made her lawyer, M. Ancelle, the legal guardian of Baudelaire's financial holdings, the capital of which then amounted to thirty-five thousand francs.³⁰ Baudelaire received the interest on this until his death. Though he was never completely destitute, he was always deeply in debt. In vain Baudelaire, beside himself at the prospect of the humiliation, begged his mother not to resort to the appointment of a legal guardian.³¹

Baudelaire found that it was more difficult than he had imagined to earn a living as a writer. Considering himself a failure, chastised by the disapproving attitude of his family, he sank into a condition of mental depression. Finally he became desperate. On June 30, 1845, Baudelaire wrote a letter to M. Ancelle, saying that he was going to kill himself and requesting that everything belonging to him be left to "Jeanne Lemer," or Jeanne Duval.³² The fact that Baudelaire inflicted only a slight knife wound on himself has led authorities to conclude that his attempted suicide was a hoax designed to induce his family to pay his debts. The episode did result in a brief reunion between the poet and his family, and the payment by them of some of his more pressing debts.

³⁰Hyslop, op. cit., p. 24.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., p. 29.

Soon Baudelaire was estranged from his family once more.

Baudelaire was never especially interested nor active in politics. He had nothing but disdain for the common people, but when the Revolution of 1848 broke out, Baudelaire ". . . endosse la blouse du prolétaire, et, arborant un large foulard rouge, court dans la rue se mêler à l'émeute."³³ "Il faut aller fusiller le général Aupick!" Baudelaire shouted. In other words, "tout ce qui est bassement médiocre et se croit admirablement juste."³⁴

For some years there was only occasional contact, usually through letters, between Baudelaire and his family, and always the relations were strained. General Aupick's career forced him and his wife to move rather frequently. In June, 1851, when the Aupicks were on their way to Spain where he was to become ambassador, Madame Aupick paid a visit to her son in Neuilly. She was dismayed at the surroundings and condition in which she found him. His life of dissipation had begun to take its toll on him physically and emotionally. Not infrequently Baudelaire was forced to write his mother a request for money. Sometimes she complied; sometimes she did not. Sometimes she sent him money through M. Ancelle, and the indirect route infuriated Baudelaire.

³³Roth, op. cit., p. 9.

³⁴Jean Massin, Baudelaire: entre Dieu et Satan (Paris: René Julliard, 1945), p. 119.

Baudelaire was an alcoholic, though he was never drunk, He also made immoderate use of drugs, though he considered them dangerous and even immoral. In his youth Baudelaire used drugs to induce sensations and to enhance his experiences. Later he came to depend on them as a means of relief from pain or discomfort and as a way of escape.³⁵

In July, 1857, Baudelaire's most famous work, Les Fleurs du mal, went on sale. The collection of poems was edited by the poet's good friend, Poulet-Malassis. Immediately a scandal and a controversy arose over a book that dared to speak openly of sin, sex, ugliness, and death. He dedicated the volume to his friend, the poet Gautier.

Baudelaire was not prepared for the storm of outrage and protest that greeted Les Fleurs du mal. It became evident that prosecution was inevitable. Baudelaire chose a lawyer, and they drew up arguments based in part on suggestions of Sainte-Beuve. On August 10, 1857, Baudelaire was brought to trial, where he was found guilty of offending public morality. He was fined three hundred francs, and he was also ordered to pay the expenses of the trial. The Tribunal ordered six poems eliminated from Les Fleurs du mal, because they contained ". . . des passages et des expressions obscènes et immorales."³⁶

³⁵Hyslop, op. cit., p. 161.

³⁶Roth, op. cit., pp. 12-13.

The editors, Poulet-Malassis and de Broise, were each fined one hundred francs. In November, 1857, Baudelaire wrote to the Empress Eugénie, entreating her intercession with the Minister of Justice. As a result of the letter, Baudelaire's fine was reduced from three hundred to fifty francs.

Baudelaire was hurt and angered at the criticism and condemnation of his book. He had given his all to this work, and he had expected it to meet with appreciation. He confessed in a letter to M. Ancelle that in Les Fleurs du mal he had put "tout mon cœur, toute ma tendresse, toute ma religion (travestie), toute ma haine. Il est vrai que j'écrirai le contraire, je jurerai mes grands dieux que c'est un livre d'art pur, de singerie, de jonglerie et je mentirai comme un arracheur de dents."³⁷ Though rebuffed and disappointed, Baudelaire remained confident that the future would acknowledge his genius and that his contemporary detractors were not worthy judges of his work. He said:³⁸

Je me moque de tous ces imbéciles, et je sais que ce volume, avec ses qualités et ses défauts, fera son chemin dans la mémoire du public lettré, à côté des meilleures poésies de V. Hugo, de Th. Gautier et même de Byron.

Baudelaire was correct in his prediction; his masterpiece was destined for future appreciation and acclaim.

³⁷ Massin, op. cit., p. 127.

³⁸ Pla, op. cit., p. 8.

There were a few who spoke out in praise of Les Fleurs du mal. Sainte-Beuve, though not courageous enough to openly laud the work himself, persuaded the critic Édouard Thierry to do so. Thierry compared Baudelaire to Dante. Sainte-Beuve wrote to Baudelaire: "Vous avez dû beaucoup souffrir, mon enfant."³⁹ Hugo wrote congratulating Baudelaire for creating "un frisson nouveau."⁴⁰

In April, 1857, the year of the publication of Les Fleurs du mal, General Aupick died. His stepson was mentioned neither in his will nor in the death notices. After her husband's death, Madame Aupick moved to Honfleur, where they had built a cottage by the sea. She was left with only the pension of a general's widow and the money bequeathed to her by her first husband. In December, 1857, Baudelaire wrote to his mother, complaining that he felt unwelcome in her home. Madame Aupick was lonely, and she replied by inviting her son to live with her in Honfleur.⁴¹ Baudelaire was thrilled with the invitation, but it was not until January, 1859, that he was able to pay some outstanding debts and move to Honfleur. By June he was back in Paris.

³⁹Ibid., p. 107.

⁴⁰Jones, op. cit., p. 48.

⁴¹Hyslop, op. cit., p. 133.

With each passing year, Baudelaire's disappointment, frustration, and bitterness deepened. In an 1861 letter to his mother, he complained of his poor health, depression, lethargy, and thoughts of suicide. He was also upset over his mother's criticism and inability to understand him.⁴² In December, 1861, Baudelaire wrote to the secretary of the French Academy, announcing his candidacy to that highly esteemed organization. He no doubt saw election to the Academy as a means of elevating the estimation of his work and his talent in the eyes of the world, and especially in the eyes of his mother. The announcement of his candidacy caused a sensation in the literary world. Many thought it was merely a prank, particularly since Baudelaire was, ironically, seeking to succeed to the chair of Father Lacordaire, whose work was mainly religious. Hoping to save Baudelaire the embarrassment of scandal and failure, his acquaintances, including Vigny, Sainte-Beuve, and Lamartine, advised the poet to renounce his candidacy. Knowing that failure was inevitable, Baudelaire sent a letter of withdrawal to the Academy.

In April, 1863, Baudelaire went to Belgium to give a few lectures and to arrange for the publication of some of his books. Ill health and financial problems forced him to remain in Belgium longer than he had intended. He gave three lectures:

⁴²Ibid., p. 179.

one on Delacroix, another on Gautier, and a third on the subject of stimulants. The first lecture was fairly well attended and received, but the second and third were dismal failures.

Baudelaire was unable to find a publisher who would risk publishing his works. When Baudelaire found reason to question his literary agent's honesty, M. Ancelle began to act as his agent. Baudelaire came to appreciate his guardian's interest and concern as second only to that of his mother. Sick in body and soul, the discouraged poet bitterly hated Belgium and Belgians.

Baudelaire lived his short life in such a fast and dissipated manner that he was old before his time. At thirty he said: "On dit que j'ai trente ans; mais si j'ai vécu trois minutes en une . . . n'ai je pas quatre-vingt-dix ans?"⁴³ It was said of him at forty-three:⁴⁴

. . . son aspect est d'un vieillard. Le visage est las, les traits sont tirés; les yeux restés vifs, presque durs, sont à la fois douloureux et hagards.

In his later years, Baudelaire was constantly tormented by his syphilis and haunted by the certainty of worse tortures to come. On January 23, 1862, he wrote: "J'ai subi un singulier avertissement, j'ai senti passer sur moi le vent de l'aile

⁴³Pla, op. cit., p. 111.

⁴⁴Roth, op. cit., p. 15.

de l'imbécillité."⁴⁵ In March, 1866, while touring a Jesuit church with friends in Namur, Belgium, Baudelaire staggered and fell to the floor. The doctor diagnosed the condition as asphasia resulting from a stroke.⁴⁶ Poulet-Malassis sent for M. Ancelle, who hastened to Brussels and had his ward placed in a Catholic nursing home. After spending two weeks in the home, Baudelaire spent another two and one-half months recuperating in a Brussels hotel.

The courage and stoicism that Baudelaire had shown throughout his long stay in Belgium remained with him even when he lay helpless.⁴⁷ He would dictate letters that called for meticulous corrections in his poems, and he acknowledged gifts and letters. He recovered partial use of his limbs, but his speech deteriorated until he could utter only two words-- "sacré nom."⁴⁸ He would shout this phrase in anger at his inability to express himself.

On July 2, 1866, accompanied by his mother and the Belgian art critic, Stevens, Baudelaire journeyed by train to Paris in a private compartment paid-for by friends. A petition, signed by friends, including the authors Banville, Champfleury,

⁴⁵ Pia, op. cit., pp. 107-108.

⁴⁶ Hyslop, op. cit., p. 236.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Lecote de Lisle, Mérimée, and Sainte-Beuve, prompted the Ministère de l'Instruction Publique to accord Baudelaire a pension that permitted him to enter a hydrotherapeutic clinic.⁴⁹ On the advice of doctors who felt she was upsetting her son, Madame Aupick returned to Honfleur.

At first Baudelaire seemed content at the clinic. He appreciated the daily visits from friends, went out to dine with them, and enjoyed the music of Tannhäuser and Wagner that they played for him. Then, realizing that his outings were over-stimulating him and increasing his sleeplessness, Baudelaire began refusing invitations, even the weekly dinners with friends arranged in his honor.⁵⁰

Michel Lévy, the publisher, had agreed to begin an immediate reprinting of Les Fleurs du mal. When Baudelaire failed to improve enough to be able to supervise the publication himself, he seemed to lose the will to live. In July, his friend, the author Charles Asselineau, sent for Madame Aupick, who took a room in a hotel near the clinic, and remained there through July and August. At eleven o'clock on the morning of August 31, 1867, Baudelaire died in his mother's arms.

Even in death, Baudelaire was tormented and virtually alone. Many of his friends had left Paris to escape the summer

⁴⁹ Plé, op. cit., p. 112.

⁵⁰ Hyslop, op. cit., p. 239.

heat; others failed to receive their funeral invitations. Only about one hundred persons attended the funeral. Neither Sainte-Beuve nor Gautier was present. The Société des Gens de Lettres did not send a representative, though Asselineau had requested them to do so.⁵¹

Baudelaire's funeral day was disastrous:⁵²

On l'enterra le 2 septembre, par une chaleur accablante. A peine si soixante amis ou connaissances suivirent la dépouille du poète maudit. A l'arrivée au cimetière, un furieux orage creva. Entre deux éclats de tonnerre. Banville put lire son discours; une trombe de pluie dispersa l'assistance et saccagea les rares fleurs.

The ailing Banville gave an emotional and moving funeral oration, in which he hailed the author of Les Fleurs du mal as a literary genius.⁵³

Baudelaire had not at first submitted his literary works for publication. By 1843 he had written a number of the poems that would appear in Les Fleurs du mal, and he enjoyed reading them to friends. In 1843 the Tintamarre and the Démocratie Pacifique refused several of the aspiring young author's articles as immoral and too audacious in satire.⁵⁴ Baudelaire's first signed work was in the field of art criticism, a field in which he was to excel. The article, written in praise of

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Roth, op. cit., p. 17.

⁵³Hyslop, op. cit., p. 240.

⁵⁴Pia, op. cit., p. 142.

the painter Delacroix, appeared in the Salon de 1845. The most important and best-received of the several Salons Baudelaire was to write was the Salon de 1859, in which he developed his concept of imagination.⁵⁵

"Baudelaire's criticism has the novelty of being expert in two arts, literature and painting, and original in combining attention to them with fruitful reactions to music."⁵⁶ Baudelaire's literary criticism included articles on Flaubert, Gautier, and Hugo. Besides his art criticism on Delacroix, he wrote Le Peintre de la vie moderne on Constantin Guys, a minor artist. The latter is probably his masterpiece in criticism.⁵⁷ A music lover, Baudelaire wrote celebrated articles on Wagner and the opera. Baudelaire's criticism earned the respect of many in the literary world, but they did not bring him fame and fortune, as he had hoped they would.

Though Baudelaire's views regarding the 1848 Revolution are inconsistent, the situation at hand afforded him a chance to use his literary talent. In February he helped in the publication of a revolutionary newspaper, Le Salut Public, which, because of lack of funds, had only two issues. From April to June he was associated with a conservative newspaper, La

⁵⁵Hyslop, op. cit., p. 248.

⁵⁶Jones, op. cit., p. 14.

⁵⁷Ibid.

Tribune Nationale. In October he was for a short time editor-in-chief of the provincial newspaper in Chateauroux, Le Représentant de l'Inde.⁵⁸

In March of 1846, Baudelaire's Choix de maximes consolantes sur l'amour was published. The next month brought Conseils aux jeunes littérateurs, a work which reveals young Baudelaire's ideas concerning the man of letters and his art.⁵⁹ January, 1847, saw the publication of Baudelaire's short story, La Fanfarlo. Samuel Cramer, the hero of La Fanfarlo, was the epitome of his author, possessing his shortcomings and mannerisms.

Baudelaire was an ardent admirer and disciple of Edgar Allan Poe. In 1848 he submitted for publication the first of his many essays on and translations of Poe. Baudelaire did such an excellent translation of Poe's works that many have suggested that these translations alone would have immortalized Baudelaire in French literature. Baudelaire admitted that he had a strong desire to make Poe, who was not greatly appreciated in America, famous in France. Baudelaire accomplished his aim, making Poe popular in France and other European countries as well.

In 1857, Baudelaire's controversial masterpiece, Les

⁵⁸ Hyslop, op. cit., p. 52.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 36.

Fleurs du mal, appeared. The effect these poems of darkness, cold, rain, and fog, these pictures of crime, sin, disease, destitution, senility, and death produced upon the poet's shocked contemporaries has also been brought out.⁶⁰ The one hundred poems, some of which had already been printed in various periodicals, were written between 1841 and 1857. A second edition of Les Fleurs du mal, corrected and with thirty-five new poems added, was published in 1861. A third edition of Les Fleurs du mal came out in 1869, two years after the author's death. Théophile Gautier wrote the preface to this last edition. In 1866 there appeared the third collection of Baudelaire's poetry that was published in his lifetime--Les Épaves.

Baudelaire's Les Paradis artificiels, published in 1860, described the effects of various drugs upon the consumer. The author, as a frequent user of drugs, was well qualified to write on the subject; but he made it clear that he condemned, rather than condoned, the practice.

Baudelaire began in 1859 a "critical and autobiographical volume which, if he had ever completed it, he intended to hurl down as his final challenge to society."⁶¹ The book, entitled

⁶⁰C. F. MacIntyre (trans.), One Hundred Poems from Les Fleurs du mal (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1947), p. ix.

⁶¹Peter Quennell (ed.), My Heart Laid Bare and other prose writings (New York: The Vanguard Press, Inc., 1951), p. 18.

Mon Cœur mis à nu, was published in fragmentary form after the author's death. It consisted of miscellaneous notes, some in poetic form, that gave Baudelaire's opinion on a number of different subjects. It affords an important insight into the psychology of its author.

Time was to prove Baudelaire correct in his assumption that the future, at least, would recognize his genius:⁶²

There can have been no more complete reversal of judgment on a modern poet than this volte-face from the bourgeois condemnation of 1857 for an offense against morals, resulting in a costly succès de scandale, to the elevation of the victim to the position he now holds at the apex of French poetry in the nineteenth century.

His works are studied, read, and reprinted. Outside of France, he is the favorite of the French poets. His works were translated into most European languages, a fact that is without precedent in French literature.⁶³

Baudelaire was quick to admit his indebtedness to and admiration for the works of Poe, from which he drew many ideas. He also admired and praised Sainte-Beuve, Chateaubriand, and Balzac. He criticized Molière, Voltaire, and Hugo.

Baudelaire was, in his turn, to have a tremendous influence on other writers and on literature. His poems are "the root of modern French literature and much of the best English literature; they were the origin of that new method

⁶²Jones, op. cit., p. 7.

⁶³Peyre, op. cit., p. 6.

in poetry that gave Mallarmé and Verlaine to France; Yeats and some others to England."⁶⁴

The man who was so greatly misunderstood and underestimated in his own lifetime was to inspire considerable respect and imitation many years after his death. The little volume, Les Fleurs du mal, was to leave an indelible mark on the writing and the thinking of later generations. T. R. Smith wrote:⁶⁵

The change wrought, directly or indirectly, by The Flowers of Evil alone is almost too great to be properly understood. There is perhaps not a man in Europe today whose outlook on life would not have been different had The Flowers of Evil never been written.

Baudelaire was instrumental in leading poetry away from moralization and unrestrained emotional outpourings. He led the way to a poetry of order, form, and clarity. He showed that any subject, even the sordid and the ugly, could become a poetic subject. He was condemned for his open treatment of sex and sin, but his boldness helped break down restraints for later writers. He was a master in the use of sensations in poetry.

⁶⁴Smith, op. cit., p. 15.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 20.

CHAPTER III

BAUDELAIRE'S POETIC THEORIES

Charles Baudelaire arrived on the literary scene in time to add to French romanticism, and at the same time to help usher in romanticism's successor. The poets of the day were Lamartine, Hugo, Musset,¹ and Vigny. Baudelaire considered himself a romantic. He said: "Qui dit romanticisme dit art moderne, c'est-à-dire intimité, spiritualité, couleur, aspiration vers l'infini."⁶⁶ In the importance he attributes to sensuality and sensibility in the arts, Baudelaire is very much a romantic.⁶⁷

Without abandoning romanticism, Baudelaire strove, nevertheless, to be different from the masters. He served as the first important reaction against early nineteenth-century poetry.⁶⁸ He was a leader in the movement to call "a spade a spade." In the classic tradition, Baudelaire's poetry was very lucid. He did not believe that poetry should be simply a spontaneous outpouring of emotion. He was classical in the

⁶⁶Jean Massin, Baudelaire: entre Dieu et Satan (Paris: René Julliard, 1945), p. 119.

⁶⁷Henri Peyre (ed.), Baudelaire: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1962), p. 59.

⁶⁸Joseph D. Bennett, Baudelaire: A Criticism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), p. 2.

significance he attached in his poetry to order and to architecture.⁶⁹ He was also classical in his ". . . fondness for constraints and gleefully confronted difficulties. . . ."70

In his effort to be different and original, Baudelaire sometimes went too far. One can say: "Baudelaire a délibérément pratiqué une poésie scandaleuse: faite pour étonner."⁷¹ Sensationalism mars some of Baudelaire's best poems. There is no doubt, though, that Baudelaire was very sincere in much of his writing. He was acutely aware of ". . . all the morbid and gloomy secrets hidden beneath the fair exteriors of the world."⁷² He was preoccupied with such things as death, decay, and cruelty; and he actually found beauty in them. He was the first to treat as divine and lovely subjects previously considered unsuited to poetic treatment. Even though he was sometimes guilty of sensationalism, ". . . no mind was ever made up more exclusively of originality than Baudelaire's. . . ."73

To Baudelaire poetic inspiration did not come easily.

⁶⁹Peyre, op. cit., pp. 4-5.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 28.

⁷¹Pascal Pia, Baudelaire par lui-même (Bourges: l'Imprimerie Tardy, 1952), p. 99.

⁷²T. R. Smith (ed.), Baudelaire: His Prose and Poetry (New York: The Modern Library, 1925), p. 15.

⁷³Peyre, op. cit., p. 41.

He labored over his poems, seeking to bring them to perfection. He believed that great poetry was produced only through "les retouches, les variants, les épreuves barbouillées."⁷⁴ Work was never a pleasure for him. He was an incurable procrastinator who never could overcome his penchant for self-indulgence.

Baudelaire none the less admired the ability to work diligently and to create. He considered lethargy the greatest of sins. He said that he was one "qui regarde comme le plus grand honneur du poète d'accomplir juste ce qu'il a projeté à faire."⁷⁵ Baudelaire felt that he was forever fighting against time. He often showed through his poetry that he considered time an enemy, and that he was haunted by the idea of the irreparable past.

Baudelaire spent an unhealthy amount of time in a state of deep mental dejection. He sometimes referred to this depressed state as "spleen." A series of his poems is entitled "Spleen," and many more of his poems display some of the earmarks of spleen. Paul Desjardins has attempted to define Baudelaire's spleen:⁷⁶

Etat singulier, incohérent, maladif; sens exaspérés,
parfums troublants de christianisme; inquiétude de

⁷⁴Allison Fairlie, Les Fleurs du mal (London: Edward Arnold Publishers, 1960), p. 9.

⁷⁵Massin, op. cit., p. 28.

⁷⁶C. F. MacIntyre (trans.), One Hundred Poems from Les Fleurs du mal (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1947), p. 359.

l'individu qui sent son isolement et son impuissance, s'en épouvante et s'en glorifie; ambitions vastes et avortements pitieux; mélange de sincérité brutale et de vain désir de paraître; impuissance à exprimer ce qu'on n'est pas maître de ne pas sentir. . . .

Baudelaire was a master at conveying the mood of total dejection and hopelessness. He sometimes expressed a desire to obtain le néant, a state of nothingness where worldly pressures could not penetrate.

"La poésie est ce qu'il y a de plus réel, c'est ce qui n'est complètement vrai que dans un autre monde,"⁷⁷ wrote Baudelaire. He believed that poetry was the greatest of the arts. He wrote further: "Il n'y a de grand parmi les hommes que le poète, le prêtre, et le soldat. L'homme qui chante, l'homme qui bénit, l'homme qui se sacrifie. Sois toujours poète, même en prose."⁷⁸ Baudelaire demonstrated his opposition to moralization and didacticism in poetry when he said: "Si le poète a poursuivi un but moral, il a diminué sa force poétique."⁷⁹ For Baudelaire, poetry had only itself as an object. He believed that rhythm was of great importance in poetry.

Baudelaire was caught up with longing for le beau and l'absolu. He was bound to meet frustrating failure in his

⁷⁷ Plé, op. cit., p. 93.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 102.

⁷⁹ Massin, op. cit., p. 224.

search for the infinite, but he never abandoned his search. He defined le beau thus: "J'ai trouvé la définition du Beau, de mon Beau. C'est quelque chose d'ardent et de triste, quelque chose d'un peu vague, laissant carrière à la conjecture."⁸⁰ Baudelaire held the strange concept that beauty must contain misfortune. He said: ". . . je ne conçois guère . . . un type de Beauté où il n'y ait du Malheur."⁸¹ He believed that stupidity was often a part of beauty. The women in his poetry are frequently stupid but beautiful.

Baudelaire contributed much to modern poetry through his use of correspondences and comparisons. He was a firm believer in the principle of correspondances, "which relates the things of time and sense with absolute rigor to their counterparts on one plane or another of the spirit-world. . . ."⁸² Following this doctrine, sounds were found to have color, and colors had musical qualities. Baudelaire's poetry was highly suggestive. He did not just say that he was depressed. He tried to convey the feeling of depression by seeking in the physical state a correspondent of his emotional state that would demonstrate his mood concretely to the reader.⁸³

⁸⁰ Pia, op. cit., pp. 87-88.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 88.

⁸² Mansell Jones, Baudelaire (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), p. 27.

⁸³ Bennett, op. cit., p. 85.

In May, 1861, Baudelaire wrote to his mother: "Je désire de tout mon cœur (avec quelle sincérité, personne ne peut le savoir que moi!) croire qu'un être extérieur et invisible s'intéresse à ma destinée, mais comment faire pour le croire?"⁸⁴ Whether Baudelaire ever found and believed in God; whether he was basically a moral or an immoral person, is debatable. His poems were filled with sin, but they pictured sin as undesirable. Baudelaire's own life was a lesson in decadence, but perhaps he was living the lesson of the horrible example. "There are indeed men who elect to be damned for the glory of God, and Charles Baudelaire was one of them."⁸⁵

Baudelaire's poems show that he definitely had a conscience, and that he was constantly aware of and bothered by his conscience. There is little doubt that there is in Baudelaire's work at least some appeal to Christianity, and specifically to Catholicism. "Les catholiques savent aujourd'hui qu'il y a dans l'œuvre baudelairienne quelque chose qui s'adresse à eux. . . ."⁸⁶ In complaining to his mother about an abbé's condemnation of Les Fleurs du mal, Baudelaire wrote: "Il n'a même pas compris que le livre portait d'une idée

⁸⁴Jacques Crépet et Georges Blin (eds.), Les Fleurs du mal (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1942), p. 459.

⁸⁵Arthur F. Kraetzer (trans.), The Flowers of Evil (New York: Richard R. Smith, 1950), p. 1.

⁸⁶Massin, op. cit., p. 8.

catholique."⁸⁷

Baudelaire firmly believed in the theory of original sin. Evil comes about naturally and of itself; it is inherent in every man. Good, by contrast, can be created only through reason and thought. This belief of Baudelaire led to his valuing the artificial above the natural. He said: ". . . ce qui est créé par l'esprit est plus vivant que la matière. . . ." ⁸⁸ He did not love nature. In fact, he often condemned nature, accusing it of being wicked and of inspiring wickedness. Baudelaire only infrequently drew poetic symbols from nature. He strove for the ". . . absolute poetic creation, absolute artifice, and himself as the artificial creator."⁸⁹ He wanted natural things to be so completely changed through art that they were no longer natural.⁹⁰

Baudelaire was a haughty man who scoffed at the bourgeoisie, whom he thought incapable of appreciating real art. He was not, however, a heartless man. He displayed a great deal of compassion for and sympathy with the oppressed, the suffering, and the poor. He probably identified himself with them. Massin notes: ". . . Baudelaire est un homme qui partage

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 44.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 202.

⁸⁹ Peyre, op. cit., p. 165.

⁹⁰ Smith, op. cit., p. 26.

l'angoisse, les pleurs, et nous force à les comprendre."⁹¹

Baudelaire offers pity, but he offers no comfort and no hope.

Baudelaire was fascinated by women: their odor, their jewels, and their gowns. He was even interested in the texture of their clothing. His obsession with women might have been traced back to his childhood. "As a child, he was passionately attached to his mother Caroline. The world of entrancing colors, smells, and sounds flowered for him around her person."⁹² Baudelaire's love for his mother was very possessive. When she remarried, he was jealous and resentful of the time and attention that was taken away from him.

Baudelaire's background led to ". . . an intense need for tenderness and comfort, set against scorn of woman as superficial, treacherous, and uncomprehending. . . ." ⁹³ He seemed to be incapable of doing without them. For Baudelaire there was always a gulf between spiritual and physical love. If he loved a woman spiritually, he could not love her physically. He considered women as essentially stupid beings who acted as partners in pleasure, rather than as companions, for men. He considered women "natural," and thus "abominable."⁹⁴

⁹¹Massin, op. cit., p. 309.

⁹²Bennett, op. cit., p. 1.

⁹³Fairlie, op. cit., p. 35.

⁹⁴Smith, op. cit., p. 226.

He wondered why women were allowed to enter church, seeing that they were incapable of communion with God.⁹⁵ The women in Baudelaire's poetry are ". . . enigmatic courtesans whose beauty is a transfiguration of sin; who hide the ugliness of the soul beneath the perfection of the body. He loves them and does not love; they are cruel and indolent and full of strange perversions; they are perfumed with exotic perfumes. . . ." ⁹⁶

Baudelaire had an extremely low opinion of sexual love. He wrote: "Qu'est-ce que l'amour?--Le besoin de sortir de soi. --L'homme est un animal adoreur.--Adorer, c'est se sacrifier et se prostituer. Aussi tout amour est-il prostitution."⁹⁷

Almost always Baudelaire represents the relationship between lovers as ". . . an obsession mingled with hatred and contempt. . . ." ⁹⁸ He believed that the pleasure in love-making lay in the conviction of doing evil. He put it plainly: "L'Homme et la femme savent que c'est dans la certitude du mal que git toute volupté."⁹⁹

Baudelaire was one of the better French sea poets.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 236.

⁹⁶Ibid., pp. 12-13.

⁹⁷Massin, op. cit., p. 163.

⁹⁸Peyre, op. cit., p. 158.

⁹⁹Jones, op. cit., p. 37.

Baudelaire's men ". . . love the immense ungovernable sea, the uniformed and multitudinous waters; the place where they are not; the woman they will never know. . . ."100 Baudelaire depicts the sea as a means of escape from personal problems and monotonous routine.

"Baudelaire's sole contact with life itself came through his nerves, forever unbared and rasped upon."101 "Ses Fleurs du mal constituent moins un ouvrage élaboré que le journal intime d'un poète exceptionnellement sensible et condamné à cultiver ses sensations, fut-ce au prix de sa vie même."102 Baudelaire relied heavily on the use of sensations to suggest ideas and feelings. This remarkably sensitive man seemed to think through his senses, and his poetry was full of appeal to the senses.

100 Ibid., p. 12.

101 Peyre, op. cit., p. 40.

102 Pia, op. cit., p. 107.

CHAPTER IV

THE SENSE OF SMELL

Baudelaire possessed a hypertrophied sense of smell,¹⁰³ and the olfactory sense was perhaps the most important one in his poetry. Few, if any, poets have employed the sense of smell to such an extent and with such facility as did Baudelaire. Time and again the reader experiences the odors of tropical flowers, decaying bodies, incense, a lover's perfume, that are so vividly evoked in Baudelaire's poetry.

"R. Vivier a remarqué que le parfum baudelairien par excellence c'est celui qui émane de la femme, l'odeur mundus muliebris."¹⁰⁴ It is not surprising that a man so obsessed with women as was Baudelaire should have written frequently of the odor of women.

Baudelaire often spoke of the scents given off by a woman's body. To one female companion he said:¹⁰⁵

Quand, les deux yeux fermés, en un soir chaud d'automne,
Je respire l'odeur de ton sein chaleureux, . . .

¹⁰³ Joseph D. Bennett, Baudelaire: A Criticism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), p. 118.

¹⁰⁴ Cited by Jacques Crépet et Georges Blin (eds.), Les Fleurs du mal (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1942), p. 362.

¹⁰⁵ Claude Pichois (ed.), Les Fleurs du mal (Paris: Editions Gallimard et Librairie Générale, 1956), p. 36. (Hereafter, all references to Les Fleurs du mal will be included in the body of the thesis, and will be referred to by subdivision, number, title, and page.)

Another time he wrote:

En me penchant vers toi, reine des adorées,
Je croyais respirer le parfum de ton sang (Spleen et Idéal, XXXVI, "Le Balcon," p. 48).

A woman prompted Baudelaire to exclaim: ". . . Un parfum nage autour de votre gorge nue! . . ." (Spleen et Idéal, IV, "Causerie," p. 69). In one poem he claimed:

Sur ta chair le parfum rôde
Comme autour d'un encensoir; . . . (Spleen et Idéal, LVIII, "Chanson d'Après-midi," p. 73).

Baudelaire was fascinated by the odor of a woman's hair. "Exotic odors emanating from the hair and person of his mulatto mistress excite the olfactory sensitiveness from which he drew some of his most typical effects. . . ." ¹⁰⁶ "O boucles! O parfum chargé de nonchaloir!" Baudelaire cried (Spleen et Idéal, XXIII, "La Chevelure," p. 37). To his enticing mate, presumably Jeanne, he asserted:

Le désert et la forêt
Embaument tes tresses rudes, . . . (Spleen et Idéal, "Chanson d'Après-midi," p. 73).

In a poem devoted entirely to the aromas given off by the person of the female, one stanza was devoted to the hair:

De ses cheveux élastiques et lourds,
Vivant sachet, encensoir de l'alcôve,
Une senteur montait, sauvage et fauve, (Spleen et Idéal, XXXVIII, Un Fantôme, II "Le Parfum," p. 51).

Describing his first mistress, the unattractive Louchette,

¹⁰⁶ Mansell Jones, Baudelaire (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), p. 35.

Baudelaire spoke of "Ses cheveux qui lui font un casque parfumé, . . ." (Spleen et Idéal, XXXII, "Une nuit que j'étais près d'une affreuse Juive," p. 45).

Baudelaire was always very fond of cats, and in Les Fleurs du mal he included two poems entitled "Le Chat." In the first poem to bear this title, the poet claimed that the cat he was stroking reminded him of his mistress. He was thinking of his love when he spoke of the cat's odor:

Et, des pieds jusques à la tête,
Un air subtil, un dangereux parfum,
Nagent autour de son corps brun (Spleen et Idéal,
XXXIV, "Le Chat," p. 47).

In the second cat poem, the poet found himself covered with the scent of the cat:

De sa fourrure blonde et brune
Sort un parfum si doux, qu'un soir
J'en fus embaumé, pour l'avoir
Caressée une fois, rien qu'une (Spleen et Idéal,
LI, "Le Chat," p. 63).

For Baudelaire the very clothing of a woman, for having been worn close to her person, carried the woman's scent. He described the aroma of female clothing in the following selection:

Et des habits, mousseline ou velours,
Tout imprégnés de sa jeunesse pure,
Se dégageait un parfum de fourrure (Spleen et Idéal,
XXXVIII, Un Fantôme, II "Le Parfum," p. 51).

In another instance he voiced this desire:

Dans tes jupons remplis de ton parfum
Ensevelir ma tête endolorie, . . . (Pièces condamnées,
IV, "Le Léthé," p. 165).

Baudelaire often wrote of foreign or exotic places. Sometimes he expressed nostalgia or regret for lost youth and lost love. He used odors to help conjure up a picture of the exotic, the dream-like, or of past glories.

"Mœsta et Errabunda" showed Baudelaire pining for the lost paradise of youth and first love, as he lamented: "Comme vous êtes loin, paradis parfumé, . . ." (Spleen et Idéal, LXII, "Mœsta et Errabunda," p. 77). Of a love long grown cold, the poet recalled the kisses and the perfumes: ". . . O Serments! O parfums! O baisers infinis!" (Spleen et Idéal, XXXVI, "Le Balcon," p. 49).

In one of his most beautiful poems Baudelaire evoked the feeling of a dream-like world, in which one had the strange sensation of having lived in another time and another place. He used odor as a means of expressing this dream-like state:

C'est là que j'ai vécu dans les voluptés calmes,
 Au milieu de l'azur, des vagues, des splendeurs
 Et des esclaves nus, tout imprégnés d'odeurs, . . . (Spleen et Idéal, XII, "La Vie antérieure," p. 28).

Baudelaire was a master at describing the "Parfum qui fait rêver aux oasis lointaines, . . ." (Tableaux parisiens, XCVII, "L'Amour du Mensonge," p. 115). To help him call forth images of exotic lands, Baudelaire again turned to women. He told his lover he was "Guidé par ton odeur vers de charmants climats, . . ." Later in the poem he again referred to her provocative scent:

Pendant que le parfum des verts tamariniers,
 Qui circule dans l'air et m'enfle la narine,

Se mêle dans mon âme au chant des marinières (Spleen et Idéal, XXII, "Parfum exotique," p. 36).

Baudelaire sometimes called upon the aroma of incense to enhance his poetry. He asked:

Lecteur, as-tu quelquefois respiré
Avec ivresse et lente gourmandis
Ce grain d'encens qui remplit une église,
Ou d'un sachet le musc invétéré? (Spleen et Idéal,
XXXVIII, Un Fantôme, II "Le Parfum," p. 50).

Commenting on the above passage, R. Vivier noted "le caractère de rareté que présentent les parfums célébrés par Baudelaire (encens et musc ici; nard, myrrhe, benjoin, oliban, etc. . . . ailleurs)." ¹⁰⁷

Predictably, women reminded Baudelaire of the smell of incense. Speaking no doubt of Jeanne, he said:

Bizarre déité, brune comme les nuits,
Au parfum mélangé de musc et de havane, . . . (Spleen et Idéal, XXVI, "Sed non satiata," p. 39).

Still another female consort "Laissait couler ces mots tout imprégnés de musc: . . ." (Pièces condamnées, VII, "Les Métamorphoses du Vampire," p. 169).

Baudelaire wrote a number of poems lauding the Muses who inspired and watched over him. Here he honored his Muse with incense:

Et comme tout en moi te chérit et t'admire,
Tout se fera Benjoin, Encens, Oliban, Myrrhe, . . .
(Spleen et Idéal, LVII, "A une Madone," p. 72).

¹⁰⁷Crépet et Blin, op. cit., p. 362.

His idol, either a Muse or the perfect woman, was like an incense, always hovering around the poet:

Sachet toujours frais qui parfume
L'atmosphère d'un cher réduit,
Encensoir oublié qui fume
En secret à travers la nuit, . . .

Later in the poem he addressed his idol thus:

Grain de musc qui gis, invisible,
Au fond de mon éternité! (Galanteries, X, "Hymne,"
p. 173).

The poet who shocked and intrigued generations of readers with his treatment of questionable topics, often used odors to heighten the effects of these subjects. In his poetry Baudelaire depicted odors that ranged from mildly unpleasant to downright nauseating. The classic example of Baudelaire's "shocking" poetry was "Une charogne," his ". . . most famous and infamous poem. . . ." ¹⁰⁸ Here the always-original poet employed the image of a rotting, stinking animal carrion to convey the traditional poetic idea that verse could conquer age and death and bring immortality.

The poet and his lady came upon the hideous carcass:

Brûlante et suant les poisons,
Ouvrait d'une façon nonchalante et cynique
Son ventre plein d'exhalaisons.

The stench was unbearable:

La puanteur était si forte, que sur l'herbe
Vous crûtes vous évanouir (Spleen et Idéal, XXIX,
"Une charogne," pp. 42-43).

¹⁰⁸T. R. Smith (ed.), Baudelaire: His Prose and Poetry (New York: The Modern Library, Inc., 1925), p. 32.

The poet calmly told his love that even though she, too, would some day be like this foul-smelling carrion, his poetry would immortalize her.

Baudelaire could speak less crudely of the smells of death. In one poem he had Death, in the form of a skeleton dressed for the ball, saying to the human dancers:

"Fiers mignons, malgré l'art des poudres et du rouge,
Vous sentez tous la mort! O squelettes musqués, . . .
(Tableaux parisiens, XCVII, "Danse macabre," p. 114).

Baudelaire used old, musty, or stagnant smells to express ideas. "Le Flacon," which showed the curious power of odors to recall long-forgotten situations,¹⁰⁹ was a prime example of this type of odor. The poem began with a declaration of the strength of these musty smells:

Il est de forts parfums pour qui toute matière
Est poreuse. On dirait qu'ils pénètrent le verre.

An old cupboard carried a dusty, unpleasant smell:

Ou dans une maison déserte quelque armoire
Pleine de l'acre odeur des temps, poudreuse et noire, . . .

More subtly, Lazarus awakening and stirring the ashes of a dead love suggested the rank smell of the grave:

Où, Lazare odorant déchirant son suaire,
Se meut dans son réveil le cadavre spectral
D'un vieil amour ranci, charmant et sépulcral (Spleen et Idéal, XLVIII, "Le Flacon," p. 60).

An old deck of cards gave off a dirty, musty smell:

¹⁰⁹ Arthur F. Kraetzer (trans.), The Flowers of Evil (New York: Richard R. Smith, 1950), note by Kraetzer, p. 80.

"Cependant qu'en un jeu plein de sales parfums, . . ." (Spleen et Idéal, LXXV, "Spleen," p. 86). To two homosexual women, the poet declared that their lives would always be fruitless, stagnant, with not even a breath of fresh air to enliven them:

Jamais un rayon frais n'éclaira vos cavernes;
Par les fentes des murs des miasmes fiévreux
Filtrent en s'enflammant ainsi que des lanternes
Et pénètrent vos corps de leurs parfums affreux (Pièces
condamnées, III, "Femmes damnées," p. 164).

Baudelaire even managed to use perfumes to express a mood of disappointment, or hopelessness. When he was inclined to feel sorry for himself because his talents were unappreciated, he remembered the flowers that shared his plight:

Mainte fleur épanche à regret
Son parfum doux comme un secret
Dans les solitudes profondes (Spleen et Idéal,
XI, "Le Guignon," p. 27).

At a moment when he had lost all hope, and no longer wanted to live, Baudelaire cried, "Le Printemps adorable a perdu son odeur!" (Spleen et Idéal, LXXX, "Le Goût du Néant," p. 90).

Baudelaire used odors to illustrate his famous theory of correspondances, in which the senses appealed to one another and were confounded. "Correspondances," the most argued over of all Baudelaire's poems, and one that was to be closely studied by the Symbolists, demonstrated the idea that odors had qualities perceptible to touch, sight, and hearing. Line eight of this poem stated: "Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent." The poem went on to back up this contention:

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

Ayant l'expansion des choses infinies,
Comme l'ambre, le musc, le benjoin et l'encens,
Qui chantent les transports de l'esprit et des sens
(Spleen et Idéal, IV, "Correspondances," p. 21).

"Il est à remarquer que Baudelaire n'a développé le postulat de son v. 8 qu'en ce qui concerne les parfums, prouvant par là que le sens olfactif était chez lui dominant."¹¹⁰

"Whether Baudelaire actually believed odors have color, sound, and extension is highly questionable, but he certainly entertained the idea as a phantasy and dwelt on it a number of times."¹¹¹ Another instance of Baudelaire's mixing of the senses occurred when the devil asked the poet which trait of his mistress he most admired. The poet replied that he could not say, as they were all confounded:

O métamorphose mystique
De tous mes sens fondus en un!
Son haleine fait la musique,
Comme sa voix fait le parfum! (Spleen et Idéal,
XLI, "Tout entière," p. 54).

Still another example of Baudelaire's frequent confusion of the senses was the much-discussed and much-imitated "Harmonie du Soir." Here the evening time appealed to nearly all the senses. "The perfumes, among others, are those of the vibrating

¹¹⁰Crépet et Blin, op. cit., p. 299.

¹¹¹Kraetzer, op. cit., p. 26.

flowers."¹¹² Smell and sound were commingled:

Chaque fleur s'évapore ainsi qu'un encensoir;
Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir; . . .
(Spleen et Idéal, XLVII, "Harmonie du Soir," p. 59).

This poem will serve to lead into the next chapter, where its appeal to the sense of sound will be discussed further.

Only a representative portion of the passages appealing to the olfactory sense in Les Fleurs du mal have been included in this chapter. Likewise, in the succeeding chapters devoted to the other four senses, only selected, representative passages pertaining to the sense under discussion are presented.

¹¹²Bennett, op. cit., p. 133.

CHAPTER V

THE SENSE OF SOUND

The simultaneous appeal to the senses of sound and smell found in "Harmonie du Soir" was discussed in the last chapter. It is continued here. "The sounds and the perfumes strike up harmonies; they commingle and undulate, striking both senses at once as if they were a single sensation."¹¹³ The scents, primarily the smell of flowers, and the sounds, mainly the sound of violins, were fused in the evening air.¹¹⁴ The sound of the violin was provocative and penetrating: "Le violon frémit comme un cœur qu'on afflige; . . . (Spleen et Idéal, XLVII, "Harmonie du Soir," p. 59).

In another poem Baudelaire fused sound and sight. His naked mistress paced around him, silent except for the jingling of her jewels:

Quand il jette en dansant son bruit vif et moqueur,
Ce monde rayonnant de métal et de pierre
Me ravit en extase, et j'aime à la fureur
Les choses où le son se mêle à la lumière (Pièces
condamnées, VI, "Les Bijoux," p. 167).

Another instance of Baudelaire's mixing of sight with sound also demonstrated his ability to use the senses to evoke a feeling of a dream-like, mysterious world. The eyes and the

¹¹³Joseph D. Bennett, Baudelaire: A Criticism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), p. 133.

¹¹⁴Cf. ante, p. 48.

ears were both affected by the surging sea:

Les houles, en roulant les images des cieux,
Mêlaient d'une façon solennelle et mystique
Les tout-puissants accords de leur riche musique
Aux couleurs du couchant reflété par mes yeux (Spleen
et Idéal, XII, "La Vie antérieure," p. 28).

A compounding of the senses helped project the idea of regret for the lost innocence of first love. Sound was foremost among the senses:

Les courses, les chansons, les baisers, les bouquets,
Les violons vibrant derrière les collines, . . .

A little later in the same poem, sound again took precedence:

Peut-on le rappeler avec des cris plaintifs,
Et l'animer encor d'une voix argentine,
L'innocent paradis plein de plaisirs furtifs? (Spleen
et Idéal, LXII, "Mœsta et Errabunda," p. 77).

Baudelaire's play on the auditory sense could be purely musical. To his guardian angel he promised: "Je te chanterai sur des cordes nouvelles, . . ." (Spleen et Idéal, LX, "Franciscæ meæ laudes," p. 242). He told a sick Muse that he wished her ailing blood would flow rhythmically, musically:

Et que ton sang chrétien coulât à flots rythmiques
Comme les sons nombreux des syllabes antiques,
Où règnent tour à tour le père des chansons,
Phœbus, et le grand Pan, le seigneur des moissons (Spleen
et Idéal, VII, "La Muse malade," p. 25).

The call of earthly pleasures was sweet music to the ears of all sinners:

Le son de la trompette est si délicieux,
Dans ces soirs solennels de célestes vendanges,
Qu'il s'infiltré comme une extase dans tous ceux
Dont elle chante les louanges. (Pièces diverses, XVIII,
"L'Imprévu," p. 183).

Even though Baudelaire was not a nature lover, a number of his poems contain the sounds of nature. Hoping to find silence and nothingness, the poet turned to nature, only to find that the sea and the woods and the stars all spoke to him. He spoke in hatred to all nature. To the woods he said:

Vous hurlez comme l'orgue; et dans nos cœurs maudits,
Chambres d'éternel deuil où vibrent de vieux râles,
Répondent les échos de vos De profundis.

In the same poem he said to the sea:

ce rire amer
De l'homme vaincu, plein de sanglots et d'insultes,
Je l'entends dans le rire énorme de la mer.

To the night sky he complained:

Comme tu me plairais, ô nuit! sans ces étoiles
Dont la lumière parle un langage connu! (Spleen et Idéal, LXXIX, "Obsession," p. 89).

Elsewhere for Baudelaire the voice of the sea produced a calming effect. Here it was coupled with the sound of the wind:

Quel démon a doté la mer, rauque chanteuse
Qu'accompagne l'immense orgue des vents grondeurs, . . .
(Spleen et Idéal, LXII, "Mœsta et Errabunda," p. 77).

The great sea poet believed that a man could feel so akin with the sea that his own heartbeat could be confused with the noise of the sea:

et ton cœur
Se distraît quelquefois de sa propre rumeur
Au bruit de cette plainte indomptable et sauvage (Spleen et Idéal, XIV, "L'Homme et la Mer," p. 29).

In the winter, when he was forced to stay inside, the poet conjured up his own image of nature in the spring.

Accoustics played an important part in the picture:

Des jardins, des jets d'eau pleurant dans les albâtres,
Des baisers, des oiseaux chantant soir et matin, . . .
(Tableaux parisiens, LXXXVI, "Paysage," p. 97).

Even the voice of the lowly cricket attracted the poet's sensitive ear:

Du fond de son réduit sablonneux, le grillon,
Les regardant passer, redouble sa chanson; . . . (Spleen et Idéal, XIII, "Bohémiens en Voyage," p. 29).

Some of Baudelaire's poems manifested a groaning, complaining, or crying type of auditory sensation. He pictured God as daily listening unfeelingly to the sounds of blasphemies that came to him from the inhabitants on earth:

Qu'est-ce que Dieu fait donc de ce flot d'anathèmes
Qui monte tous les jours vers ses chers Séraphins?
Comme un tyran gorgé de viande et de vins,
Il s'endort au doux bruit de nos affreux blasphèmes.

Les sanglots des martyrs et des suppliciés
Sont une symphonie envirante sans doute, . . . (Révolte, CXVIII, "Le Reniement de saint Pierre," p. 139).

In the opening poem of his volume, in which he indicated that the reader was his partner in evil, Baudelaire wrote of the sounds of death:

Et, quand nous respirons, la Mort dans nos poumons
Descend, fleuve invisible, avec de sourdes plaintes.

In the same poem he featured our vices as howling monsters:

Les monstres glapissants, hurlants, grognants, rampants,
Dans la ménagerie infâme de nos vices, . . . ("Au lecteur," pp. 15-16).

The sounds of death are again portrayed in a poem describing the world at dawn:

Et les agonisants dans le fond des hospices
 Poussaient leur dernier râle en hoquets inégaux
 (Tableaux parisiens, CIII, "Le Crépuscule du Matin,"
 p. 121).

The poet's very blood seemed to him to be forever running restlessly and noisily. He tried in vain to quiet it with love and wine. It had the sobbing sound of a fountain:

Il me semble parfois que mon sang coule à flots,
 Ainsi qu'une fontaine aux rythmiques sanglots.
 Je l'entends bien qui coule avec un long murmure, . . .
 (Fleurs du mal, CXIII, "La Fontaine de Sang," p. 133).

In another instance, the "sobbing" of a fountain formed the background for the poet's romantic mood. He expressed this wish:

D'écouter la plainte éternelle
 Qui sanglote dans les bassins! (Galanteries,
 VIII, "Le Jet d'Eau," p. 172).

In a poem praising the genius of several artists, Baudelaire represented genius as a prayer to God. The artist's expression of the miseries and the moanings of man testified to his dignity:

Ces malédictions, ces blasphèmes, ces plaintes,
 Ces extases, ces cris, ces pleurs, ces Te Deum,
 Sont un écho redit par mille labyrinthes;
 C'est pour les cœurs mortels un divin opium!

.....

Car c'est vraiment, Seigneur, le meilleur témoignage
 Que nous puissions donner de notre dignité
 Que cet ardent sanglot qui roule d'âge en âge
 Et vient mourir au bord de votre éternité! (Spleen et Idéal, VI, "Les Phares," p. 24).

Baudelaire could deftly present bone-chilling, nerve-racking, or repulsive noises. A skeleton created this

frightening auditory effect:

Tremblaient confusément des débris de squelette,
 Qui d'eux-mêmes rendaient le cri d'une girouette
 Ou d'une enseigne, au bout d'une tringle de fer,
 Que balance le vent pendant les nuits d'hiver (Pièces
 condamnées, VII, "Les Métamorphoses du Vampire," p. 169).

A drunkard's wife heralded her husband's homecoming
 with maddening cries:

Lorsque je rentrais sans un sou,
 Ses cris me déchiraient la fibre (Le Vin, CVI,
 "Le Vin de l'Assassin," p. 125).

Still on the subject of drink, Baudelaire credited wine with
 making the life of a ragpicker bearable. After a few drinks,
 the ragpicker entered a world of deafening noises and blinding
 lights:

Et dans l'étourdissante et lumineuse orgie
 Des clairons, du soleil, des cris et du tambour, . . .
 (Le Vin, CV, "Le Vin des Chiffonniers," p. 124).

An imprisoned poet was nearly driven crazy by the un-
 nerving cries around him:

Les rires enivrants dont s'emplit la prison
 Vers l'étrange et l'absurde invitent sa raison; . . .
 (Epigraphes, XVI, "Sur Le Tasse en Prison d'Eugène
 Delacroix," p. 180).

At an early age the poet heard two voices which invited him
 to follow their urgings. The voice that he followed had a
 frightening quality:

Et celle-là chantait comme le vent des grèves,
 Fantôme vagissant, on ne sait d'où venu,
 Qui caresse l'oreille et cependant l'effraie (Pièces
 diverses, XVII, "La Voix," p. 181).

Baudelaire depicted the voice of the All-Powerful as inspiring

awe and fear:

Puis il leur dit avec sa voix majestueuse,
Comparable à la voix d'une eau tumultueuse
Qui tombe et rend un son monstrueux, surhumain: . . .
(Additions de la troisième édition, III, "Le Calumet de
Paix," p. 196).

Baudelaire sometimes inserted sounds unexpectedly to create a startling impression, or to swiftly and completely change the mood of the poem. One night as the poet and his female companion were taking a stroll, the lady suddenly broke the quiet of the peaceful night with a lament on the fading of beauty and love, rendered in a terrible voice:

Tout à coup, au milieu de l'intimité libre
Ecluse à la pâle clarté,
De vous, riche et sonore instrument où ne vibre
Que la radieuse gaieté,

De vous, claire et joyeuse ainsi qu'une fanfare
Dans le matin étincelant,
Une note plaintive, une note bizarre
S'échappa, tout en chancelant

Comme une enfant chétive, horrible, sombre, immonde,
Dont sa famille rougirait,
Et qu'elle aurait longtemps, pour la cacher au monde,
Dans un caveau mise au secret (Spleen et Idéal, XLV,
"Confession," pp. 57-58).

In a poem portraying the feeling of utter hopelessness, Baudelaire broke the quiet, heavy monotony of the first few stanzas when he unexpectedly introduced the loud clanging of bells, and changed the tone of the poem completely:

Des cloches tout à coup sautent avec furie
Et lancent vers le ciel un affreux hurlement, . . . (Spleen et Idéal, LXXVIII, "Spleen," p. 88).

The contrast of these lines with the earlier part of the poem

". . . enhances the shock of the bell-ringing line as much as it is possible for musical effects in poetry to do so."¹¹⁵

Baudelaire dreamed of a world where all was artificial, made of metals, gold, and crystals. The poem contained absolutely no sound until the last stanza, when the silence was shattered by the striking of the clock:

La pendule aux accents funèbres
Sonnait brutalement midi, . . . (Tableaux parisiens, CII, II, "Rêve parisien," p. 120).

Baudelaire presented a contrast when he had the far-off sound of a rooster pierce through the sounds and activities of early morning in the city:

Comme un sanglot coupé par un sang écumeux
Le chant du coq au loin déchirait l'air brumeux; . . .
(Tableaux parisiens, CIII, "Le Crépuscule du Matin," p. 121).

Baudelaire at times provoked the auditory sense by creating a picture of utter silence. In his artificial and inanimate city, there was no sound:

Et sur ces mouvantes merveilles
Planait (terrible nouveauté!
Tout pour l'œil, rien pour les oreilles!) (Tableaux parisiens, CII, I "Rêve parisien," p. 119).

In portraying the night, Baudelaire first presented an image of complete quiet, then claimed the deepening darkness itself could be heard: "Entends, ma chère, entends la douce Nuit qui marche" (Additions de la troisième édition, XIII, "Recueillement," p. 205).

¹¹⁵Bennett, op. cit., p. 96.

In a moving poem, Baudelaire suggested that, as the blind lived in utter darkness, some very deep-thinking persons lived in eternal silence. All around were the sounds of the city, yet some, like the poet, were oblivious to them. The city noises were all the more forceful because of their contrast with the silent world of the poet:

Ils traversent ainsi le noir illimité,
Ce frère du silence éternel. O cité!
Pendant qu'autour de nous tu chantes, ris et beugles, . . .
(Tableaux parisiens, XCII, "Les Aveugles," p. 108).

In a poem which portrayed the poet's dark mood and his subsequent desire for complete nothingness, all was still:

En haut, en bas, partout, la profondeur, la grève,
Le silence, l'espace affreux et captivant . . . (Additions de la troisième édition, XI, "Le Gouffre," p. 204).

Baudelaire often depicted his own dismal mood, as he did in the poem just discussed. In the autumn, the poet was haunted by the sound of falling wood, which touched off a chain of sensations, all of them funereal:

J'entends déjà tomber avec des chocs funèbres
Le bois retentissant sur le pavé des cours.

To the poet, the noise of the wood suggested the construction of a scaffolding and a coffin. The poet's spirit was experiencing blows like those being given to the scaffolding:

J'écoute en frémissant chaque bûche qui tombe;
L'échafaud qu'on bâtit n'a pas d'écho plus sourd.
Mon esprit est pareil à la tour qui succombe
Sous les coups du bélier infatigable et lourd.

Il me semble, bercé par ce choc monotone,
Qu'on cloue en grande hâte un cercueil quelque part.

Pour qui?--C'était hier l'été; voici l'automne!
Ce bruit mystérieux sonne comme un départ (Spleen et Idéal,
LVI, 1 "Chant d'Automne," p. 70).

In another gloomy moment, the poet likened his soul to the sound of a bell on a wintry evening. His soul could not ring so brilliantly as the bells, though. His soul sounded like a wounded person struggling vainly to escape from a pile of dead men:

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 (Spleen et Idéal, LXXIV, "La Cloche fêlée," p. 85).

To Baudelaire, winter was a depressing time of year. A third example of his "mood" poems, like the two poems immediately preceding, had a fall or winter background. There was no noise of living things in this poem describing the oppressive heated interior of the poet's dwelling one cold, wet day in January. The noise of the wind outside represented to Baudelaire the mourning voice of an old poet:

L'âme d'un vieux poëte erre dans la gouttière
Avec la triste voix d'un fantôme frileux.

The distant clanging of a bell, the whistle of the burning log, and the sick sound of the clock formed a strange and mournful harmony:

Le bourdon se lamente, et la bûche enfumée
Accompagne en fausset la pendule enrhumée, . . . (Spleen et Idéal, LXXV, "Spleen," p. 86).

The cat-loving Baudelaire wrote a poem in which one entire section was devoted to a feline voice. He said the cat's beautiful voice was haunting his brain, and it had a very peaceful effect on the poet:

Dans ma cervelle se promène,
Ainsi qu'en son appartement,
Un beau chat, fort, doux et charmant.
Quand il miaule, on l'entend à peine,

Tant son timbre est tendre et discret;
Mais que sa voix s'apaise ou gronde,
Elle est toujours riche et profonde.
C'est là son charme et son secret.

Cette voix, qui perle et qui filtre,
Dans mon fonds le plus ténébreux,
Me remplit comme un vers nombreux
Et me réjouit comme un philtre (Spleen et Idéal, LI,
I, "Le Chat," pp. 62-63).

The next chapter, which will be concerned with Baudelaire's treatment of the sense of touch, will begin with a look at a poem describing what a cat is like to the touch.

CHAPTER VI

THE SENSE OF TOUCH

The last chapter ended with a discussion of the profound effect a cat's voice had upon Baudelaire. Perhaps he was particularly fascinated with cats because they tended to remind him of women, who were his main obsession. Stroking a cat, the poet was reminded of his mistress:

Lorsque mes doigts caressent à loisir
Ta tête et ton dos élastique,
Et que ma main s'enivre du plaisir
De palper ton corps électrique, . . . (Spleen
et Idéal, XXXIV, "Le Chat," p. 47).

Baudelaire's poetry was full of lovers' kisses, caresses, and embraces. He praised the embracing arms of an Amazon of a woman:

Faits pour serrer obstinément,
Comme pour l'imprimer dans ton cœur, ton amant (Spleen
et Idéal, LII, "Le Beau Navire," p. 65).

He lavished kisses and caresses on a heartless and insatiable woman:

Car j'eusse avec ferveur baisé ton noble corps,
Et depuis tes pieds frais jusqu'à tes noires tresses
Déroulé le trésor des profondes caresses, . . . (Spleen et
Idéal, XXXII, "Une nuit que j'étais près d'une affreuse
Juive," p. 45).

Baudelaire, always fond of a woman's hair, liked to run his fingers through his love's tresses:

Je veux longtemps plonger mes doigts tremblants
Dans l'épaisseur de ta crinière lourde; . . . (Pièces
condamnées, IV, "Le Léthé," p. 165).

His mistress' caress was a balm to him in his despair:

Et tu connais la caresse
Qui fait revivre les morts!

In her passion she bestowed both bites and kisses on his body:

Quelquefois, pour apaiser
Ta rage mystérieuse,
Tu prodigues, sérieuse,
La morsure et le baiser; . . . (Spleen et Idéal,
LVIII, "Chanson d'Après-midi," p. 73).

To Baudelaire, none too gentle in his attitude toward women, biting was often synonymous with love-making. Gustave Bourdin sarcastically commented on Les Fleurs du mal: "Jamais on ne vit mordre et même mâcher autant de seins dans si peu de pages."¹¹⁶ Biting was again brought up when his bedmate said: "Ou lorsque j'abandonne aux morsures mon buste, . . ." (Pièces condamnées, VII, "Les Métamorphoses du Vampire," p. 169).

Baudelaire was fond of depicting in verse the pleasure and the horrors of Lesbianism. In Lesbos kisses were pleasurable:

Lesbos, où les baisers, languissants ou joyeux,
Chauds comme les soleils, frais comme les pastèques, . . .

The Lesbian girls were enamoured of their own bodies:

Les filles aux yeux creux, de leurs corps amoureuses,
Caressent les fruits mûrs de leur nubilité; . . . (Pièces condamnées, II, "Lesbos," p. 159).

¹¹⁶C. F. MacIntyre (trans.), One Hundred Poems from Les Fleurs du mal (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1947), note by Gustave Bourdin, p. 346.

In a poem that presented Lesbianism as a sterile and inescapable hell, the young and fragile Hippolyte dreamed of being caressed by a man:

Hippolyte rêvait aux caresses puissantes
Qui levaient le rideau de sa jeune candeur.

The older, more callous Delphine jealously admonished Hippolyte that her tender kisses were much preferable to the rough, pitiless caresses of the male:

Mes baisers sont légers comme ces éphémères
Qui caressent le soir les grands lacs transparents,
Et ceux de ton amant creuseront leurs ornières
Comme des chariots ou des socs déchirants;
Ils passeront sur toi comme un lourd attelage
De chevaux et de bœufs aux sabots sans pitié . . .
(Pièces condamnées, III, "Femmes damnées," pp. 161-162).

In the following selection, in which a ghost returned at night to caress and terrorize his love, Baudelaire described kisses and caresses in distasteful terms:

Et je te donnerai, ma brune,
Des baisers froids comme la lune
Et des caresses de serpent
Autour d'une fosse rampant (Spleen et Idéal, LXIII,
"Le Revenant," p. 78).

In another instance, the poet presented the terrible picture of a man mercilessly making love to the woman he had murdered:

Combla-t-il sur ta chair inerte et complaisante
L'immensité de son désir?

Réponds, cadavre impur! et par tes tresses roides
Te soulevant d'un bras fiévreux,
Dis-moi, tête effrayante, a-t-il sur tes dents froides
Collé les suprêmes adieux? (Fleurs du mal, CX, "Une martyre," p. 131).

Another time Baudelaire expressed the desire to punish his

mistress, whose beauty and cheer mocked his desperate condition, by inflicting pain through love-making:

Pour châtier ta chair joyeuse,
 Pour meurtrir ton sein pardonné,
 Et faire à ton flanc étonné
 Une blessure large et creuse, . . . (Pièces
 condamnées, V, "A Celle qui est trop gaie," p.
 167).

As he did in the several poems immediately preceding, Baudelaire often looked to the sense of touch to express unpleasant thoughts or acts. The sense of touch was particularly suitable for revealing his frustration and anger at the bad blows life had dealt him. He appealed to feelings ranging from discomfort to cruel and extreme physical pain. A weakling tried in vain to obtain pleasure in a bed of nails:

Comme en un lit de plume un délicat se vautre,
 Dans les clous et le crin cherchant la volupté; . . .
 (La Mort, CXXVI, VI "Le Voyage," p. 152).

An older woman had a certain charm, though her skin was drier and rougher:

Ta peau brûlante et sans douceur,
 Comme celle des vieux gendarmes,
 Ne connaît pas plus la sueur . . . (Galanteries,
 XII, I, "Le Monstre," p. 176).

Baudelaire wrote of the sadistic desire to hurt someone, though he felt no malice toward that person:

Je te frapperai sans colère
 Et sans haine, comme un boucher,
 Comme Moïse le rocher! (Spleen et Idéal, LXXXIII,
 "L'Héautontimorouménos," p. 91).

In an action symbolizing the futility of his life, a ragpicker purposely knocked himself against the wall:

On voit un chiffonnier qui vient, hochant la tête,
Butant, et se cognant aux murs comme un poète, . . . (Le Vin, CV, "Le Vin des Chiffonniers," p. 124).

In another poem it was Hope, in the form of a bat, that knocked itself against the wall in a vain effort to escape from its prison:

Où l'Espérance, comme une chauve-souris,
S'en va battant les murs de son aile timide
Et se cognant la tête à des plafonds pourris; . . .
(Spleen et Idéal, LXXVIII, "Spleen," p. 88).

Baudelaire could very ably create the effect of gnawing or eating away at something. He featured unused time and remorse as eating up man's life and gnawing at his guilt-ridden heart:

Le Temps mange la vie,
Et l'obscur Ennemi qui nous ronge le cœur . . . (Spleen et Idéal, X, "L'Ennemi," p. 27).

Similarly, remorse and a bad conscience growing out of the irreparable past attacked and gnawed at a man's soul like a termite attacking a building:

L'Irréparable ronge avec sa dent maudite
Notre âme, piteux monument,
Et souvent il attaque, ainsi que le termite,
Par la base le bâtiment (Spleen et Idéal, LIV,
"L'Irréparable," p. 68).

To Baudelaire teeth and fingernails were powerful and cruel weapons. Two deadly enemies, a man and a woman, faced each other with broken swords; but no matter, for they had their teeth and nails to wound each other with:

Les glaives sont brisés! comme notre jeunesse,
Ma chère! Mais les dents, les ongles acérés,

Vengent bientôt l'épée et la dague traîtresse (Spleen et Idéal, XXXV, "Duellum," p. 47).

To a woman caressing his breast, the poet explained that other treacherous women had torn out his heart with teeth and nails:

--Ta main se glisse en vain sur mon sein qui se pâme;
Ce qu'elle cherche, amie, est un lieu saccagé
Par la griffe et la dent féroce de la femme.
Ne cherchez plus mon cœur; les bêtes l'ont mangé (Spleen et Idéal, LV, "Causerie," p. 69).

Again lamenting the cruelty of women, Baudelaire depicted a poet's woman tearing out his heart with her nails:

Et mes ongles, pareils aux ongles des harpies,
Sauront jusqu'à son cœur se frayer un chemin.

Comme un tout jeune oiseau qui tremble et qui palpite,
J'arracherai ce cœur tout rouge de son sein, . . . (Spleen et Idéal, I, "Bénédiction," p. 18).

A very vivid, though very unpleasant, example of Baudelaire's use of the sense of touch found ferocious birds tearing the dead body of a hanged man to pieces with their beaks:

De féroces oiseaux perchés sur leur pâture
Détruisaient avec rage un pendu déjà mûr,
Chacun plantant, comme un outil, son bec impur
Dans tous les coins saignants de cette pourriture;
Les yeux étaient deux trous, et du ventre effondré
Les intestins pesants lui coulaient sur les cuisses,
Et ses bourreaux, gorgés de hideuses délices,
L'avaient à coups de bec absolument châtré.

The poet suffered vicariously the tortures inflicted by the birds and other animals on the rotting flesh:

J'ai senti tous les becs et toutes les mâchoires
Des corbeaux lancinants et des panthères noires
Qui jadis aimaient tant à triturer ma chair (Fleurs du mal, CXVI, "Un Voyage à Cythère." p. 137).

The feeling of being crushed or ground was depicted a

number of times in Baudelaire's poetry. He compared his anguished mind to a dying man being crushed by the wounded and bruised by a horse's hoof:

A cet esprit comblé d'angoisse
Et pareil au mourant qu'écrasent les blessés,
Que le sabot du cheval froisse, . . . (Spleen et
Idéal, LIV, "L'Irréparable," p. 68).

An old man stumbling through the snow and mud seemed to be crushing dying men under his shoes:

Dans la neige et la boue il allait s'empêtrant,
Comme s'il écrasait des morts sous ses savates, . . .
(Tableaux parisiens, XC, "Les Septs Vieillards," p. 104).

A drunkard who had just killed his wife scoffed at death and God. He welcomed the thought of a wagon's crushing him, or cutting him in two:

Le wagon enragé peut bien
Ecraser ma tête coupable
Ou me couper par le milieu, . . . (Le Vin, CVI,
"Le Vin de l'Assassin," p. 126).

A heavy, oppressive, though not crushing weight was portrayed by Baudelaire in several of his poems. In attempting to convince a young woman to love him while there was still time, the poet described how the heavy tombstone would stifle all her hopes and activities:

Quand la pierre, opprimant ta poitrine peureuse
Et tes flancs qu'assouplit un charmant nonchaloir,
Empêchera ton cœur de battre et de vouloir,
Et tes pieds de courir leur course aventureuse, . . .
(Spleen et Idéal, XXXIII, "Remords posthume," p. 46).

Baudelaire could become so depressed that he felt that the sky was covering and weighing down his spirit:

Quand le ciel bas et lourd pèse comme un couvercle
 Sur l'esprit gémissant en proie aux longs ennuis, . . .
 (Spleen et Idéal, LXXVIII, "Spleen," p. 88).

In a similar vein, he suggested that one's own body could seem to weigh heavily on one's soul: "Où l'âme, sous le poids du corps revêche et lourd, . . ." (Tableaux parisiens, CIII, "Le Crépuscule du Matin," p. 120).

Baudelaire sometimes called on the elements to help present his feelings. He made use of wetness, humidity, and even dryness in portraying his dark moods and thoughts. He warned a woman friend of the misery of the grave that would one day be her only home:

Et lorsque tu n'auras pour alcôve et manoir
 Qu'un caveau pluvieux et qu'une fosse creuse; . . .
 (Spleen et Idéal, XXXIII, "Remords posthume," p. 46).

The poet professed to love the rainy seasons because they were a perfect background for his funereal thoughts:

O fins d'automne, hivers, printemps trempés de boue,
 Endormeuses saisons! je vous aime et vous loue
 D'envelopper ainsi mon cœur et mon cerveau
 D'un linceul vapoureux et d'un vague tombeau.
 Dans cette grande plaine où l'autan froid se joue,
 Où par les longues nuits la girouette s'enroue,
 Mon âme mieux qu'au temps du tiède renouveau
 Ouvrira largement ses ailes de corbeau.

Rien n'est plus doux au cœur plein de choses funèbres,
 Et sur qui dès longtemps descendent les frimas,
 O blafardes saisons, reines de nos climats,

Que l'aspect permanent de vos pâles ténèbres, . . .
 (Tableaux parisiens, CI, "Brumes et Pluies," p. 117).

In a room that contained the dead body of a young woman, the air was as humid as that in a hothouse:

Dans une chambre tiède où, comme en une serre,
L'air est dangereux et fatal, . . . (Fleurs du mal, CX, "Une martyre," p. 130).

During a depressed state of mind, the poet felt that the earth was transformed into a humid dungeon: "Quand la terre est changée en un cachot humide, . . ." (Spleen et Idéal, LXXVIII, "Spleen," p. 88).

In a poem addressed to Victor Hugo and lamenting the plight of exiles like Hugo, Baudelaire pictured a swan out of his natural surroundings. The frustrated bird, desperate for water, wallowed helplessly in the dry, dusty streets of Paris:

Un cygne qui s'était évadé de sa cage,
Et, de ses pieds palmés frottant le pavé sec,
Sur le sol raboteux traînait son blanc plumage.
Près d'un ruisseau sans eau la bête ouvrant le bec

Baignait nerveusement ses ailes dans la poudre, . . .
(Tableaux parisiens, LXXXIX, "Le Cygne," p. 101):

Baudelaire depicted the bodies of Lesbians as being racked by a hot, dry wind from hell:

Flagellés par un vent qui ne vient pas du ciel, . . .

.

Et le vent furibond de la concupiscence
Fait claquer votre chair ainsi qu'un vieux drapeau (Pièces condamnées, III, "Femmes damnées," p. 164).

Baudelaire could describe the feel of the wind as pleasant and refreshing. Slaves in a tropical land fanned him with palm branches:

Et des esclaves nus, tout imprégnés d'odeurs,

Qui me rafraîchissaient le front avec des palmes, . . .
(Spleen et Idéal, XII, "La Vie antérieure," p. 28).

A pampered young woman lay in her room, idly fanning herself:

D'une main éventant ses seins,
Et son coude dans les coussins, . . . (Additions
de la troisième édition, X, "Bien loin d'ici,"
p. 203).

The early morning air was refreshing, like the feel of the breeze drying the tears on one's cheeks:

Comme un visage en pleurs que les brises essuient,
L'air est plein du frisson des choses qui s'enfuient, . . .
(Tableaux parisiens, CIII, "Le Crépuscule du Matin,"
p. 120).

Baudelaire quite often featured the feelings of heat and cold in his poetry. Autumn seemed to him a particularly depressing time. He dreaded its coming: "Bientôt nous plongerons dans les froides ténèbres; . . ." The autumn was a good match for the poet's own mood:

Et, comme le soleil dans son enfer polaire,
Mon cœur ne sera plus qu'un bloc rouge et glacé (Spleen
et Idéal, LVI, I, "Chant d'Automne," p. 70).

Time, the poet's eternal enemy, engulfed him, like the snow swallowing up a body stiff with cold:

Et le Temps m'engloutit minute par minute,
Comme la neige immense un corps pris de roideur; . . .
(Spleen et Idéal, LXXX, "Le Goût du Néant," p. 90).

The chill of the early dawn forced the poor old women to blow on their embers and on their fingers, in an effort to warm themselves:

Les pauvresses, traînant leurs seins maigres et froids,
Soufflaient sur leurs tisons et soufflaient sur leurs doigts
(Tableaux parisiens, CIII, "Le Crépuscule du Matin," p. 121).

Baudelaire could write of the welcome warmth of a tropical sun:

Où les vaisseaux, glissant dans l'or et dans la moire,
Ouvrent leurs vastes bras pour embrasser la gloire
D'un ciel pur où frémit l'éternelle chaleur (Spleen et
Idéal, XXIII, "La Chevelure," p. 37).

The poet could also make the sun's heat seem cruel:

Quand le soleil cruel frappe à traits redoublés
Sur la ville et les champs, sur les toits et les blés, . . .
(Tableaux parisiens, LXXXVII, "Le Soleil," p. 98).

The sun's hot rays only added to the putrefaction of a carcass:

Le soleil rayonnait sur cette pourriture,
Comme afin de la cuire à point, . . . (Spleen
et Idéal, XXIX, "Une Charogne," p. 42).

Occasionally Baudelaire contrasted heat with cold, as
he did when he spoke of a warm fire on a cold winter evening:

Durant les noirs ennuis des neigeuses soirées,
Un tison pour chauffer tes deux pieds violets? (Spleen
et Idéal, VIII, "La Muse vénale," p. 25).

The poet's lover injected warmth into his cold, dark life:

Explosion de chaleur
Dans ma noire Sibérie! (Spleen et Idéal,
LVIII, "Chanson d'Après-midi," p. 74).

The fatal rhythm of the dance of death took the human
dancers to unknown places with varied climates:

Le branle universel de la danse macabre
Vous entraîne en des lieux qui ne sont pas connus!

Des quais froids de la Seine aux bords brûlants du
Ganges, . . . (Tableaux parisiens, XCVII, "Danse
macabre," pp. 114-115).

Abel's descendants were prosperous and warm, while
Cain's were miserable and cold:

Race d'Abel, chauffe ton ventre
A ton foyer patriarcal;

Race de Cain, dans ton antre
 Tremble de froid, pauvre chacal! (Révolte,
 CXIX, "Abel et Cain," pp. 140-141).

Baudelaire did not neglect the sense of touch in illustrating his theory of correspondances. In recalling a time when the world was young and uncomplicated, he included touch among the senses appealed to: "Ses parfums, ses chansons et ses douces chaleurs!" (Spleen et Idéal, V, "J'aime le souvenir de ces époques nues," p. 22). Compounding the senses in his "Correspondances," he depicted perfumes as fresh as a child's skin.¹¹⁷

In a poem praising his beloved's many attributes, Baudelaire showed how she affected his different senses. Was she an exotic perfume or a soft pillow?

Parfum qui fait rêver aux oasis lointaines,
 Oreiller caressant, ou corbeille de fleurs? (Tableaux parisiens, XCVIII, "L'Amour du Mensonge," p. 115).

This same woman's appeal to the sense of taste will be discussed in the next chapter.

¹¹⁷Cf. ante, p. 47.

CHAPTER VII

THE SENSE OF TASTE

The young woman under discussion at the end of the last chapter excited the poet's senses of smell and touch. This same woman also stimulated his sense of taste. Was she a fruit fit for the palate of a king? "Est-tu le fruit d'automne aux saveurs souveraines?" (Tableaux parisiens, XCVIII, "L'Amour du Mensonge," p. 115). Tasty fruits were again mentioned in a poem picturing the delights of a primitive, tropical island:

Une île paresseuse où la nature donne
Des arbres singuliers et des fruits savoureux; . . .
(Spleen et Idéal, XXII, "Parfum exotique," p. 36).

The appeal of savory fruits was employed a third time in a poem treating of ennui and the desire for something new and different:

Par ici! vous qui voulez manger

Le Lotus parfumé! c'est ici qu'on vendange
Les fruits miraculeux dont votre cœur a faim; . . . (La Mort, CXXVI, VII, "Le Voyage," p. 153).

Baudelaire believed that a poet was different from the average person, and often saw in things quite the opposite of what other people saw. He laughed at funerals, cried at celebrations, and thought the bitterest of wines sweet:

Que je ris dans les deuils et pleure dans les fêtes,
Et trouve un goût sauve au vin le plus amer; . . . (Pièces diverses, XVII, "La Voix," p. 181).

Though the poet was plagued by adversity and ridiculed by his

fellow men, he found something elegant in everything, including his food and drink, which to him seemed like the food of the gods:

Et dans tout ce qu'il boit et dans tout ce qu'il mange
Retrouve l'ambrosie et le nectar vermeil (Spleen et Idéal,
I, "Bénédiction," p. 17).

Kisses to Baudelaire sometimes had a pleasing taste.

He once compared his love's kisses to a powerful love potion:

Tes baisers sont un philtre et ta bouche une amphore
Qui font le héros lâche et l'enfant courageux (Spleen et
Idéal, XXI, "Hymne à la Beauté," p. 35).

He praised the agreeable medicine-like taste of a woman's mouth:

Je préfère au constance, à l'opium, au [sic] nuits,
L'élixir de ta bouche où l'amour se pavane; . . . (Spleen
et Idéal, XXVI, "Sed non satiata," p. 39).

The taste of a woman's kiss was not always pleasant, however; it could be like a bitter wine:

Quand l'eau de ta bouche remonte
Au bord de tes dents,

Je crois boire un vin de Bohême,
Amer et vainqueur, . . . (Spleen et Idéal,
XXVIII, "Le Serpent qui danse," p. 41).

As he did in the last lines quoted, Baudelaire often featured disagreeable tastes in his poetry. He depicted another bitter taste when he wrote of sadness as lingering on like the acrid taste of mud in his mouth:

Mais la tristesse en moi monte comme la mer,
Et laisse, en refluant, sur ma lèvre morose
Le souvenir cuisant de son limon amer (Spleen et Idéal,
IV, "Causerie," p. 69).

The "poison" that came from his lover's mouth was more dizzying to his senses than drugs or wines:

Tout cela ne vaut pas le terrible prodige
 De ta salive qui mord,
 Qui plonge dans l'oubli mon âme sans remord,
 Et, charriant le vertige,
 La roule défaillante aux rives de la mort! (Spleen et Idéal, XLIX, "Le Poison," p. 61).

The devil, who was always with him, accustomed his lips to vile tastes:

Sans cesse à mes côtés s'agite le Démon; . . .

 Et, sous de spécieux prétextes de cafard,
 Accoutume ma lèvre à des philtres infâmes (Fleurs du mal, CIX, "La Destruction," p. 129).

The poet's enemies poisoned his food and drink with foul impurities:

Dans le pain et le vin destinés à sa bouche
 Ils mêlent de la cendre avec d'impurs crachats; . . .
 (Spleen et Idéal, I, "Bénédiction," p. 18).

In one of his frequent states of depression, Baudelaire's funereal appetite inspired him to boil and eat his own heart:

Où, cuisinier aux appétits funèbres,
 Je fais bouillir et je mange mon cœur, . . . (Spleen et Idéal, XXXVIII, Un Fantôme, I, "Les Ténèbres," p. 50).

Baudelaire several times wrote of the feeling of nausea, the very thought of which brought a bad taste to one's mouth. The dancers at the ball were repulsed by the smile of a fashionably-dressed skeleton:

et les danseurs prudents
 Ne contempleront pas sans d'amères nausées

Le sourire éternel de tes trente-deux dents (Tableaux parisiens, XCVII, "Danse macabre," p. 114).

The poet, watching a hanged man being torn to pieces by beasts, felt keenly the victim's distress:

Je sentis, à l'aspect de tes membres flottants,
Comme un vomissement, remonter vers mes dents
Le long fleuve de fiel des douleurs anciennes; . . .
(Fleurs du mal, CXVI, "Un Voyage à Cythère," p. 137).

A poet's mother, furious at having created a monster, tried to swallow back her foaming anger: "Elle ravale ainsi l'écume de sa haine, . . ." (Spleen et Idéal, I, "Bénédiction," p. 17).

Baudelaire presented troubled persons attempting to drown their problems in food and drink, though they were neither hungry nor thirsty:

Enfin, nous avons, pour noyer
Le vertige dans le délire,
Nous, prêtre orgueilleux de la Lyre,
Dont la gloire est de déployer
L'ivresse des choses funèbres,
Bu sans soif et mangé sans faim! . . . (Additions de la troisième édition, VI, "L'Examen de Minuit," p. 200).

In another instance, the poet depicted a drunkard's intense thirst for wine. To slake this man's great thirst, it would take enough wine to fill the grave of the wife he had just murdered:

L'horrible soif qui me déchire
Aurait besoin pour s'assouvir
D'autant de vin qu'en peut tenir
Son tombeau; . . . (Le Vin, CVI, "Le Vin de l'Assassin," p. 125).

The poet found in his own blood elements that appealed to nearly all of the senses. It seemed to him to be flowing

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The poet found in his own blood elements that appealed to nearly all of the senses. It seemed to him to be flowing

all around, encompassing everything, even quenching the thirst of each creature it touched:

A travers la cité, comme dans un champ clos,
Il s'en va, transformant les pavés en flots,
Désaltérant la soif de chaque créature, . . . (Fleurs
du mal, CXIII, "La Fontaine de Sang," p. 134).

How Baudelaire's blood affected the optical sense will be taken up in the next chapter, "The Sense of Sight."

CHAPTER VIII

THE SENSE OF SIGHT

At the end of the last chapter, the poet's blood was slaking the thirst of numerous creatures. His blood was also capable of coloring nature red: "Et partout colorant en rouge la nature" (Fleurs du mal, CXIII, "La Fontaine de Sang," p. 134). Again coloring nature, Baudelaire presented Cybèle, goddess of the earth, increasing the natural hues of the surrounding countryside for the benefit of passing gypsies:

Cybèle, qui les aime, augmente ses verdure,

Fait couler le rocher et fleurir le désert
Devant ces voyageurs, . . . (Spleen et Idéal, XIII,
"Bohémiens en Voyage," p. 29).

Various colors appealed to the sense of sight in a large number of Baudelaire's poems. The spray of a fountain reflected colors that reminded one of flowers:

La gerbe épanouie
En mille fleurs,
Où Phœbé réjouie
Met ses couleurs, . . . (Galanteries,
VIII, "Le Jet d'Eau," p. 171).

Warriors, dressed colorfully for battle and standing in a green prairie, presented a many-hued picture:

Les guerriers se tenaient sur la verte prairie,
Tous équipés en guerre, et la mine aguerrie,
Bariolés ainsi qu'un feuillage automnal; . . . (Additions de la troisième édition, III, I, "Le Calumet de Paix," p. 165).

Baudelaire's colors ranged from very pale to the darkest

of shades. The poet was able to convey an image of perfect whiteness. In a dejected state, he compared the pallor of his Marguerite to the whiteness of the marguerite or the autumnal sun:

--O pale marguerite!
Comme moi n'es-tu pas un soleil autumnal,
O ma si blanche, ô ma si froide Marguerite? (Spleen et Idéal, LXIV, "Sonnet d'Automne," p. 78).

The poet portrayed the sad but beautiful moon as swooning in a whiteness that was heightened by the contrasting blue of the sky:

Mourante, elle se livre aux longues pâmoisons,
Et promène ses yeux sur les visions blanches
Qui montent dans l'azur comme des floraisons.

A poet caught the pale tear of the unhappy moon, and found all the colors of the rainbow in its reflection:

Dans le creux de sa main prend cette larme pâle,
Aux reflets irisés comme un fragment d'opale, . . .
(Spleen et Idéal, LXV, "Tristesses de la Lune," p. 79).

The poet, plagued by ennui, thought of his brain as an old boudoir full of faded, pastel colors, such as those used by the artist Boucher in the eighteenth century:

Je suis un vieux boudoir plein de roses fanées,
Où gît tout un fouillis de modes surannées,
Où les pastels plaintifs et les pâles Boucher, . . .
(Spleen et Idéal, LXXVI, "Spleen," p. 86).

In a similar instance, old thoughts were likened to pupas, which, after a period of chrysalization, take flight, in many-tinted splendor:

Qui dégagent leur aile et prennent leur essor,
Teintés d'azur, glacés de rose, lamés d'or (Spleen et Idéal, XLVIII, "Le Flacon," p. 60).

Baudelaire could depict the evening in pink and blue tones: "Un soir fait de rose et de bleu mystique, . . ." (La Mort, CXXI, "La Mort des Amants," p. 145). He could also paint the evening in scarlet: "Et quand descend le soir au manteau d'écarlate, . . ." (Pièces diverses, XX, "A une Malabaraise," p. 185). In one poem, he presented a stark black night, with not even a star to illumine it:

Peut-on illuminer un ciel bourbeux et noir?
 Peut-on déchirer des ténèbres
 Plus denses que la poix, sans matin et sans soir,
 Sans astres, sans éclairs funèbres? (Spleen et Idéal,
 LIV, "L'Irréparable," p. 68).

Another time the poet described the sky and the sea as being as black as ink: "Si le ciel et la mer sont noirs comme de l'encre, . . ." (La Mort, CXXVI, VIII, "Le Voyage," p. 153).

In countless of his poems, Baudelaire used color to enhance the appeal to the visual sense. Many of the passages yet to be discussed in this chapter contain vivid descriptions of color, though they will be grouped according to something other than color. In the last passage under consideration, the sky and sea were as black as ink. In another passage, the poet used his vivid imagination to describe the tropical sun and sea in much more lively, more colorful terms:

J'ai longtemps habité sous de vaste portiques
 Que les soleils marins teignaient de mille feux,
 Et que leurs grands piliers, droits et majestueux,
 Rendaient pareils, le soir, aux grottes basaltiques
 (Spleen et Idéal, XII, "La Vie antérieure," p. 28).

Similarly, the poet dreamed of a primitive land where the sun

shone brilliantly on the happy seashore:

Je vois se dérouler des rivages heureux
 Qu'éblouissent les feux d'un soleil monotone; . . .
 (Spleen et Idéal, XXII, "Parfum exotique," p. 36).

Sometimes Baudelaire's suns were bright, reddish-orange, gold, and welcome, as in the following selection:

--Les soleils couchants
 Revêtent les champs,
 Les canaux, la ville entière,
 D'hyacinthe et d'or;
 Le monde s'endort
 Dans une chaude lumière (Spleen et Idéal, LIII,
 "L'Invitation au Voyage," p. 67).

One of the poet's suns, illuminating like a candle the dinner hour in his boyhood home at Neuilly, even seemed friendly:

Et le soleil, le soir, ruisselant et superbe,
 Qui, derrière la vitre où se brisait sa gerbe,
 Semblait, grand œil ouvert dans le ciel curieux,
 Contempler nos dîners longs et silencieux,
 Répandant largement ses beaux reflets de cierge
 Sur la nappe frugale et les rideaux de serge (Tableaux
 parisiens, XCIX, "Je n'ai pas oublié, voisine de la
 ville," p. 116).

A quite different sun seemed to be wounding a bleeding sky:

à l'heure où le soleil tombant
 Ensanglante le ciel de blessures vermeilles, . . .
 (Tableaux parisiens, XCI, III "Les Petites Vieilles,"
 p. 107).

Earlier in the chapter, one of Baudelaire's moons, clothed in whiteness, was considered. Another of his moons bathed her white beauty in a lake:

comme le rayon blanc
 Que la lune onduleuse envoie au lac tremblant,
 Quand elle y veut baigner sa beauté nonchalante; . . .
 (Le Vin, CVII, "Le Vin du Solitaire," p. 127).

A third moon glowed like a new medal:

ainsi qu'une médaille neuve
La pleine lune s'étalait, . . . (Spleen et
Idéal, LXV, "Confession," p. 57).

In the following passage, Baudelaire painted a lovely picture of a night sky in which a star, a lamp's glow, rivers of smoke, and the pale moon, shone through the haze:

Il est doux, à travers les brumes, de voir naître
L'étoile dans l'azur, la lampe à la fenêtre,
Les fleuves de charbon monter au firmament
Et la lune verser son pâle enchantement (Tableaux
parisiens, LXXXVI, "Paysage," p. 97).

In another poem, the poet wrote of blazing stars:

C'est grâce aux astres nonpareils,
Qui tout au fond du ciel flamboient, . . . (Additions
de la troisième édition, XII, "Les Plaintes d'un
Icare," p. 205).

As he did in the last passage presented, Baudelaire often depicted bright, even dazzling, rays of light. An example was the blinding light, more brilliant than any metals or jewels, including the jewels of the ruined Syrian town of Palmyra, which represented the inspiration of the poet:

Mais les bijoux perdus de l'antique Palmyre,
Les métaux inconnus, les perles de la mer,
Par votre main montés, ne pourraient pas suffire
A ce beau diadème éblouissant et clair;
Car il ne sera fait que de pur lumière,
Puisée au foyer saint des rayons primitifs,
Et dont les yeux mortels, dans leur splendeur entière,
Ne sont que des miroirs obscurcis et plaintifs! (Spleen et
Idéal, I, "Bénédiction," p. 19).

Baudelaire was fond of picturing jewels, crystals, and metals in his verse. He described to his love the shrine and the crown of his verses that he proposed to make for her:

Une niche, d'azur et d'or tout émaillée,
 Où tu te dresseras, Statue émerveillée.
 Avec mes Vers polis, treillis d'un pur métal
 Savamment constellé de rimes de cristal,
 Je ferai pour ta tête une énorme Couronne; . . . (Spleen
et Idéal, LVII, "A une Madone," p. 71).

The bejeweled leg of a dead woman posed this picture:

Un bas rosâtre, orné de coins d'or, à la jambe,
 Comme un souvenir est resté;
 La jarretière, ainsi qu'un œil secret qui flambe,
 Darde un regard diamanté (Fleurs du mal, CX, "Une
 martyre," p. 131).

In his "Rêve parisien," in which he carried to the
 extreme his preference for the artificial over the natural,
 Baudelaire described a dream city where all was metals, crys-
 tals, water, jewels, dazzlingly bright:

Babel d'escaliers et d'arcades,
 C'était un palais infini,
 Plein de bassins et de cascades
 Tombant dans l'or mat ou bruni;

Et des cataractes pesantes,
 Comme des rideaux de cristal,
 Se suspendaient, éblouissantes,
 A des murailles de métal.

.

Des nappes d'eau s'épanchaient, bleues,
 Entre des quais roses et verts,
 Pendant des millions de lieues,
 Vers les confins de l'univers;

C'étaient des pierres inouïes
 Et des flots magiques; c'étaient
 D'immenses glaces éblouies
 Par tout ce qu'elles reflétaient!

Insouciants et taciturnes,
 Des Ganges, dans le firmament,
 Versaient le trésor de leurs urnes
 Dans des gouffres de diamant.

Architecte de mes féeries,
 Je faisais, à ma volonté,
 Sous un tunnel de pierreries
 Passer un océan dompté;

Et tout, même la couleur noire,
 Semblait fourbi, clair, irisé;
 Le liquide enchâssait sa gloire
 Dans le rayon cristallisé (Tableaux parisiens, CII,
 I, "Rêve parisien," pp. 118-119).

The poet's very colorful dream city featured both dull and polished metals, blue waters between quays of pink and green, the dazzling whiteness of crystals and diamonds, and the multi-colored reflections of icebergs; even the color black was iridescent there.

Baudelaire frequently depicted eyes in his poetry, usually a woman's eyes. Some of his women's eyes shone like metals: "Ses yeux polis sont faits de minéraux charmants, . . ." (Spleen et Idéal, XXVII, "Avec ses vêtements ondoyants et nacrés," p. 40). A cat, representing a woman, stared fixedly at the poet with her eyes like opals:

Je vois avec étonnement
 Le feu de ses prunelles pâles,
 Clairs fanaux, vivantes opales,
 Qui me contemplent fixement (Spleen et Idéal, LI,
 II, "Le Chat," p. 64).

One of Baudelaire's women had eyes that sparkled with the brilliance of fireworks:

Tes yeux, illuminés ainsi que des boutiques
 Et des ifs flamboyants dans les fêtes publiques, . . .
 (Spleen et Idéal, XXV, "Tu mettrais l'univers entier dans ta ruelle," p. 39).

Another pair of radiant eyes, representing poetic inspiration, radiated fire and light:

Ils marchent devant moi, ces Yeux pleins de lumières,

 Secouant dans mes yeux leurs feux diamantés.

 Charmants Yeux, vous brillez de la clarté mystique
 Qu'ont les cierges brûlant en plein jour; le soleil
 Rougit, mais n'éteint pas leur flamme fantastique; . . .
 (Spleen et Idéal, XLIII, "Le Flambeau vivant," pp. 55-56).

Some of Baudelaire's women possessed eyes that mirrored the elements. A storm seemed to be brewing in the eye of one striking woman: "Dans son œil, ciel livide où germe l'ouragan, . . ." (Tableaux parisiens, XCIII, "A une Passante," p. 109). The eyes of Beauty, in the form of a woman, reflected both sunset and dawn: "Tu contiens dans ton œil le couchant et l'aurore; . . ." (Spleen et Idéal, XXI, "Hymne à la Beauté," p. 35). Old women had piercing eyes that glistened like pools in the night:

. . . des yeux perçants comme une vrille,
 Luisants comme ces trous où l'eau dort dans la nuit; . . .
 (Tableaux parisiens, XCI, "Les Petites Vieilles," p. 105).

Baudelaire often wrote of dark-eyed women. One beauty possessed eyes as black as dark night:

J'aime, ô pâle beauté, tes sourcils surbaissés,
 D'où semblent couler des ténèbres;
 Tes yeux, quoique très-noirs, m'inspirent des pensées
 Qui ne sont pas du tout funèbres.

Tes yeux, qui sont d'accord avec tes noirs cheveux, . . .
 (Galanteries, XI, "Les Promesses d'un Visage," p. 174).

Another woman's eyes were as black as mud, on which a beacon light shone:

Tes yeux qui semblent de la boue,
 Où scintille quelque fanal,
 Ravivés au fard de ta joue,

Lancent un éclair infernal!
 Tes yeux sont noirs comme la boue! (Galanteries,
 XII, I, "Le Monstre," p. 176).

The eyes of one lovely, dark-skinned girl were the color of her skin: "Tes grands yeux de velours sont plus noirs que ta chair" (Pièces diverses, XX, "A une Malabaraise," p. 184).

Baudelaire, who was partial to dark-skinned women, often extolled them in verse. He addressed a dark-complexioned beauty thus:

Bizarre déité, brune comme les nuits,

 Sorcière au flanc d'ébène, enfant des noirs minuits, . . .
 (Spleen et Idéal, XXVI, "Sed non satiata," p. 39).

A waning lamp from time to time illumined the amber-colored body of his beloved:

Sur ce teint fauve et brun le fard était superbe!

--Et la lampe s'étant résignée à mourir,
 Comme le foyer seul illuminait la chambre,
 Chaque fois qu'il poussait un flamboyant soupir,
 Il inondait de sang cette peau couleur d'ambre! (Pièces
 condamnées, VI, "Les Bijoux," p. 168).

Another time he described his love as swarthy: "Bistré comme la peau d'un bonze, . . ." (Galanteries, XI, "Les Promesses d'un Visage," p. 174). It is highly probable that in at least some of the above descriptions of dark-skinned women, Baudelaire had in mind his mulatto mistress, Jeanne Duval.

In at least a few instances, Baudelaire sang the praises of light-complexioned women. The following line is an example: "Et revêt d'un baiser tout ton corps blanc et rose" (Spleen et Idéal, LVII, "A une Madone," p. 71). In another poem the poet

lauded the charms of a pale-skinned beggar girl with red hair and freckles:

Blanche fille aux cheveux roux,

.

Pour moi, poëte chétif,
Ton jeune corps maladif,
Plein de taches de rousseur,

A sa douceur (Tableaux parisiens, LXXXVIII,
"A une mendiante rousse," p. 99).

In his verse, Baudelaire could very ably depict the overall beauty of charming and graceful women of regal bearing. In the following lines, he extolled the attractions of the statue of an elegant woman:

Cette femme, morceau vraiment miraculeux,
Divinement robuste, adorablement mince, . . .

.

--Aussi, vois ce souris fin et voluptueux
Où la Fatuité promène son extase;
Ce long regard sournois, langoureux et moqueur;
Ce visage mignard, tout encadré de gaze, . . . (Spleen et Idéal, XX, "Le Masque," p. 34).

The poet lauded the noble carriage of a woman glimpsed fleetingly on a busy street:

La rue assourdissante autour de moi hurlait.
Longue, mince, en grand deuil, douleur majestueuse,
Une femme passa, d'une main fastueuse
Soulevant, balançant le feston et l'ourlet;

Agile et noble, avec sa jambe de statue (Tableaux parisiens, XCIII, "A une Passante," p. 109).

A dark-skinned Creole woman was svelte and poised:

la brune enchanteresse
A dans le cou des airs noblement maniérés;
Grande et svelte en marchant comme une chasserresse, . . .
(Spleen et Idéal, LXI, "A une Dame créole," p. 76).

Baudelaire was fond of comparing women to the sea and to other things nautical. In "Le Beau Navire," the fine sea poet pictured a woman with the grace and rhythm of a sailboat:

Quand tu vas balayant l'air de ta jupe large,
 Tu fais l'effet d'un beau vaisseau qui prend le large,
 Chargé de toile, et va roulant
 Suivant un rythme doux, et paresseux, et lent (Spleen et
Idéal, LII, "Le Beau Navire," p. 64).

Baudelaire's use of rhythm and swaying in his poetry will be discussed further in the chapter on conclusions.

It was inevitable that the poet who sometimes displayed such bitterness toward life should have frequently depicted in his verse ugly, morbid, and grotesque sights. Baudelaire was fascinated with skeletons, and often wrote about them. A skeleton wearing nothing but a diadem on his forehead presented a bizarre spectacle:

Ce spectre singulier n'a pour toute toilette,
 Grotesquement campé sur son front de squelette,
 Qu'un diadème affreux sentant le carnaval (Spleen et
Idéal, LXXI, "Une gravure fantastique," p. 83).

Skeletons digging laboriously created a frightening sight:

On voit, ce qui rend plus complètes
 Ces mystérieuses horreurs,
 Bêchant comme des laboureurs,
 Des Ecorchés et des Squelettes (Tableaux parisiens,
 XCIV, "Le Squelette laboureur," p. 110).

A female skeleton, elegantly dressed for a ball, produced this grotesque, though striking, picture:

Fière, autant qu'un vivant, de sa noble stature,
 Avec son gros bouquet, son mouchoir et ses gants,
 Elle a la nonchalance et la désinvolture
 D'une coquette maigre aux airs extravagants.

Vit-on jamais au bal une taille plus mince?
 Sa robe exagérée, en sa royale ampleur,
 S'écroule abondamment sur un pied sec que pince
 Un soulier pomponné, joli comme une fleur.

La ruche qui se joue au bord des clavicules,
 Comme un ruisseau lascif qui se frotte au rocher,
 Défend pudiquement des lazzi ridicules
 Les funèbres appas qu'elle tient à cacher.

Ses yeux profonds sont faits de vide et de ténèbres,
 Et son crâne, de fleurs artistement coiffé,
 Oscille mollement sur ses frêles vertèbres,
 O charme d'un néant follement attifé! (Tableaux parisiens,
 XCVII, "Danse macabre," p. 113).

Baudelaire many times expressed his disdain for civilized modern man and his admiration for primitive man. In the following selection, he featured modern men as contorted monsters:

O ridicules troncs! torsos dignes des masques!
 O pauvres corps tordus, maigres, ventrus ou flasques, . . .
 (Spleen et Idéal, V, "J'aime le souvenir de ces époques nues," p. 21).

The poet graphically portrayed his horror of old, debauched courtesans in a gambling house who, though unhappy, preferred their present state to death or nothingness:

Autour des verts tapis des visages sans lèvre,
 Des lèvres sans couleur, des mâchoires sans dent,
 Et des doigts convulsés d'une infernale fièvre,
 Fouillant la poche vide ou le sein palpitant;

Sous de sales plafonds un rang de pâles lustres
 Et d'énormes quinquets projetant leurs lueurs
 Sur des fronts ténébreux de poètes illustres
 Qui viennent gaspiller leurs sanglantes sueurs: . . .
 (Tableaux parisiens, XCVI, "Le Jeu," p. 112).

Baudelaire had a horror of growing old. In the following lines, he gave his conception of an old man, mishapen, poverty-stricken, and spiteful:

Tout à coup, un vieillard dont les guenilles jaunes
 Imitaient la couleur de ce ciel pluvieux,
 Et dont l'aspect aurait fait pleuvoir les aumônes,
 Sans la méchanceté qui luisait dans ses yeux,

M'apparut. On eût dit sa prunelle trempée
 Dans le fiel; son regard aiguïsait les frimas,
 Et sa barbe à longs poils, roide comme une épée,
 Se projetait, pareille à celle de Judas.

Il n'était pas voûté, mais cassé, son échine
 Faisant avec sa jambe un parfait angle droit,
 Si bien que son bâton, parachevant sa mine,
 Lui donnait la tournure et le pas maladroit

D'un quadrupède infirme ou d'un juif à trois pattes
 (Tableaux parisiens, XC, "Les Sept Vieillards," pp. 103-
 104).

Though the poet never pictured old age as a desirable state,
 he sometimes demonstrated sympathy toward old people. He asked
 for sympathy for the aged, destitute old women, once women of
 note:

Ces monstres disloqués furent jadis des femmes,
 Eponine ou Lais! Monstres brisés, bossus
 Ou tordus, aimons-les! ce sont encor des âmes (Tableaux
 parisiens, XCI, "Les Petites Vieilles," p. 105).

Baudelaire's description of the corpse of a young woman
 lying amid splendor was particularly striking:

Au milieu des flacons, des étoffes lamées
 Et des meubles voluptueux,
 Des marbres, des tableaux, des robes parfumées
 Qui traînent à plis somptueux, . . .

.

Semblable aux visions pâles qu'enfante l'ombre
 Et qui nous enchaînent les yeux,
 La tête, avec l'amas de sa crinière sombre
 Et de ses bijoux précieux,

Sur la table de nuit, comme une renoncule,
 Repose, et, vide de pensées,

Un regard vague et blanc comme le crépuscule
S'échappe des yeux révulsés.

Sur le lit, le tronc nu sans scrupules étale
Dans le plus complet abandon
La secrète splendeur et la beauté fatale
Dont la nature lui fit don; . . . (Fleurs du mal,
CX, "Une martyre," p. 130).

"Camille Mauclair a retenu ce poème comme 'un des exemples les plus complets de la faculté picturale' de son auteur. . . ." ¹¹⁸

Baudelaire, as has been mentioned in earlier chapters, was very fond of cats. He "aimait les chats par une profonde affinité naturelle." ¹¹⁹ His liking for cats was well known, and artists sometimes pictured him with cats. In one of his poems, Baudelaire depicted cats as having a lovely, proud, sinister, mysterious appearance:

Ils prennent en songeant les nobles attitudes
Des grands sphinx allongés au fond des solitudes,
Qui semblent s'endormir dans un rêve sans fin;

Leurs reins féconds sont pleins d'étincelles magiques,
Et des parcelles d'or, ainsi qu'un sable fin,
Etoilent vaguement leurs prunelles mystiques (Spleen et Idéal, LXVI, "Les Chats," p. 80).

Artists also liked to portray Baudelaire with a pipe in his mouth, for he was a great smoker. In verse he described how the pipe and its blue smoke brought him solace in times of trouble:

¹¹⁸ Jacques Crépet et Georges Blin (eds.), Les Fleurs du mal (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1942), note by Camille Mauclair, p. 494.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 412.

Je suis la pipe d'un auteur;
 On voit, à contempler ma mine
 D'Abyssinienne ou de Cafrine,
 Que mon maître est un grand fumeur.

Quand il est comblé de douleur,
 Je fume comme la chaumine
 Où se prépare la cuisine
 Pour le retour du laboureur.

J'enlace et je berce son âme
 Dans le réseau mobile et bleu
 Qui monte de ma bouche en feu, . . . (Spleen et
Idéal, LXVIII, "La Pipe," p. 81).

Thus ends the last of the five chapters devoted to Baudelaire's treatment of the senses. There follows a final chapter in which will be made some general conclusions and observations on the poet's remarkable faculty for appealing to the sensory perceptions. Also included will be a brief review of the life and ideas that produced Baudelaire's poetry. His treatment of rocking and swaying will also be discussed.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSIONS

Charles Baudelaire was an unusually sensitive man. One could almost say that he lived through his senses. His poetry, which was full of appeal to the sensory perceptions, reflected his experiences and his theories. His childhood, unhappy from the time his mother took a second husband who never understood the poet, led to a youth marred by alcohol, drugs, women, dandyism, and squandered inheritance. In his later years, Baudelaire lived in virtual poverty and debauchery, plagued by syphilis. The disease hastened his early death, which was preceded by many months of mutism and paralysis.

From this tragic life developed some ideas and some poetry that were to help change the course of literature. Until Baudelaire started to write, poetry was romantic and unrestrained. Baudelaire, though not completely anti-romantic, started poetry in the direction of clarity, order, and form, and away from moralization. He appalled his contemporaries by featuring in his poetry sin, sex, death, and other subjects previously considered unfit for poetic treatment. Though Baudelaire obviously enjoyed shocking his readers, he was sincere in most of what he wrote. He firmly believed in innate evil in man, and he found real beauty in the ugliest of subjects.

Producing great poetry did not come easily to Baudelaire. He was an incurable procrastinator with a penchant for self-indulgence. He thought lethargy the greatest sin, and counted time as his worst enemy. He labored over each poem, and considered a poem finished only after hours of painstaking revisions.

To Baudelaire poetry was the greatest of the art forms, and it had only itself as its object. The poet constantly strove for le beau, or perfection in poetry, but he was doomed to failure. His dissatisfaction with life and with himself often found him in a state of total dejection, which he referred to as spleen. He sometimes expressed a desire for death, or for at least le néant.

Baudelaire professed to hate nature and believed that the artificial was always superior to the natural. Whether he was ever able to find God is not certain, but he demonstrated a profound sense of conscience, and he never pictured sin as desirable. Purposely or not, he lived the life of the horrible example. Though Baudelaire was haughty toward the bourgeois and the common people, he offered sympathy, without hope, to the suffering, the poor, and the oppressed, with whom he identified. Baudelaire was a noted sea poet. He presented the sea as having a calming influence on man, and as offering an escape from personal problems and dreary routine.

Baudelaire's unnatural attachment to his mother helped create his dilemma with women; he detested them, and at the

same time craved their company. He was never able to make a woman both a spiritual and a sexual partner. Jeanne Duval, his long-time mistress, epitomized Baudelaire's low conception of women: she was attractive, stupid, selfish, heartless, and she could offer a man only sexual contentment.

Baudelaire's poetry showed clearly his preoccupation and fascination with women.

Baudelaire seemed to be able to smell more keenly, hear more clearly, and in general to be more profoundly affected by sensory stimuli than the ordinary person. He in turn was able to include in his poetry much more than the average poet's appeal to the senses. The olfactory sense, though not necessarily the one most frequently evoked, was perhaps the most important one in Baudelaire's poetry. He often described the aroma of a woman's body, her hair, or even her clothing. He depicted the odor of cats, which to him seemed to represent women. Baudelaire called on smell to help present an image of exotic lands, dream worlds, and lost youth. The pungent smell of incense permeated some of his poems. On the unpleasant side, Baudelaire presented the smells of death, decaying flesh, stagnant, and musty smells.

The sounds featured in Baudelaire's poetry included the strains of music and the voices of nature. The unhappy poet frequently depicted groaning or crying sounds. Some of his sounds were bone-chilling and nerve-racking. Unexpected,

startling sounds heightened the effect of several of Baudelaire's poems. In some instances, the sense of sound was provoked by utter silence. The calming influence that a cat's voice had upon the poet is described in one poem.

The poet who loved cats explained in verse how a cat feels to the touch. He often wrote about kisses, caresses, and embraces between lovers, and the love-making he pictured was sometimes far from gentle. Many of Baudelaire's evocations of touch were sadistic, cruel, and painful. Women sank their teeth and nails into their male adversaries, and wild beasts tore at human flesh. Baudelaire used the elements in appealing to the sense of touch. In his poems he described the feelings of wetness, dryness, humidity, and wind. Many times he portrayed heat and cold.

A few of the tastes Baudelaire evoked in his poetry were pleasant, like the tastes of savory fruits and sweet kisses. Most of his tastes, though, were unsavory, like the bitterness of mud or the vileness of ashes, spit, or vomit. In a few instances, Baudelaire created in verse the sensation of intense thirst.

The sights evoked in Baudelaire's poetry were numerous and vivid. He presented whiteness, blackness, and pastel and dark colors. He portrayed blinding lights and brilliant jewels, metals, and crystals. He pictured moons, suns, and stars. He described a variety of eyes, mainly women's eyes. He depicted

the attractions of a variety of women. He pictured morbid, grotesque sights, including skeletons, corpses, and twisted old men and women.

In a number of instances, Baudelaire illustrated in verse his theory of correspondances, in which the various senses were fused. The olfactory sense, for example, had qualities perceptible to the other four faculties. Odors were found to have color, and colors possessed sound, and so forth.

Baudelaire was particularly adept at creating in verse a feeling of rocking or swaying. "Probably the sensation which gives the most rich and varied effects in Baudelaire's poetry is that of rocking or swaying."¹²⁰ The poet especially liked to combine the images of the sea, ships, and women, as he did in the passage which follows:

Et ton corps se penche et s'allonge
 Comme un fin vaisseau
 Qui roule bord sur bord et plonge
 Ses vergues dans l'eau (Spleen et Idéal,
 XXVIII, "Le Serpent qui danse," p. 41).

Baudelaire's Les Fleurs du mal, though condemned and unappreciated during his lifetime, has had a tremendous effect on modern literature, as Baudelaire had always remained confident that it would. The poet himself is now widely acclaimed,

¹²⁰ Alison Fairlie, Les Fleurs du mal, (London: Edward Arnold Publishers, 1960), p. 28.

and is considered one of the greatest of modern poets. He is credited with being instrumental in starting poetry toward clarity, form, and frankness, and especially with clearing the way for a bold treatment of subjects once considered taboo. How Charles Baudelaire, a remarkably sensitive man, appealed to the five senses in Les Fleurs du mal, has been the subject of this thesis. Not all of the poems in the volume have been included in this study. Only a representative portion of the poems appealing to each sense has been presented.

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