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Fragments in the Dark

Idealist Epistemology and the Baudelairean Experience of Modernity

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Fragments in the Dark

Idealist Epistemology and the Baudelairean Experience of Modernity

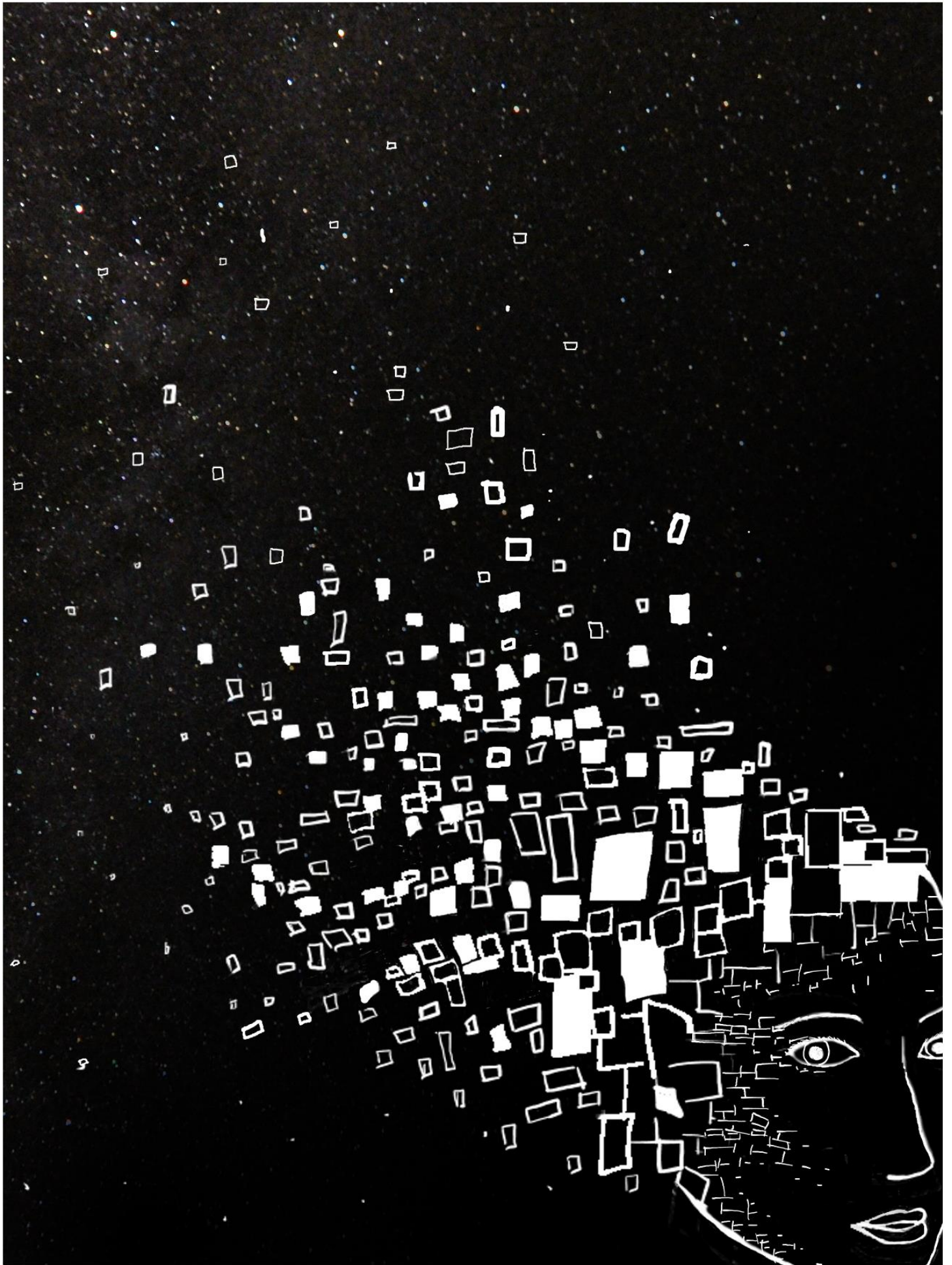
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La Passante

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Abstract

This study proposes an Idealist epistemology on the basis of a streamlined and heavily modified German Idealism. With a focus on Second Empire material modernity, the underlying research question is rather simple: how is knowledge created in material modernity? While the philosophical foundation is grounded in the work of Immanuel Kant and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, this study branches out and bridges the gap between philosophy and cultural studies by including the works of other canonical thinkers such as, for example, Walter Benjamin, Henri Bergson, Henri Lefebvre, and Georg Simmel with the aim of making German Idealist epistemology not merely more relevant in the context of material modernity, but also applicable as a methodology for cultural criticism. Addressing the conceptual challenges of this theoretico-philosophical development and application represents a large portion of this study's original contribution to the knowledge pool.

Using my theoretico-philosophical model as a methodology for cultural criticism, a second, but in no way secondary research question is this: how does the creation of knowledge in material modernity affect human existence? In order to find an answer, this study proposes to read Second Empire material modernity through the lens of epistemological concerns. In this context, the study revolves around the work of Charles Baudelaire, who, in his often emphasised function as the first poet of modernity, serves as a cultural-critical gateway. Constructing innovative understandings of the Baudelairean *œuvre* in a theorised framework will allow for a clear demonstration of how the creation of knowledge in material modernity filters into the aesthetic representation of modern human existence as well as into the formation of modern society, next to aesthetics, as yet another mode of representation. By focusing on the work of Baudelaire and by enlisting the help of the canonical nineteenth-century sociologists Karl Mannheim, Max Weber, and Émile Durkheim, this study will conclude twofold: firstly, that the specific socio-cultural and socio-economic conditions of material modernity eventually produce an epistemological darkness tainting all of modern human existence; and, secondly, that this epistemological darkness ultimately leads to fatalism as a form of existential, socio-collective determinism in the guise of a materialist teleology.

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Chapter One

Darkness There: Introduction

*Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,
“Sir,” said I, “or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you” —here I opened wide the door;—
Darkness there and nothing more.¹*

Charles Baudelaire was a great admirer of Edgar Allan Poe’s work, taking an astonishing, though, perhaps, necessary fourteen years to translate ‘The Raven’ (1884) into French, and, according to Hervey Allen, Baudelaire did Poe the ‘inestimable service of translating him supremely well’ for ‘[n]o writer in English has so greatly affected modern French literature’.² But what exactly is it that caused the former’s profound fascination with the latter? Why did Poe exert such an influence on Baudelaire and in particular the latter’s established position as one of the first poets of modernity?³ While, according to Jonathan Culler, the ‘relationship between the writings of [both] is a tantalizing problem for literary history, literary criticism, and, hence, for literary theory’,⁴ aesthetically speaking, Poe and Baudelaire were, in fact, situated at opposite ends of the spectrum: Poe was a Romantic and a neo-Platonist, Baudelaire was neither.⁵ The latter’s passionate engagement with the former substantially influenced my

¹ Edgar Allan Poe, ‘The Raven’, in *The Complete Tales and Poems* (New York, NY: The Modern Library, 1938), pp. 943–46 (p. 943; ll. 19–24).

² Hervey Allen, ‘Introduction’, in Poe, *The Complete Tales and Poems*, pp. v–viii (p. vii).

³ Following Walter Benjamin’s socio-economic readings of Baudelaire, the latter is often considered (one of) the first poet(s) of modernity. Chapter 3 will address the relevant passage in Benjamin’s Baudelaire essays.

⁴ Jonathan Culler, ‘Baudelaire and Poe’, *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur*, 100 (1990), 61–73 (p. 61).

⁵ To some critics such a sweeping statement may appear not merely debatable but downright wrong. As regards Baudelaire, chapter 2 will provide the necessary contextualisation. It should be noted, here, that neo-Platonism is a form of aesthetic Idealism. At a later stage, in the context of the painter Jean-August-Dominique Ingres, I shall also refer to neo-Classicism. Generally, however, I try to refrain from drawing these distinctions and simply refer to aesthetic Idealism or, indeed, the *Idéal*. In his well-known article ‘La Situation de Baudelaire’ (1924), Paul Valéry argues that it was precisely Poe’s neo-Platonism that not merely fascinated Baudelaire, but, indeed, allowed for the latter’s exclusive position in French literary history to be established in the first place. Valéry reads Baudelaire as either a Romantic or a Classicist, not as a Modernist. See Paul Valéry, ‘The Position of Baudelaire’, trans. by William Aspenwall Bradley, in *Variety: Second Series* (New York, NY: HBJ, 1938) <http://supervert.com/elibrary/charles_baudelaire/the_position_of_baudelaire> [accessed 17 March 2016]. Marc Eigeldinger points us in a similar direction, speaking of Baudelaire’s ‘platonisme esthétique’. See *Le Platonisme de Baudelaire* (Paris: Éditions de la Baconnière, 1951), p. 15.

choice of topic and in order to lead appropriately into the main argument, it is my aim, here, to reconstruct the original train of thought. If at times it seems that my study is addressing Poe more than Baudelaire (or, indeed, appears to be purely a study in philosophy, as opposed to a cultural criticism), I would ask the reader to bear with me, for in the history of modern aesthetics Baudelaire is a little like the idiomatic city of Rome: eventually all interpretive avenues lead to him.

For now, one must return to Poe, for it is his aesthetic influence on Baudelaire that has provided this study with much of its intellectual impetus. In ‘The Philosophy of Composition’ (1846), Poe describes how Romantic longing for lost love constitutes the aesthetico-inspirational core of ‘The Raven’: ‘the death of a beautiful woman is unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world, and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover’.⁶ Those who are familiar with Baudelaire’s most refined and coherent theory of modern aesthetics, as outlined in the well-known essay ‘Le Peintre de la vie moderne’ (1863),⁷ will also be familiar with the poet’s description of watercolourist Constantin Guys as the ‘painter of circumstance’. Baudelaire explains:

Pour le croquis de mœurs, la représentation de la vie bourgeoise et les spectacles de la mode, le moyen le plus expéditif et le moins coûteux est évidemment le meilleur. Plus l’artiste y mettra de beauté, plus l’œuvre sera précieuse; mais il y a dans la vie triviale, dans la métamorphose journalière des choses extérieures, un mouvement *rapide* qui commande à l’artiste une égale vélocité d’exécution [...]. [Cet artiste] est le peintre de la *circonstance* et de tout ce qu’elle suggère d’éternel.⁸
(my emphasis)

⁶ Edgar Allan Poe, ‘The Philosophy of Composition’, in *The Complete Poems and Stories*, ed. by Edward H. O’Neill, 2 vols (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), II, 978–87 (p. 982).

⁷ See Charles Baudelaire, ‘Le Peintre de la vie moderne’, in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Claude Pichois, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1975–76), II (1976), 683–724. All further references to this edition of the poet’s *Œuvres complètes* will be abbreviated BOC. ‘Le Peintre’ is a key text and will be addressed throughout this study.

⁸ ‘Le Croquis de mœurs’, in ‘Le Peintre’, in BOC, II, 686–87 (p. 686). Both of the terms emphasised in the citation—‘rapide’ as well as ‘circonstance’—stress the importance of *rapidité* as one of the fundamental characteristics of material modernity and its aesthetic representation. This is, of course, further supported by Baudelaire’s prominent definition of ‘modernité’ as ‘le transitoire, le fugitif, le contingent’ in an eponymously titled section of ‘Le Peintre’. The Idealist epistemology I propose in this study is very much grounded in the idea that *rapidité* is inherent to material modernity, and I shall frequently refer to it. Baudelaire’s definition of ‘modernité’, as mentioned, here, will be discussed in chapters 2 and 4, respectively.

Poe, on the other hand, insists with reference to ‘The Raven’: ‘Let us *dismiss*, as irrelevant to the poem, *per se*, the circumstance [‘circonstance’]—or say the necessity—which, in the first place, gave rise to the intention of composing a poem that should suit at once the popular and the critical taste’ (my emphasis of ‘dismiss’).⁹ Moreover, Poe concludes ‘The Poetic Principle’ by stating that poetry is ‘strictly and simply, the Human Aspiration for Supernal Beauty’.¹⁰ For Poe, then, the artist always strives towards neo-Platonist beauty in the form of the *Idéal*, whereas for Baudelaire they¹¹ must be grounded in the *spleen* and ennui of ‘material modernity’,¹² that is, ‘modern human existence’.¹³ So what exactly is the common aesthetic denominator between the two? Just like Poe’s, Baudelaire’s poetry thrives on the poet’s and, by extension, the speaker’s or narrator’s identification with melancholy.¹⁴ Melancholy, here, is the artist’s primary aesthetic inspiration, something I shall come to define as Baudelaire’s ‘ethics of vice’ in the specific context of Second Empire material modernity.¹⁵ Poe writes in his ‘Philosophy’: ‘Beauty of whatever kind, in its supreme development, invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears. Melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all the poetical tones.’¹⁶ While one may not find such a helpfully concise and poignant citation in the Baudelairean œuvre, the canonical Baudelaire critic Walter Benjamin would later state that ‘Baudelaire’s genius, which is nourished by melancholy, is an allegorical genius’.¹⁷ It is,

⁹ Poe, ‘The Philosophy of Composition’, p. 979.

¹⁰ Poe, ‘The Poetic Principle’, in *The Complete Tales and Poems*, pp. 889–907 (p. 906).

¹¹ I am aware of the efforts to establish gender-neutral language in academic writing and have opted for the generic plural, when referring, for example, to ‘the (modern) artist’ or ‘the (generic) individual’.

¹² The terms ‘spleen’ and ‘Idéal’ are rather omnipresent in the Baudelairean œuvre. For the poet, they constitute the conceptual boundaries of modern human existences. From an aesthetic as well as ethico-political point of view, I shall address both in greater detail throughout chapter 2 and particularly in the section on ‘Baudelairean Aesthetics’, arguing that one of Baudelaire’s core aesthetico-theoretical achievements was to transform traditional conceptions of the *Idéal* as a form of aesthetic Idealism into a more ‘*spleen*-bound’ aesthetic, a reconception of the *Idéal*, and thus a theory of modern aesthetics to which I subsequently refer as Baudelaire’s *le beau moderne*. For now, however, particularly in reference to Poe and later Ingres, the *Idéal* denotes divine/ideal beauty, as identified, for example, with neo-Platonism and neo-Classicism. It is divine/ideal beauty towards which the artist must always strive.

¹³ By ‘material modernity’ I mean the socio-cultural and socio-economic setting that gives rise to and frames what I refer to as ‘modern human existence’. Throughout this study, both concepts should be considered as mostly interchangeable. In the specific context of Second Empire Paris and the modern city, I shall also refer to ‘modern city existence’. In light of sociological concerns, ‘modern society’ is frequently applied, as yet another synonym.

¹⁴ I shall use the term ‘speaker’, when referring to the (lyric) voice of verse poetry. In the context of prose poetry, I shall use the term ‘narrator’ in order to highlight its, by definition, more prosaic nature.

¹⁵ See the section on ‘Second Empire Aesthetics’ in chapter 2.

¹⁶ Poe, ‘The Philosophy of Composition’, p. 981.

¹⁷ Walter Benjamin, ‘Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century’, in *The Writer of Modern Life*, ed. by Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 30–45 (p. 40). In Baudelaire, the strong link between the emotion of melancholy and the poet’s conception of *spleen* comes across, for example, in one of the four consecutive ‘Spleen’ poems of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, which begins with the following two lines: ‘Je suis comme le roi d’un pays pluvieux, // Riche, mais impuissant, jeune et pourtant très vieux’ (ll. 1–

therefore, not in the aesthetico-inspirational qualities of circumstance, but in the emotional state of melancholy that the aesthetico-theoretical trajectories of both poets can be said to merge.

While for the speaker of ‘The Raven’, melancholy is the emotional consequence of Romantic longing for lost love, Baudelaire saw in Poe an artist whose aesthetic quest for neo-Platonist beauty was nothing but a mechanism of aesthetic ‘simulation’ (I shall shortly return to the term), an aesthetic veil to hide Poe’s true inspiration: his own socio-economic misery. Baudelaire knew very well that such a take on Poe’s aesthetic inspiration and methodology was explicitly going against the latter’s meticulously detailed reflections on the creative conception of ‘The Raven’, as outlined in his ‘Philosophy’. Yet, throughout his two essays on Poe, Baudelaire’s essentially socio-economic perception of the poet’s life and work becomes increasingly clear. Early on in his ‘Edgar Poe, sa vie et ses œuvres’ (1856), for example, Baudelaire cries out:

Lamentable tragédie que la vie d’Edgar Poe! Sa mort, dénouement horrible dont l’horreur est accrue par la trivialité!—De tous les documents que j’ai lus est résultée pour moi la conviction que les États-Unis ne furent pour Poe qu’une vaste prison qu’il parcourait avec l’agitation fiévreuse d’un être fait pour respirer dans un monde plus amoral,—qu’une grande barbarie éclairée du gaz,—et que sa vie intérieure, spirituelle, de poète ou même d’ivrogne, n’était qu’un effort perpétuel pour échapper à l’influence de cette atmosphère antipathique. Impitoyable dictature que celle de l’opinion dans les sociétés démocratiques.¹⁸ (my emphasis)

2). Moreover, as Jonathan Culler points out in his introduction to Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du Mal*: ‘The term *spleen* was in vogue in Baudelaire’s day: a number of the minor French Romantic poets had used the term for a state of depression or youthful world-weariness, marked by a sense of the oppressiveness of life. The four poems entitled ‘Spleen’ in *The Flowers of Evil* give the notion a particular intensity.’ Jonathan Culler, ‘Introduction’, in Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, trans. by James McGowan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. xi–xxxvii (p. xvii).

¹⁸ ‘Edgar Poe, sa vie et ses œuvres’, in *BOC*, II, 296–318 (p. 297). In Baudelaire’s socio-economic depiction of Poe, there is, more than in other writings, continuous political awareness as though, in the context of Poe, ‘material modernity’ becomes, to some extent, synonymous with ‘democracy’. I shall not further speculate on this, but the section on ‘Second Empire Aesthetics’ in chapter 2 does address the intimate connection between ‘ethics’, ‘politics’, and ‘aesthetics’ from an art historical as well as biographical point of view. Moreover, the citation above reminds one strongly of an early passage in Stendhal’s *Le Rouge et le Noir* (1830): ‘Dans le fait, ces gens sages y exercent le plus ennuyeux *despotisme*; c’est à cause de ce vilain mot que le séjour des petites villes est insupportable pour qui a vécu dans cette grande république qu’on appelle Paris. La tyrannie de l’opinion, et quelle opinion! est aussi *bête* dans les petites villes de France qu’aux États-Unis d’Amérique’. See Stendhal, *Romans et Nouvelles*, ed. by Henri Martineau, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1952), I, 219–699 (p. 222).

The link is clear: the '[l]amentable tragédie' of Poe's life is considered a direct consequence of material modernity. In other words, Poe's subjectivity, his *subjective individuality* ('sa vie intérieure, spirituelle') and, by suggestive extension, his aesthetic inspiration and methodology, are driven by the perpetual efforts to escape from this 'vaste prison' of objectivity, his *objective reality* ('grande barbarie éclairée du gaz').¹⁹ More specifically, in 'Notes nouvelles sur Edgar Poe' (1857), Baudelaire brings melancholy into the mix:

L'homme civilisé invente la philosophie du progrès pour se consoler de son abdication et de sa *déchéance*; cependant que l'homme sauvage, époux redouté et respecté, guerrier contraint à la bravoure personnelle, poète aux heures *mélancoliques* où le soleil déclinant invite à chanter le passé et les ancêtres, rase de plus près la lisière de l'idéal.²⁰ (my emphasis)

Again, melancholy is addressed as the artist's primary source of aesthetic inspiration. Prior to material modernity ('l'homme sauvage'), this melancholy is derived from the emotional state of longing associated with Romanticism ('poète aux heures mélancoliques où le soleil déclinant invite à chanter le passé et les ancêtres'). Recall, for example, the speaker's Romantic longing for lost love in 'The Raven'. In material modernity ('l'homme civilisé', 'progrès'), however, melancholy originates in the discrepancy ('déchéance') occurring between subjective individuality ('la vie intérieure, spirituelle') and objective reality ('vaste prison', 'la grande barbarie éclairée du gaz'). In both cases, it is melancholy that brings the artist closer to 'la lisière de l'idéal'. According to Benjamin, the latter applies to Baudelaire. And according to Baudelaire, the same is true for Poe.

Towards the end of his 'Notes nouvelles', Baudelaire encapsulates his socio-economic reading of Poe by addressing the latter's rigid, compositional procedure regarding 'The Raven' with some scepticism:

¹⁹ The concepts of subjective individuality and objective reality will become increasingly important in the course of my argument. I apply them, here, in order to introduce terminology. At this early stage, however, their meaning must be considered tentative.

²⁰ 'Notes nouvelles sur Edgar Poe', in *BOC*, II, 319–37 (pp. 325–26). The notion of 'déchéance' hinted at, here, is further discussed in the section on 'Baudelairean Aesthetics' in chapter 2. Essentially, it will be defined as the fragmentation of *distance* between subjective individuality and objective reality.

J'ai dit que cet article ['Philosophy'] me paraissait entaché d'une légère impertinence. Les partisans de l'inspiration quand même ne manqueraient pas d'y trouver un blasphème et une profanation; mais je crois que c'est pour eux que l'article a été spécialement écrit. Autant certains écrivains affectent l'abandon, visant au chef-d'œuvre les yeux fermés, pleins de confiance dans le désordre, et attendant que les caractères jetés au plafond retombent en poème sur le parquet, autant Edgar Poe—l'un des hommes les plus *inspirés* que je connaisse—a mis d'affectation à *cache*r la spontanéité ['circonstance'], à *simuler* le sang-froid et la délibération.²¹ (my emphasis)

Admittedly, Baudelaire slightly struggles to make his point. Nonetheless, it does complement the argument I wish to propose. Baudelaire perceives irony as a driving force in Poe's 'Philosophy'.²² He sees it as a simulated ('simuler') adherence to neo-Platonism, that is, more specifically, Poe's attempt to conceal ('cacher') the fact that spontaneity ('spontanéité') and circumstance ('circonstance') provide the aesthetic inspiration for all aesthetic production in material modernity, as is the case for Guys in Baudelaire's 'Le Peintre' ('le peintre de la circonstance'/'vie moderne'). Baudelaire remains vague as to why he perceives such strong irony to be in place. Perhaps, he is drawing a conceptual link between his admiration for Poe and those ideas regarding modern aesthetic production that would eventually be refined in 'Le Peintre' a few years later.²³ Or, perhaps, part XII of Poe's 'Marginalia'—also translated by Baudelaire—helps give rise to such a perception:

The *pure Imagination* chooses, from *either Beauty or Deformity*, only the most combinable things hitherto uncombined; the compound, as a general rule, partaking, in character, of beauty, or sublimity, in the ratio of the respective beauty or sublimity of the things combined—which are themselves still to be considered as atomic—that is to say, as previous combinations.²⁴ (Poe's emphasis)

²¹ 'Notes nouvelles sur Edgar Poe', in *BOC*, II, 335.

²² Irony is a widely (and wildly) discussed topic in Baudelaire studies. For some of the better known scholarly approaches, see the section on 'Baudelairean Poetics' in chapter 2.

²³ The publication dates are provided in-text.

²⁴ Edgar Allan Poe, 'Marginalia: Part XII', in *The Complete Works of E. A. Poe*, ed. by J. A. Harrison, 17 vols, XVI <<http://www.eapoe.org/works/harrison/jah16m13.htm>> [accessed 05 June 2015]. I owe this reference to Patrizia Lombardo, *Edgar Poe et la Modernité: Breton, Barthes, Derrida, Blanchot* (Birmingham, AL: Summa Publications, 1985), p. 22.

With such a statement, one enters the aesthetic domain of symbolism,²⁵ which is of particular interest, of course, as Baudelaire's aesthetic methodology is most frequently associated with that of symbolism, or, at the very least, with the rise of symbolism towards the fin de siècle. In his article 'The Linguistic Turning of the Symbol: Baudelaire and his French Symbolist Heirs', then, William Franke makes explicit that the 'process of symbolisation begins when one thing is used to stand for something else'.²⁶ Moreover, Franke claims that in aesthetic theory, specifically, the symbol 'distinguishes itself from other types of signs (or as against the sign altogether) by virtue of its making concretely present the thing it signifies' (15). Following Coleridge,²⁷ Franke argues that '[i]n the symbolic universe, all things are interconnected, and all are immanent in each individual thing' (17). Additionally, it is the purpose of symbolism to 'give access to nature beneath the level of social conventions of signification' (16). Franke goes on to argue that in Baudelaire 'language is not just a reality but all reality, and perhaps supereality as well':

Language tends to become identical with all it represents in Baudelaire's poetry: it is the part which concretely embodies and becomes symbolically identical with the whole. This is not to be confused with a metaphysical thesis that there is nothing but language. It is rather a poetic experience of everything becoming accessible to

²⁵ The discrepancy between Benjamin's pointing towards Baudelaire as an allegorist, and the poet's more frequent reception as a symbolist should not be considered a cause for concern within the analytical framework of this study. Both rhetorical devices address an aesthetic shift away from conceptions of *mimēsis* towards more subjective forms of aesthetic representation. While there are numerous nuances between the two, throughout this study, I read them mostly as interchangeable, and it should be noted that the *OED*'s secondary definition of the term 'allegory' is, indeed, 'a symbol'. For a more detailed distinction between allegory and symbol, see Paul de Man, 'Allegory and Symbol', in 'The Rhetoric of Temporality', in *Blindness and Insight: Essays on the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), pp. 187–228 (pp. 187–208). In conclusion, de Man explains: 'Whereas the symbol postulates the possibility of an identity or identification, allegory designates primarily a distance in relation to its own origin, and, renouncing the nostalgia and the desire to coincide, it establishes its language in the void of this temporal difference. In so doing, it prevents the self from an illusory identification with the non-self. It is this painful knowledge that we perceive at the moments when early romantic literature finds its true voice' (p. 207). Moreover, to avoid convoluting an already complex argument, this study will mostly refer to 'aesthetics' and 'poetics' as more universally applicable concepts of representation, referring to 'symbolism' only, when it is deemed helpful and necessary. The difference between aesthetics and poetics is further discussed throughout chapter 2.

²⁶ William Franke, 'The Linguistic Turning of the Symbol: Baudelaire and his French Symbolist Heirs', in Patricia A. Ward (ed.), *Baudelaire and the Poetics of Modernity* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2001), pp. 15–28 (p. 15). All further references will be provided in-text.

²⁷ In *The Statesman's Manual*, Coleridge argues that a 'symbol is characterised by a translucence of the Special in the Individual or the General in the Especial or of the Universal in the General [*sic*]'; as cited in Nicholas Reid, *Coleridge, Form and Symbol, Or the Ascertaining Vision* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p. 5.

be known symbolically—that is, as identical, on the model of part [fragment] and whole, with the concrete, sensuous instance of the poem itself. (19)

At this point, the links between Baudelaire’s symbolism and part XII of Poe’s ‘Marginalia’ become apparent,²⁸ though, it may be helpful to reiterate the train of thought leading up to this point. For Baudelaire, Poe’s aesthetic inspiration and methodology are essentially grounded in material modernity (‘Edgar Poe,—l’un des hommes les plus inspirés que je connaisse,—a mis d’affectation à cacher la spontanéité, à simuler le sang-froid et la délibération’). Moreover, following Franke, the function of symbolism is the creation of a whole from fragments, or a whole within and from *each* fragment (‘[i]n the symbolic universe, all things are interconnected, and all are immanent in each individual thing’). In the work of both poets, then, symbolism as an aesthetic methodology with the aim of merging fragments into a whole, plays a crucial role in the poetic representation of material modernity, that is, once again, modern human existence (‘The *pure Imagination* chooses, from *either Beauty or Deformity*, only the most combinable things hitherto uncombined’ [Poe’s emphasis]). I shall leave aside for now the importance of the term ‘imagination’ in Baudelaire. It will be addressed throughout this study and most readers,²⁹ I assume, will already have at least a tentative understanding of its relevance. More immediately pressing, here, is the remaining question of how all this relates to Poe’s ‘The Raven’ and particularly to the stanza I chose as the epigraph to this chapter (‘Darkness there and nothing more’).

Poe himself hints at the possibility of reading ‘The Raven’ through the lens of symbolism, when noting in his ‘Philosophy’ that the line ‘Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door’, occurring late in the poem, constitutes in fact its ‘first metaphorical expression’.³⁰ For the sake of this argument, I suppose, it is better late than never. While there are many nuances between the composition of a symbol and a metaphor, in this particular case, both concepts seem rather interchangeable: the raven’s ‘beak’ and ‘form’ metaphorically express the dark, fatalistic, and deterministic grip of raven over man, while,

²⁸ It may be worth pointing out that Poe is frequently considered to be the founder of the detective story, which takes fragments (clues) and the subsequent merging thereof (solving the case) as its structural logic, though, not necessarily as its aesthetic inspiration. While this remains a very tenuous link to the merging of fragments in the sphere of symbolism, perhaps, it is worth a thought or two.

²⁹ See in particular the section on ‘Photography, Memory, Imagination (and Happiness)’ in chapter 4.

³⁰ Poe, ‘The Philosophy of Composition’, p. 987.

simultaneously, symbolising the dark, fatalistic, and deterministic atmosphere created by the poem from the start. Applying the idea of symbolic representation to ‘The Raven’ means that the most dominant symbol in the poem is the raven itself. Now, the passage forming my epigraph is stanza 4. The raven, however, does not occur or arrive until stanza 7, ‘when, with many a flirt and flutter, // In there stepped a stately Raven from the saintly days of yore’ (ll. 37–38). It should be noted that the term ‘Raven’ is capitalised throughout the poem, further emphasising its potentially symbolic function.

At this point, one must turn to the speaker, who, in the three stanzas leading up to stanza 4 (‘Darkness there and nothing more’), is situated in the solitude of his chamber, reading and napping, until *interrupted* by a tapping:³¹ “‘ ’Tis some visitor,” I muttered, “tapping at my chamber door— // Only this and nothing more” (ll. 5–6). The apparent rarity of this event immediately plunges the speaker into a dream-like mental state, represented in the form of Romantic longing for lost love: ‘From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the lost Lenore— // For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore— // Nameless here for evermore’ (ll. 10–12). At this juncture, we encounter one of the clearer indications that there is a subtle shift from Romanticism (representation of emotional longing for lost love) to Modernism (representation of modern human existence) intrinsic to ‘The Raven’. In stanza 3, the longing for lost love is, to my mind, but contrary to Poe’s statement in his ‘Philosophy’, also expressed metaphorically or symbolically: ‘And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain’ (l. 13).³² This longing connects with and is subsequently surpassed or replaced by some sort of curious excitement triggered by the sudden recognition of an event occurring outside of the poem’s Romantic setting: ‘Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before’ (l. 14). It is important to emphasise that the poem’s ‘Romantic setting’ includes not merely the speaker’s emotional state of longing, but also the confines of a richly furnished chamber. According to Poe, the ‘close *circumscription of space* [the chamber] is absolutely necessary to the effect of insulated incident—it has the force of a frame to a picture’ (Poe’s emphasis).³³ In other words, for Poe, the physical confines of the chamber may bring to the

³¹ The concept of interruption will become increasingly important and is explained in chapter 3. As regards Baudelaire, it will be addressed, most explicitly, in my interpretation of the prose poem ‘La Chambre double’ (1862), also in chapter 3. The poem’s volta reads as follows: ‘Mais un coup terrible, lourd’.

³² The term ‘uncertain’ connotes a sense of instability, seemingly caused by the loss of love, while the term ‘sad’ describes the emotional consequence of this loss and instability.

³³ Poe, ‘The Philosophy of Composition’, p. 984.

fore ('frame') the emotional confines of Romantic longing. Moreover, the fact that it is 'richly furnished' suggests the poem's reach for neo-Platonist beauty, that is, the *Idéal*: 'The room is represented as richly furnished—this in mere pursuance of [...] Beauty, as the sole true poetical thesis'.³⁴ Moreover, the speaker seems indicative of the subtle clash between Romanticism and Modernism one encounters in 'The Raven'. Ripped from the emotional state of Romantic longing, at least for the time being, he becomes curious as to what is happening on the outside, what is there *other* than the poem's Romantic setting: 'So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating: // "'Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door— // Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door; // This it is and nothing more"' (ll. 15–17). In this moment, he 'open[s] wide the door;— // Darkness there and nothing more' (ll. 23–24).

The contextual denotations and connotations of the term 'darkness' are numerous. Most powerfully, however, the darkness encountered, here, invites one to read the poem from the viewpoints of death and fatalism as forms of existential, socio-collective determinism; an analytical framework already hinted at above in relation to the line 'Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door'. Such an interpretive approach is subtly supported by Poe's choice of the raven as a bird of 'ill-omen',³⁵ throughout the poem also referred to as 'beast', 'devil', 'fiend', and—in particular support of an overall dark, fatalistic, and deterministic atmosphere—as a 'prophet' in conjunction with a 'thing of evil'.³⁶ Its repeated croaking of 'nevermore', then, furnishing us with nothing less than the idiomatic icing on the interpretive cake. What started in stanza 1 with 'one gently rapping [and] tapping', quickly arouses the speaker's curiosity, as regards the event happening 'outside': "'Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door— // only this and nothing more"'. This leads to the emotional state of Romantic longing in stanza 2, but also to a subtle clash between Romanticism and Modernism in stanza 3: 'And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain // Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before'. The outside, then, represents material modernity, which represents itself an interpretation of the poem's dominant Romantic setting, grounded, specifically, in Baudelaire's socio-economic perception of Poe's

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 982.

³⁶ As regards Baudelaire, the notions of death and fatalism as forms of existential, socio-collective determinism will be addressed in the section on 'Society and Existence from the Viewpoint of Death' in chapter 5.

life and work. As we have already seen, for Baudelaire, Poe applies irony in his ‘Philosophy’ in order to conceal (‘cacher’) the fact that spontaneity (‘spontanéité’) and circumstance (‘circonstance’) provide the aesthetic inspiration for all aesthetic production in material modernity. Once again, at this point, the speaker ‘opens wide the door— // Darkness there and nothing more’. Projected onto the symbol of the raven, this darkness continues to taint the melancholic atmosphere intentionally created within the poem: the poem revolves around the symbol of the raven and thus revolves around the darkness it represents (connoting death and fatalism). From the perspective of symbolism, and in agreement with Franke that the function of a symbol is essentially to create a whole from fragments, then, what the speaker of ‘The Raven’ truly perceives upon opening wide the door are fragments in the dark.

Hypothesis

The main title of my study, *Fragments in the Dark*, connects directly to the underlying Idealist epistemological hypothesis that all of human engagement with reality occurs on the basis of experience and knowledge—that is, the branch of philosophy referred to as Idealism. The existential question of ‘who we are’ is defined by our experience and subsequent knowledge of reality: from metaphysical ‘self-consciousness’ to social, cultural, political, ethical, and economic ‘self-identification’. To paraphrase Shakespeare’s Ophelia, ‘[w]e know what we are’;³⁷ sure, but, first and foremost, we are what we know. In the case of Baudelaire and, from Baudelaire’s own socio-economic perspective, also in the case of Poe, this reality is material modernity and, once again, modern human existence. The artist, in order to represent modern human existence,³⁸ must, therefore, firstly, acquire experience, and, secondly, create knowledge about modern human existence. This is what I refer to as the Baudelairean experience of modernity. To put it in symbolist terminology, it is the artist’s experience and knowledge that allows for the combination of the ‘most combinable things hitherto uncombined; the compound’ (Poe), and thus for language to become ‘all reality, and perhaps supraréality as well’ (Franke). It is experience and knowledge that allows for the creation of a whole from the fragments one may perceive in the dark.

³⁷ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act 4, Scene 5.

³⁸ From an Idealist epistemological perspective, Baudelaire’s poetic representation of modern human existence—the poet’s a posteriori—will be discussed in chapter 5.

The primary questions I ask are rather straightforward. What happens if experience can no longer be acquired and knowledge can no longer be created? What happens to the whole if fragments remain fragments? Interestingly, it is the specific socio-cultural and socio-economic setting of material modernity that gives rise to such a query. Ever since Benjamin's seminal, Marxist, socio-economic readings of Baudelaire and in particular the introduction of his concepts of shock reception and the dialectical image, the fragmentation of *physical space*—in short, Haussmann's Paris and the commodity culture of the Second Empire it represents—has become a prevalent theoretical paradigm in scholarly approaches to Baudelaire and Baudelairean modernity, especially. Chapter 2 will elaborate on this in greater detail. At this juncture, for now, let us assume the following. The conceptual fragmentation of reality ultimately serves the artist as their primary inspiration in the process of aesthetic production. From an interpretive point of view, material modernity thus represents the conceptual petrification of fragmentation in the form of Haussmann's Paris. The term 'petrification', here, connotes a newly emerging rigidity and immobility of the fragments of reality in material modernity, and, consequentially, the sudden inability to create a whole from these fragments. It 'subverts' (I shall shortly return to the term) the integrity of aesthetic production, and points towards the need for aesthetic 'adaptation' ('s'adapter').³⁹ In the Baudelairean universe, this aesthetic adaptation eventually manifests itself in the form of prose poetry as a literary genre, a form of poetic Modernism representing the fragmentation, or, as I shall argue towards the end of chapter 5,⁴⁰ perhaps even the fatalistic finality of aesthetic production itself. In his 1862 dedication of twenty prose poems to Arsène Houssaye, at the time editor-in-chief of the popular daily *La Presse*, Baudelaire famously writes:

Mon cher ami, je vous envoie un petit ouvrage dont on ne pourrait pas dire, sans injustice, qu'il n'a ni queue ni tête, puisque tout, au contraire y est à la fois tête et queue, alternativement et réciproquement. Considérez, je vous prie, quelles admirables commodités cette combinaison nous offre à tous, à vous, à moi et au lecteur. Nous pouvons couper où nous voulons, moi ma rêverie, vous le manuscrit, le lecteur sa lecture; car je ne suspends pas la volonté rétive de celui-ci au fil interminable d'une intrigue superflue. Enlevez une vertèbre, et les deux morceaux

³⁹ The meaning and importance of the term 'subversion' is discussed in the section on 'Baudelairean Poetics' in chapter 2. As regards the term 'adaptation', see footnote 41.

⁴⁰ See in particular the section on 'Society and Existence from the Viewpoint of Death'.

de cette tortueuse fantaisie se rejoindront sans peine. Hachez-là en nombreux fragments, et vous verrez que chacun peut exister à part. Dans l'espérance que quelques-uns de ces tronçons seront assez vivants pour vous plaire et vous amuser, j'ose vous dédier le serpent tout entier.⁴¹

I shall return to various aspects of Baudelaire's *dédicace* in chapters 2, 4, and 6. At this point, however, one should simply acknowledge that with the establishment of prose poetry, Baudelaire aimed to incorporate the external, physical fragmentation of material modernity into modern aesthetic production.

Finally, it is important, at this stage, to return to the Idealist epistemological hypothesis that all of human engagement with reality occurs on the basis of experience and knowledge. So far, it has been argued that this essentially translates into the creation of a whole from the fragments of reality. But if the conceptual petrification of external, physical fragmentation in material modernity means that the fragments of reality can no longer be merged—that a whole can no longer be created—does this also mean that the acquisition of experience and the creation of knowledge remains fragmented? Even more importantly, how can the fragmentation of experience and knowledge in material modernity possibly be represented by modern aesthetics if the modern artist, as a member of modern society, suffers from the very same predicament? Throughout this study, I shall explore related questions in greater detail by proposing an Idealist epistemology on the basis of a streamlined and heavily modified German Idealism, and by addressing the Baudelairean experience of modernity as my case study. Eventually, I shall argue that the fatalism and determinism denoted by the idea of death, but, most importantly, connoted by the notion of darkness, ultimately springs from the often referred to phenomenon of socio-collective, intellectual decay that sociology has come to define as the *blasé*,⁴² a concept featuring prominently in Baudelaire, though, as chapter 5

⁴¹ 'Lettre à Arsène Houssaye', in *Le Spleen de Paris*, in *BOC*, I, 275–76 (p. 275). At this point, the reader should note the following: firstly, Baudelaire's 'Lettre à Arsène Houssaye' will frequently, though, perhaps not exclusively, be referred to as *dédicace*; secondly, various critics have made a case for Baudelaire's ironic insincerity in the *dédicace*. Briefly, I shall address the relevant elements of their argument in the section on 'Baudelairean Poetics' in chapter 2. Thirdly, the term 's'adapter', as cited slightly earlier, is key in the *dédicace*. It will resurface frequently throughout this study and particularly in chapter 4, when I make a case for the relationship of cause and effect between 'physical fragmentation' and 'psychological fragmentation'. What exactly I mean by those designations will become clear in the course of my argument.

⁴² See chapter 5 and in particular the subsection on "'The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903): The *Blasé* (and the Dandy)'.

will argue, perhaps more in the form of *spleen* and ennui. In order to proceed, then, we must ask one crucial question: where is it that the acquisition of experience and the creation of knowledge ultimately begin?

Methodology

What does one actually know? And for what knowledge does one require experience? At the end of the eighteenth century, it was the philosopher Immanuel Kant, who would posit these questions in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781),⁴³ attempting to unite the diachronically preceding epistemologies of Rationalism and Empiricism on the battlefield (‘Kampfplatz’) of metaphysics.⁴⁴ Essentially, Kant devised what would retrospectively be referred to as the Copernican revolution in philosophy. As regards epistemology, Kant states in the second preface to his *Critique*:

We should then be proceeding precisely on the lines of Copernicus’ primary hypothesis. Failing of satisfactory progress in explaining the movements of the heavenly bodies on the supposition that they all revolved around the spectator, he tried whether he might not have better success if he made the spectator to revolve and the stars to remain at rest.⁴⁵

Just as Copernicus determined that heavenly bodies revolve around their stars, our thoughts revolve around the object and not vice versa. Kant arrived at these fundamental epistemological revelations by splitting the concept of knowledge into a priori and a posteriori: the former referring to knowledge existing prior to experience, the latter to knowledge grounded in already acquired experience.⁴⁶ In other words, a priori refers to the battlefield of metaphysics, whereas

⁴³ In response to the philosophical complexities of Idealism, at this early stage, I have opted to provide only a most basic summary. More detailed explanations including relevant references to primary works will be provided where and when needed in the course of my argument.

⁴⁴ Kant argues his case in the foreword to both of the editions of his *Critique of Pure Reason* (the second being slightly longer and much clearer) as well as in his introduction. The specific reference to the ‘battlefield’ of metaphysics can be found here: Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), trans. by Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1929), p. 7. Later, Smith translates ‘Kampfplatz’ as ‘battle-ground’ (p. 21).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁴⁶ An excellent contextualising retrospection on Kant is provided by Robert B. Pippin, ‘The Kantian Aftermath: Reaction and Revolution in German Philosophy’, in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in the Nineteenth*

a posteriori relates to physics, the objective world, or objective reality (as opposed to subjective individuality).

In this context, two reasons must be noted as to why Idealist epistemology presents itself as the most suitable analytical framework to be applied as my methodology.⁴⁷ The first is relatively straightforward. The idea of a Copernican revolution in philosophy is by no means an exaggeration. At no point in the history of modern, Western philosophy did a single school of thought have such a fundamental impact on the intellectual landscape of the decades and even centuries to follow.⁴⁸ The second reason is more specifically relevant to the argument I propose, leading us back to the question of where the acquisition of experience and the creation of knowledge ultimately begin. Well, from the viewpoint of Idealist epistemology, it all begins on said battlefield of metaphysics. Here, the Kantian definition of a priori deserves a closer look as it provides a necessary conceptual bridge between philosophy and cultural studies. I argued above that since Benjamin's essays on Baudelaire, discussions on the fragmentation of physical space in the form of Haussmann's Paris have become a prevalent theme in scholarship on the poet. Moreover, I wondered whether or not the conceptual petrification of external, physical fragmentation, once again, in the form of Haussmann's Paris means that the fragments of reality can no longer be merged in order to create a whole; and, consequentially, whether or not the external, physical fragmentation of material modernity is projected onto the acquisition of experience and the creation of knowledge, resulting in the fragmentation of what my study will come to define as the individual's epistemological process, or, to highlight yet another term and concept that will become increasingly important in the course of my argument, as the individual's ability *to reason*:⁴⁹ 'Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering

Century (1790–1870), ed. by Allen W. Wood and Songsuk Susan Hahn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 19–45. For a concise passage on the split between a priori and a posteriori, see p. 21.

⁴⁷ By 'Idealism' I mean the 'German Idealism' of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The four key figures in philosophy were Immanuel Kant, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, though, I exclusively refer to the works of Kant and Hegel for reasons explained in the course of my argument.

⁴⁸ Allen W. Wood, for example, states concisely: 'The most significant phenomenon in early nineteenth-century philosophy was the German idealist movement'. Allen W. Wood, 'Introduction', in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century (1790–1870)*, p. 3.

⁴⁹ Throughout this study, the individual's 'epistemological process' and their 'ability to reason' should be considered as mostly synonymous. If one were to apply a more nuanced definition, then the latter would only represent one component of the former, but a crucial component, nonetheless. In the context of Hegelian dialectic, as discussed in the section on 'Idealist Epistemology in "A Une Passante"' in chapter 4, this distinction will become clear.

fearing, // Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before' ('The Raven', ll. 25–26).

Kant's analytical focus on metaphysics, I argue, provides the philosophical foundation necessary to seek out the answers required by furnishing us with a most interesting speculative insight: that all acquisition of experience and creation of knowledge—the individual's epistemological process or, indeed, their ability *to reason*—is grounded in the perception of *space* and *time*, the only two sensory stimuli one may perceive a priori. This particularity of Kantian metaphysics must be projected onto the potential relationship of cause and effect between the external, physical fragmentation of material modernity (cause), and the fragmentation of the individual's epistemological process (effect). This, then, underlines my two interlinked questions. Does the external, physical fragmentation of material modernity lead to the fragmentation of a priori space and time ('space' and 'spatial' [as opposed to 'time' and 'temporal'], for now, at least, presenting us with the terminological as well as conceptual connector)? And does the fragmentation of a priori space and time subsequently reverberate in the individual's epistemological process? In other words, via the fragmentation of a priori space and time, does the individual's epistemological process, too, become fragmented? I argue that it does, essentially translating into the blasé as a form of existential, socio-collective determinism in its own right.

Trajectory

Following on from this introduction, chapter 2, 'Compagnon's Conundrum', constitutes what is traditionally referred to as a literature review. In this particular case, however, it is not so much a literature review as it is a conceptual review. It is split into two parts: the first categorises various scholarly approaches to Baudelairean modernity; the second provides a series of three short essays on 'Second Empire Aesthetics', 'Baudelairean Aesthetics', and 'Baudelairean Poetics', respectively, summarising my own approach to Baudelairean modernity and leading into the argument I propose.

The study itself is also split into two parts in order to allow for a more clearly defined argumentative trajectory. Part I addresses the Kantian a priori, part II the a posteriori. Taking into account my own modifications of Kantian metaphysics, as outlined above, perhaps,

one could label part I the cause and part II the effect. Or, indeed, as philosophy would have it, part I is essentially analytic, whereas part II is synthetic.

The specific argument I propose begins in chapter 3, ‘The a priori of Experiencing Modernity’. Here, I provide a more detailed approach to the Kantian a priori, conceptually fragmenting it via Benjamin’s concepts of shock reception and the dialectical image,⁵⁰ which, then, simultaneously allows for the necessary links to be drawn between Idealist epistemology, material modernity, and, of course, Baudelaire as one of the first poets explicitly inspired by that modernity. At this juncture, the analytical focus will shift from a priori space onto a priori time, or from the fragment onto the instant, the fragment’s temporal synonym. The Kantian approach will, furthermore, be clarified via the Baudelairean faculties of *rêve*, *rêverie*, and *ivresse* allowing for a more precise definition of what I mean by ‘the individual’. In turn, this will enable us to draw the necessary distinction between ‘the modern artist’ and ‘the generic individual’ in their respective engagements with fragmented a priori space and time.⁵¹ The chapter’s second half will introduce the philosophy of Henri Bergson, whose doctoral *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (1889) deals extensively with the individual’s perception of time. Essentially a Kantian disciple, for Bergson, too, space and time are the only two sensory stimuli to be perceived a priori. Space is perceived externally, it manifests the individual’s objective reality, whereas time is perceived internally, thus constituting the individual’s subjectivity. Bergson labels it ‘durée’. Accordingly, his philosophy splits the individual into two selves, the *moi profond* and the *moi superficiel*, the former existing in space, the latter in time or *durée*. Both of the Bergsonian selves will eventually aid in the interpretive attempt to integrate material modernity into the concept of Kantian a priori perception.

⁵⁰ It must be stressed, here, that the conceptual fragmentation of the Kantian a priori is my own approach: for the philosopher, a priori space and time are always absolute, or, indeed, ‘homogenous’, as chapter 3 will demonstrate.

⁵¹ Throughout my argument, I apply the direct article, when referring to the figures of ‘the (modern) artist’ or ‘the (generic) individual’. This is in order to emphasise their nature as a theoretico-philosophical concept or entity. Moreover, at this early stage, it should be noted that ‘the *modern* artist’ does not necessarily, or exclusively denote something along the lines of ‘the artist of material modernity’. Rather, it refers to the Baudelairean belief that every epoch in history has its very own modernity, which only ‘the *true* artist’ is capable of transforming into an artwork. I shall further discuss this in the sections on ‘Second Empire Aesthetics’ as well as ‘Baudelairean Aesthetics’ in chapter 2. See also footnote 225.

Chapter 4, ‘The Epistemological Dialectics of Experiencing Modernity’, will continue to focus on fragmented time by addressing, specifically, the individual’s epistemological engagement with the instant as material modernity’s newly emerging temporal unit. Most important, here, is my continuous effort to distinguish between the modern artist and the generic individual. In the case of the latter, the engagement with the instant eventually multiplies into the socio-collective phenomenon I have previously referred to as the blasé (the engagement with the instant is socio-collective).⁵² In the case of the former and thus in the context of modern aesthetic production, I shall argue that it is only Baudelaire’s modern artist and child, who is able of ‘sheltering’ (I shall frequently apply this term) a priori perception from the external, physical fragmentation of material modernity via the aforementioned faculties of *rêve*, *rêverie*, *ivresse* as well as, at this point, *imagination* (‘pure Imagination’ [Poe’s ‘Marginalia’]). These faculties, I argue, enable the modern artist to still create a whole from the fragments of reality, despite its conceptual petrification in the form of Haussmann’s Paris; an increasingly rare ability that I shall come to define as ‘mnemonic filtering’ (the engagement with the instant is elitist). The Idealist epistemology presented up until that point—namely, its a priori dimension—will accumulate in a close reading of Baudelaire’s famous sonnet ‘A une passante’. And it is here, too, that I shall introduce Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and in particular his conception of dialectics as an additional layer of complexity with the paradoxical aim of facilitating the rather difficult, but necessary transition from a priori to a posteriori.

Chapter 5, ‘The a posteriori of Experiencing Modernity’, completes this analytical shift by illustrating the epistemological mechanics of my theoretico-philosophical model at work. While the Kantian a priori as well as Hegelian dialectic will continue to serve as its philosophical foundation, I shall also further enrich my analysis by including the works of the Marxist theorist Henri Lefebvre as well as the German sociologist Georg Simmel. While the former was much influenced by Hegelian dialectic, the latter was an avid follower of Kantian metaphysics, and both will aid in the attempt at making German Idealist epistemology not merely more relevant in the context of material modernity, but also applicable as a methodology for cultural criticism. Primarily addressing the question of how the acquisition of

⁵² While chapter 4 will continue to set the analytical focus on the individual per se, it should be noted, here, that the socio-collective dimension of my argument will subsequently be addressed in chapters 5 and 6, that is, in the synthetic or a posteriori part (II) of this study.

experience and the creation of knowledge in material modernity affect human existence—and with a specific focus on Baudelaire’s prose poems ‘La Fausse Monnaie’ (1864) and ‘Les Yeux des pauvres’ (1864) as well as Simmel’s essay ‘The Metropolis and Mental Life’ (1903)—chapter 5 will demonstrate that the epistemological concerns, as outlined in the preceding analytic or a priori part (I) of this study, essentially translate into the broad notions of ‘exchange’, ‘communication’, and ‘the blasé’. By enlisting the help of the canonical nineteenth-century sociologists Karl Mannheim, Max Weber, and Émile Durkheim, at this point, my analysis will slightly shift from ‘specific’ to ‘universal’—to apply Hegelian terminology—and I shall conclude that the concept of the blasé, as a defining characteristic of modern human existence, eventually leads Baudelaire to perceive ‘Society and Existence from the Viewpoint of Death’; indeed, a most fatalistic and deterministic stance, which, towards the end of my study, inevitably leads us back to the darkness of Poe’s ‘The Raven’ and the piercing croaking of ‘nevermore’.

While the section on ‘Society and Existence from the Viewpoint of Death’ in chapter 5 already serves as an initial conclusion to the epistemological concerns, as discussed throughout this study, chapter 6, ‘Conclusion to Experiencing Modernity’, will provide a slightly broader retrospection. Here, I shall embed the creative rationale behind both Baudelaire’s collection of verse poetry, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, as well as the posthumously published collection of prose poetry, *Le Spleen de Paris*, into my analytical framework, as concluded towards the end of chapter 5: in short, that from an Idealist epistemological perspective, in Baudelaire, modern human existence eventually leads to fatalism as a form of existential, socio-collective determinism. At this point, the reader will be relieved to hear that what initially started with the ominous perception of fragments in the dark—guiding Baudelaire and his readership straight into the heart of material modernity, modern city existence as well as into the fragmented minds of its disciples—eventually translates into a cordial appreciation of ‘les étés de la Saint-Martin’ and ‘la beauté des femmes très mûres’.⁵³ But, then, again, in material modernity, perhaps, all one ever encounters are the wishful phantasmagorias provided by *rêve*, *rêverie*, *ivresse*, and *imagination*... suddenly *interrupted* by ‘un coup terrible, lourd’.⁵⁴

⁵³ ‘Les Bons Chiens’, in *Le Spleen de Paris*, in BOC, I, 360–63 (p. 363). The citations used, here, will resurface towards the end of my conclusion in chapter 6.

⁵⁴ See also footnote 31.

In conclusion, this study proposes an Idealist epistemology on the basis of a streamlined and heavily modified German Idealism. Nonetheless, by placing a decidedly strong emphasis on the integration of ‘theoretical’ philosophy into a more ‘practical’ analytical framework, it should be considered cultural criticism in the broadest sense of the term, reading Second Empire material modernity through the lens of epistemological concerns. In order to achieve this goal, Baudelaire as the first poet of modernity often serves to illustrate the epistemological mechanics at work. Necessarily, for the sake of argumentative clarity, this led to a certain reductionism, as regards the complexities traditionally associated with his *œuvre*, and instead focusses on the complexities of the theoretico-philosophical model, as developed and applied throughout this study. Moreover, I would like point out, here, that I have intentionally opted for the inclusion of the term ‘experience’, when referring to ‘Baudelairean modernity’, which is, of course, the label commonly applied to readings of modernity through the lens of Baudelaire’s life and *œuvre*. The acquisition of experience, however, is key in any discussion of German Idealism, and, in the context of this study, my use of it in conjunction with ‘Baudelairean modernity’ is meant to highlight the subjective and as such rather theoretical nature of the argument I propose. It is for the very same reason that I have opted for ‘Baudelairean’, as opposed to ‘Baudelaire’s experience of modernity’, uncoupling, as much as possible, the epistemological concerns addressed throughout this study from the artist, whose *œuvre* serves so intriguingly to illustrate them. Finally, then, the reader should note that the application of Idealist epistemology as a methodology for cultural criticism caused a number of conceptual as well as terminological difficulties, a few of which I would like to mention, here, in order to facilitate intellectual access.

Firstly, in no way do I claim to apply ‘all of Idealism’ as much as such a sweeping description could ever be suitable, and I have primarily opted for ‘German Idealism’, specifically, because of its foundations in metaphysics.⁵⁵ Kant’s metaphysical approach to space and time is what sparked my interest and I largely limit my application of German Idealism to its metaphysical dimension.

⁵⁵ It must be mentioned, here, that in contemporary reflections on German Idealism, it is precisely its metaphysical dimension that is dismissed as too speculative. For example, see Espen Hammer, ‘Introduction’, in *German Idealism: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Espen Hammer (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 1–15.

Secondly, considering, this time, ‘all of *German Idealism*’, it must be stated that there is a conceptual progression or development intrinsic to German Idealism from Kant to Hegel. Kantian Idealism is considered ‘subjective’, whereas, via Fichte and Schelling, Hegelian Idealism is considered ‘absolute’. Only Kant and Hegel feature in this study and the nuances between them will be addressed only marginally and where absolutely necessary. In my approach to ‘Idealist Epistemology in “A une passante”’,⁵⁶ one particular item makes the shift from Kantian subjectivism to Hegelian absolutism explicit, and I shall point it out in a footnote.

Thirdly, in cultural studies there is a tendency to refer to Kant and Hegel only in passing without ever addressing or referencing their primary works. Part of the rationale behind this study is to provide an alternative. Nonetheless, in line with the challenges of integrating ‘theoretical’ philosophy into a more ‘practical’ analytical framework, already mentioned above, as a consequence, one faces issues of compatibility. For example, the concept of Kantian a priori or *pure* perception—hence, the title of his first *Critique*—is, indeed, *purely* theoretical and as such extremely difficult to integrate into any form of cultural analysis. In other words, as soon as one applies the idea of a priori or ‘pure’, it turns a posteriori or ‘impure’. Everything that ‘practically’, as opposed to ‘theoretically’ enters the individual’s epistemological process is instantly tainted by experience. Kant identifies and defines the epistemological mechanics of a priori or *pure* perception, but he does not apply them in the sense one applies critical theory to a cultural artefact. In the specific case of this study, my workarounds are the faculties of *rêve*, *rêverie*, *ivresse*, and *imagination* as the *purest* possible representation of subjective individuality.

Fourthly, these conceptual difficulties are reflected in terminological difficulties. For example, I have opted for the term ‘subconscious’ as a synonym for a priori whenever the focus shifts from ‘theory’ to ‘practice’, from ‘analysis’ to ‘synthesis’, or from ‘a priori’ to ‘a posteriori’. Moreover, in the case of Kant and Hegel (as well as Benjamin and Simmel), I have used for my own research the German scholarly originals. Because of the seminal nature of German Idealism in the history of modern, Western philosophy, relevant authors often had to invent terminology, which is, to my mind, reflected in certain terminological and conceptual inconsistencies. Be that as it may, layering various concepts from various thinkers for the

⁵⁶ See the corresponding section in chapter 4.

purpose of cultural analysis evidently causes discrepancies and obstructs a streamlined terminology. I hope to have addressed the issue with the appropriate level of care by choosing my terminology carefully throughout this study and by providing guidance wherever necessary.

Finally, the term ‘Idealism’ itself seems to cause confusion at times. This is not a study in aesthetic Idealism such as Poe’s neo-Platonism (and later Ingres’ neo-Classicism), though, I shall frequently refer to its underlying principles. Rather, in German Idealism, the term signifies that all of reality is exclusively based on the individual’s subjective perception of that reality—objective reality—which essentially renders it ‘ideal’. In this spirit and in the name of *rêve*, *rêverie*, *ivresse*, and *imagination*, I should now invite the reader to embark on the aforementioned journey into the heart of material modernity, modern city existence as well as, of course, the fragmented minds of its disciples; and, like any successful journey, it starts not only with an idea, but also with a map: in this particular case, a comprehensive review of Baudelairean modernity.

Chapter Two

Compagnon's Conundrum: Review of Baudelairean Modernity

[T]here is just too much.⁵⁷

Any attempt at compiling a comprehensive literature review on existing Baudelaire scholarship is a conceptually difficult undertaking. Even with explicit focus on a certain period of scholarship or specific aspects of Baudelaire's œuvre, the sheer quantity and quality of ideas encountered seems insurmountable from a practical as well as intellectual point of view. One risks losing the necessary balance between precisely those two key features of any valid literature review: quantity and quality. Focusing 'just' on *Les Fleurs du Mal*, for example, in *Baudelaire devant l'innombrable*—the title proving more than suitable in this particular instance—well-known Baudelaire scholar Antoine Compagnon dedicates an entire chapter to categorising the various scholarly responses to the collection since the publication of its second edition in 1857.⁵⁸ Almost helplessly, he asks:

Il y eut un Baudelaire réaliste, un Baudelaire décadent, un symboliste, un satanique, un catholique, un athée, un classique, un moderne, un réactionnaire, un révolutionnaire, un saint, aujourd'hui un postmoderne, que sais-je encore?⁵⁹

Baudelairean primary texts other than *Les Fleurs du Mal* have not been subjected to quite the same degree of scholarly scrutiny, although, the aforementioned collection of prose poetry, *Le Spleen de Paris*, as well as the theoretical treatise on modern aesthetics, 'Le Peintre

⁵⁷ Françoise Meltzer, *Seeing Double: Baudelaire's Modernity* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011), p. 9.

⁵⁸ Antoine Compagnon, 'Légendes des *Fleurs du Mal*', in *Baudelaire devant l'innombrable* (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2003), pp. 9–39. Compagnon remarks in a footnote: 'Une première version de ce chapitre a été publié en postface des *Fleurs du Mal*, éd. A. Compagnon, Paris, Éd. du Seuil-École des lettres, 1993' (p. 9). Similar, albeit much more exhaustive compendiums are, for example, Claude Pichois and Jean-Paul Avice, *Dictionnaire Baudelaire* (Poitiers: Editions du Lérôt, 2002) and André Guyaux, *Baudelaire: Un demi-siècle de lectures des 'Fleurs du Mal' (1855–1905)* (Paris: Presses universitaires de Paris-Sorbonne, 2007). To my knowledge, there are currently no such overviews exclusively addressing Baudelaire's *Le Spleen de Paris*. For excellent introductions, however, see, for example, J. A. Hiddleston, *Baudelaire and Spleen de Paris* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); Edward K. Kaplan, *Baudelaire's Prose Poems: The Esthetic, the Ethical, and the Religious* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1990); Steve Murphy, *Logiques du dernier Baudelaire: Lectures du Spleen de Paris* (Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2003); and Maria C. Scott, *Baudelaire's 'Le Spleen de Paris': Shifting Perspectives* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

⁵⁹ Compagnon, *Baudelaire devant l'innombrable*, p. 9.

de la vie moderne' (1863), are by no means far off. The most recent full-length study on Baudelairean modernity, Françoise Meltzer's *Seeing Double: Baudelaire's Modernity*,⁶⁰ is a case in point, as regards the difficulty of striking a coherent balance between quantity and quality, when addressing Baudelairean primary and secondary source materials. Grounding her own analysis in the aesthetic methodology outlined in 'Le Peintre' (the paradoxical definition of modernity as 'transitory' as well as 'eternal', based on Baudelaire's obsession with 'dualities and oppositions at every level'; what she calls the poet's 'aesthetic strabismus'),⁶¹ Meltzer approaches the difficulty at hand by offering insightful close readings of four poems, each coupled with a key '[aspect] of Baudelaire's thinking' to limit the approach: 'Assommons les pauvres' on 'beliefs' (prose), 'A une passante' on 'seeing' (verse), 'La Chambre double' on 'money' (prose), and 'Harmonie du soir' on 'time' (verse).⁶² Without such clear constraints, Meltzer is crucially aware that any attempt at launching an original argument faces the immediate danger of intellectual and scholarly oversaturation. As a result, she chooses attack as the best form of defence and states clearly at the end of her introduction: 'there is just too much'.⁶³

While my own research questions revolve, at least to some extent, around 'Baudelairean modernity' as the subcategory of 'Baudelaire studies' to be addressed, there is a second difficulty that emerges upon closer inspection, and, to my knowledge, Compagnon is the only one, who has, so far, addressed this conundrum, explicitly. In the same study already referred to above, *Baudelaire devant l'innombrable*, the critic points out that the concept of Baudelairean modernity—the concept of modernity scrutinised from within the analytical framework of Baudelaire's life and œuvre—is misleading in its suggestion of singularity. The

⁶⁰ Françoise Meltzer, *Seeing Double: Baudelaire's Modernity* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 1 and 20.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁶³ Meltzer's study served as both information and inspiration. While the theoretico-philosophical approach I have chosen (broadly, Idealist epistemology) differs fundamentally from Meltzer's, the final three of her four 'key aspects' of Baudelaire's thinking ('seeing', 'money', and 'time') feature extensively in my own analysis and I shall refer back to *Seeing Double*, where and when necessary. At this point, it will suffice to say that her approach to 'seeing' is heavily centred on the visual arts and Baudelaire's art criticism, especially (for my own approach, see the sections on 'Second Empire Aesthetics' and 'Baudelairean Aesthetics' in this review); her take on 'money' is largely based on Baudelaire's biography and addresses the poet's alienation from an increasingly omnipresent, capitalist, money economy (a concept I shall embed into my own argument by enlisting the help of the Marxist theorist Henri Lefebvre and the sociologist Georg Simmel in chapter 5); and, finally, her chapter on 'time' interprets time in terms of the passing thereof, ultimately leading towards death (as we know, time and the concept of fragmented time in the form of the instant feature extensively throughout this study).

problem is, Compagnon argues, there is no such thing as a single Baudelairean modernity. Rather, one faces a multitude of Baudelairean *modernities*, each of which can neither be considered wrong or right:

Le problème est qu'aucune d'elles [modernités baudelairiennes] n'est fausse, mais qu'aucune n'est juste non plus. Elles coexistent. Chacune s'affirme à partir de ses propres présupposés sans tenir compte des autres.⁶⁴

Compagnon's conundrum begins with the paradox already mentioned in relation to Meltzer and expressed in one of the most frequently cited passages of the Baudelairean œuvre: the definition of modernity with reference to watercolourist Constantin Guys in 'Le Peintre'. Here, within only a few lines, Baudelaire suggests, firstly, that modernity means to extract the poetic from history, the eternal from the transitory, and, secondly, that modernity is itself the transitory, the fugitive, and the contingent. In chapter 4, I shall look closer at the passage itself and the paradox contained therein. Moreover, in the course of this study, I shall make clear that the former (the poetic, the eternal) should, in fact, much more consistently be referred to as Baudelairean 'Modernism', as opposed to Baudelairean 'modernity'. The latter (the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent), however, signifies less a specifically Baudelairean modernity than an existential common denominator of the modern individual per se, thus standing in stark opposition to the recurring image of the transitory, the fugitive, and the contingent as an 'elitist' aesthetic arena, where the modern artist 'crie de frayeur avant d'être vaincu'.⁶⁵

Be that as it may, for Compagnon, the devil ('le démon') lies not in the paradox itself, but in the various interpretive approaches to said paradox. Here, the critic identifies four distinct 'Baudelairean modernities', all of which, he states, at some point in the course of their respective arguments refer back to 'Le Peintre' as a sort of 'argument magique' or *deus ex machina*:

⁶⁴ Compagnon, *Baudelaire devant l'innombrable*, p. 52.

⁶⁵ I read the well-known prose poem 'Le Confiteor de l'artiste' as addressing the artist's aesthetic reach for divine/ideal beauty—the *Idéal*—along the same lines as Poe's neo-Platonism. Its epithet—'L'étude du beau est un duel où l'artiste crie de frayeur avant d'être vaincu'—then, expresses the impossibility thereof. For the complete poem, see *Le Spleen de Paris*, in *BOC*, I, 278–79. With specific focus on material modernity, the difficulties of aesthetic production will be addressed throughout this review and particularly in the sections on 'Second Empire Aesthetics', 'Baudelairean Aesthetics', and 'Baudelairean Poetics'.

Quatre interprétations paraissent couvrir assez bien l'éventail des lectures possibles de la modernité baudelairienne: celle de la réconciliation phénoménologique (Georges Poulet); celle de la transcendance mystique (Jean Pommier, Marc Eigeldinger); celle du matérialisme dialectique (Walter Benjamin et surtout Hans Robert Jauss); celle enfin, non dialectique ou psychanalytique, du ni... ni... (Leo Bersani et aussi Walter Benjamin), la seule peut-être à intégrer l'aporie.⁶⁶

My study will, to some extent, offer a slightly more holistic approach to the matter by setting the focus on Idealist metaphysics and thus on the theoretico-philosophical foundation of all perception, experience, and knowledge, thus including scholarship on Baudelairean modernity. But I also believe that coherence between existing approaches is already in place and, if not made explicit, is at least implied. The following review is thus divided into two parts. The first will address a number of existing key studies on Baudelairean modernity, which, to my mind, not merely stand out as either 'seminal', 'canonical', or 'authoritative', but have essentially guided me towards the argument I propose. In order to provide some form of orientation, I have grouped these studies under the subheadings 'Benjamin, Schizophrenia, *dédoublement*' and 'Time, Trauma, Violence'. The second part of this review, then, takes a slightly different approach by proposing a series of three short essays—in the context of this review, I shall refer to them simply as sections—together clearly outlining and demonstrating the analytical framework that informs my own reading of Baudelairean modernity, and from which, I believe, the majority of existing scholarly approaches emerge. The first section, '*Le Beau dans le mal: Ethics, Politics, "Second Empire Aesthetics"*', outlines the socio-cultural framework that ultimately enables the concept of Baudelairean modernity to come into existence. The second, '*Le Beau moderne: Correspondances, Déchéance, "Baudelairean Aesthetics"*', then, builds on the first by addressing *le beau* from a more Baudelaire-specific vantage point, focussing on the poet's 'subversive' (again, the term was already pointed out in chapter 1 and will resurface

⁶⁶ Compagnon, *Baudelaire devant l'innombrable*, p. 44. Following on from the citation above, Compagnon provides a more extensive analysis. Leaving out Walter Benjamin for now (he will be addressed shortly and in greater detail) the studies Compagnon cites are as follows: Georges Poulet, *Études sur le temps humain*, 2 vols (Paris: Union générale d'éditions, 1972), I; Georges Poulet, *Les Métamorphoses du cercle* (Paris: Flammarion, 1979); Hans Robert Jauss, 'La "modernité" dans la tradition littéraire et la conscience d'aujourd'hui', in *Pour une esthétique de la réception*, trans. by Claude Mailard (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), pp. 158–209; Marc Eigeldinger, *Le Platonisme de Baudelaire* (Neuchâtel: Éditions de la Baconnière, 1951); Jean Pommier, *La Mystique de Baudelaire* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1932); Leo Bersani, *Baudelaire and Freud* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); and Leo Bersani, *The Culture of Redemption* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990). For an additional source on Jaussian aesthetics, see Hans Robert Jauss, 'Tradition, Innovation, and Aesthetic Experience', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 46.3 (Spring, 1988), 375–388.

towards the end of this review) conception of modern aesthetics in the form of *le beau moderne*. The third, ‘*La Seconde Révolution: Prose, Poetry, “Baudelairean Poetics”*’, builds, once again, upon the previous two by arguing that ethics, politics, and aesthetics ultimately merge in the notion of Baudelairean poetics—specifically, though, *not* exclusively, in the genre of prose poetry and particularly in Baudelaire’s *Le Spleen de Paris*. As suggested by the final section’s primary title, ‘*La Seconde Révolution*’, I have chosen Barbara Johnson’s seminal deconstructionist study, *Défigurations du langage poétique: la seconde révolution baudelairienne*,⁶⁷ as my analytical premise. For now, however, we start by attempting to review existing concepts addressing Baudelairean modernity.

Benjamin, Schizophrenia, *dédoublement*

The original publications of those studies on Baudelairean modernity cited by Compagnon date back as far as the 1930s. More recently, in her *The Art of Procrastination: Baudelaire’s Poetry in Prose*,⁶⁸ Cheryl Krueger suggests four distinct publications on ‘Baudelaire and modernity’. The first is Walter Benjamin’s aforementioned socio-economic reading of Baudelaire’s (verse) poetry (Benjamin’s focus is set on *Les Fleurs du Mal*), offered in a series of essays to be published in his ever-unfinished Baudelaire book project *Charles Baudelaire: Ein Lyriker im Zeitalter des Hochkapitalismus*.⁶⁹ Krueger is quite right to head her list with Benjamin. Virtually every approach to Baudelairean modernity begins with or at least intersects at one point or another with Benjaminian thought. Benjamin’s essays on the poet consist of three main pieces, ‘Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century’ (1935), ‘The Paris of the Second Empire

⁶⁷ Barbara Johnson, *Défigurations du langage poétique: la seconde révolution baudelairienne* (Paris: Flammarion, 1979).

⁶⁸ Cheryl Krueger, *The Art of Procrastination: Baudelaire’s Poetry in Prose* (Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press, 2007), p. 129.

⁶⁹ As is the case for most of the German philosophical primary texts addressed in this study (namely, those of Immanuel Kant, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and Georg Simmel), when applying Benjaminian thought, I have, where possible, used the scholarly German original, as published in Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: Ein Lyriker im Zeitalter des Hochkapitalismus*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2013). For the purpose of citation, however, I have used the scholarly English translation, as published in Walter Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire*, ed. by Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006). Neither of these, nor any other publication of Benjamin’s essays on Baudelaire (e.g. Verso, 1997) should be confused with the original book project, which bore the exact same working title: *Charles Baudelaire: Ein Lyriker im Zeitalter des Hochkapitalismus*.

in Baudelaire' (1938), and 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire' (1939).⁷⁰ The chronological progression of all three pieces is mirrored by an intellectual or argumentative trajectory.

Benjamin's first essay, 'Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century', briefly contextualises Second Empire socio-cultural history through the lens of six key personae (Baudelaire is addressed alongside Fourier, Daguerre, Grandville, Louis Philippe, and Haussmann).⁷¹ In the densely packed section on Baudelaire, Benjamin scratches the surface of one core theoretical concept after the next, from the Baudelairean allegory (I already referred to this in chapter 1: 'Baudelaire's genius, which is nourished by melancholy, is an allegorical genius' [40]), to the crowd, the flâneur, the phantasmagoria, and the arcade ('The crowd is the veil through which the familiar city beckons to the flâneur as phantasmagoria—now a landscape, now a room. Both become elements of the department store' [40]), on to Baudelaire's modern heroes ('[Baudelaire] sides with the asocial. He realizes his only sexual communion with a whore' [41]), with a brief detour to dialectic materialism ('But precisely modernity is always citing primal history. [...] Ambiguity is the appearance of dialectic in images, the law of dialectics at a standstill. This standstill is utopia and the dialectical image, therefore, dream image [phantasmagoria]' [41]). It may be worth mentioning, here, that Meltzer's analytical premise regarding Baudelaire's aesthetic strabismus as well as, of course, the title of her study, *Seeing Double*, stems precisely from this Benjaminian conception of the dialectical image. However, while for Benjamin, Baudelaire's 'infinite mental efforts' allow the poet to see past the phantasmagoria,⁷² for Meltzer, the tension between past and present in Baudelaire—utopian or not—is never resolved.⁷³ Benjamin's concept of the dialectical image is key to my theoretico-philosophical model, as outlined in chapter 3.

⁷⁰ The page numbers of all three essays in Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life*, are as follows: 'Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century', pp. 30–45; 'The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire', pp. 46–133; 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire', pp. 170–210. In the following review of Benjamin's Baudelaire essays, all further references will be provided in-text.

⁷¹ Michael Jennings explains: 'In 1935, Fritz Pollack, the co-director of the [Institute for Social Research], suggested that Benjamin produce an exposé of [*The Arcades Project*] that could be shown to potential sponsors. The text "Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century" [...] was, in fact, that exposé; it thus represents Benjamin's first attempt to describe the scope and focus of *The Arcades Project*.' Jennings, 'Introduction', in Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life*, pp. 1–25 (p. 9).

⁷² Benjamin, 'Baudelaire', trans. by Rodney Livingstone, in *The Writer of Modern Life*, pp. 27–29 (p. 27).

⁷³ Meltzer, *Seeing Double*, pp. 11–15.

Benjamin's second essay, 'The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire', hailed by Michael W. Jennings as 'one of the greatest essays of literary criticism from the twentieth century', is complementary in further elaborating most of these concepts.⁷⁴ The essay is split into three sections: The first, 'The Bohème', is the most demanding, situating Baudelaire, via Karl Marx's conception of conspirators, in the complex entanglement of political ideology and economic existentialism, as experienced by the Second Empire cultural elite: 'This almost automatically yields the image of Baudelaire: the enigmatic stuff of allegory in one, the mystery mongering of the conspirator on the other' (52).⁷⁵ In 'Central Park', Benjamin would furthermore write: 'Allegory should be shown as the antidote to myth.'⁷⁶

The essay's second section, 'The Flâneur', does what the title suggests, addressing the dimension of Second Empire flânerie in its entirety. For Benjamin, the act of flânerie springs from the socio-collective cultural desire for the panorama, a trend manifested in literature by publications such as *Le Livre des cent-et-un*, *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*, *Le Diable à Paris*, and *La Grande Ville*. A trend also reflected in the establishment of Benjamin's most prominent and, in an architectural sense, most pervasive cultural artefact, 'glass-roofed, marble panelled corridors extending through whole building blocks', 'world[s] in miniature': the arcades. Without them, '[f]lânerie could hardly have assumed the importance it did'. 'Before Haussmann, wide pavements were rare' (68); after Haussmann there was only Macadam—either *poudre* or mud—but a surface allowing the drivers of carriages to 'whip

⁷⁴ With the exception of the Baudelairean allegory. This is for good reason. 'The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire' was, specifically, conceived as the middle section of Benjamin's aforementioned Baudelaire book project, but remained the only one to ever be completed. The first would have been entitled 'Baudelaire as Allegorist', thus providing sufficient ground to cover the topic in detail, while the final section would have addressed 'The Commodity as Poetic Object'. See Jennings, 'Introduction', in Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life*, p. 10.

⁷⁵ The notion of 'conspirator' is based on Karl Marx, who defines 'the bohème' as a group of 'professional conspirators', an intermediate social stratum between workers and leaders, frequently infiltrating the latter. See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'Review from the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung. Politisch-Ökonomische Revue* No. 4: *Les Conspirateurs*, par A. Chenu, ex-capitaine des gardes du citoyen Caussidière; Les sociétés secrètes; la préfecture de police sous Caussidière; les corps-francs. *La naissance de la République en février 1848*, par Lucien de la Hodde', in *Collected Works*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975–2004), X (1978), 311–25 (in particular pp. 316–17). Debarati Sanyal provides a rare and insightful contextualisation in 'Conspiratorial Poetics in Baudelaire's "Une Mort héroïque"', in 'Passages from Form to Politics: Baudelaire's *Le Spleen de Paris*', in *The Violence of Modernity: Baudelaire, Irony, and the Politics of Form* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), pp. 53–94 (in particular pp. 65–79).

⁷⁶ Benjamin, 'Central Park', trans. by Edmund Jephcott and Howard Eiland, in *The Writer of Modern Life*, pp. 134–69 (p. 155).

their horses up to full speed'.⁷⁷ For Benjamin, it is *flânerie* that connects Baudelaire to Poe and gives rise to the detective story.⁷⁸ Citing from 'Le Peintre', '[l]'observateur est un *prince* qui jouit partout de son incognito',⁷⁹ Benjamin, then, argues: 'If the *flâneur* is thus turned into an unwilling detective, it does him a lot of good socially, for it legitimates his idleness' (72). A good thing for Baudelaire, who struggled with *paresse* all his life.⁸⁰

The third section of Benjamin's essay, 'Modernity', introduces *Le Spleen de Paris*. For Benjamin, material modernity in Baudelaire is most explicitly represented by the prose poems and there are two specific reasons. Firstly, Baudelaire's experience of modernity is mirrored best by those 'prosodic experiences' provided by poetry in prose (98). In his 'Lettre à Arsène Houssaye', Baudelaire himself gives ample reason for this claim:

Quel est celui de nous qui n'a pas, dans ses jours d'ambition, rêvé le miracle d'une prose poétique, musicale sans rythme et sans rime, assez souple et assez heurtée pour s'adapter aux mouvements lyriques de l'âme, aux ondulations de la rêverie, aux soubresauts de la conscience?

C'est surtout de la fréquentation des villes énormes, c'est du croisement de leurs innombrables rapports que naît cet idéal obsédant.⁸¹

⁷⁷ In his chapter on 'Baudelaire: Modernism in the Streets', Marshall Berman provides an eloquent and concise account of the impact of Haussmannisation on Paris as well as on Baudelaire's poetry. Berman addresses the prose poems 'Les Yeux des pauvres' (1863) and 'Perte d'auréole' (1869; rejected in 1865), specifically: 'Baudelaire's richest and deepest thought about modernity begins just after "The Painter of Modern Life", in the early 1860s' (146). 'Le Cygne' (1860) provides a well-known verse example: 'Un cygne qui s'était évadé de sa cage, // Et, de ses pieds palmés frottant le pave sec, // Sur le sol raboteux traînait son blanc plumage. // Près d'un ruisseau sans eau la bête ouvrant le bec // Bagnait nerveusement ses ailes dans la poudre', in *Les Fleurs du Mal*, in *BOC*, I, 85–87 (p. 86). See Marshall Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso, 2010), pp. 131–71 (in particular pp. 148–71 [p. 158]). I shall return to Berman and 'Les Yeux des pauvres' in the section on 'Exchange, Communication, the Blasé (and the Dandy)' in chapter 5.

⁷⁸ In chapter 1, I already referred to Poe as the founder of the detective story. His key contributions were 'The Mystery of Marie Roget', 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue', and 'The Purloined Letter'. All were translated by Baudelaire. It is, however, Poe's 'The Man of the Crowd', also translated by Baudelaire, which is most frequently associated with the latter's ideas on *flânerie*.

⁷⁹ 'L'Artiste, homme du monde, home des foules et enfant', in 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne', in *BOC*, II, 687–94 (p. 692).

⁸⁰ The term '*paresse*' occurs frequently throughout the Baudelairean œuvre, often in reference to the difficulties of aesthetic production. In his piece on 'Auguste Barbier', in 'Réflexions sur quelques-uns de mes contemporains', Baudelaire also speaks of the '*indolence naturelle des inspirés*', in *BOC*, II, 141–45 (p. 144).

⁸¹ 'Lettre à Arsène Houssaye', in *Le Spleen de Paris*, in *BOC*, I, 275–76.

I shall return to this citation at the beginning of chapter 4 as well as to other aspects of the *dédicace* ('Nous pouvons couper où nous voulons, moi ma rêverie, vous le manuscrit, le lecteur sa lecture') in chapter 6. Secondly, as we shall see in the section on 'Second Empire Aesthetics', for Baudelaire, questions regarding modern aesthetics were inextricably linked to the figure of the modern artist. Benjamin further develops the theme, arguing that if Baudelairean modern aesthetics are linked to the figure of the modern artist, then, Baudelairean modernity is linked to the figure of the modern hero. Here, the modern artist is exemplary in functioning as a modern hero, but only to the extent that modern aesthetics were Baudelaire's ultimate concern. 'Baudelaire patterned his image of the artist after an image of the hero' (96). But who were those heroes? Towards the end, Benjamin provides a concise answer:

Flâneur, apache, dandy, and ragpicker were so many roles to him. For the modern hero is no hero; he is a portrayer of heroes. Heroic modernity turns out to be a Trauerspiel in which the hero's part is available. (125)

Benjamin's conception of Baudelaire's modern hero will become relevant in chapter 5 as well as, once again, in chapter 6. It ultimately builds on the dialectical image.

Benjamin's third essay, 'On some Motifs in Baudelaire', essentially develops the well-known concept of shock reception—now featuring, to some extent, in most scholarly takes on Baudelairean modernity⁸²—by linking the poet's experience of modernity to Proustian reflections on memory. Here, memory is a form of experience—a 'synthesis' or 'recollection'—produced 'under today's social conditions' (170–75 [172]). Interestingly, Benjamin makes this link via Henri Bergson's approach to vitalism and, specifically, his concept of *durée*, which features extensively throughout this study and particularly in chapter 3.⁸³ How the shocks of modernity eventually break through *durée* in its protection against over-

⁸² See, for example, Elissa Marder, *Dead Time: Temporal Disorders in the Wake of Modernity (Baudelaire and Flaubert)* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001) and Debarati Sanyal, *The Violence of Modernity: Baudelaire, Irony, and the Politics of Form* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006). Both use Benjamin's concept of shock reception as the analytical premise from which their own individual approaches are derived. Both will be addressed in slightly more detail at a later stage in this review.

⁸³ Benjamin addresses Bergson's relatively early and most famous work, *Matière et Mémoire* (1896), which takes a decidedly biological approach. In this study, I have opted for the much more concise and philosophically (as opposed to scientifically) inclined doctoral thesis, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, first published in 1889. While Bergson's work was much appreciated in his lifetime, its influence drastically decreased

abundant external stimuli is addressed, briefly, via Freud: ‘Psychoanalytic theory strives to understand the nature of these traumatic shocks “in terms of how they break through the shield that protests against stimuli”’ (176). Here, too, strong analogies with my own argument emerge. While I do not address Freud, I shall demonstrate, via Kantian a priori space and time, how the shocks of modernity impact on the individual’s perception of time in the form of *durée*. Overall, Benjamin’s ‘Motifs’ pick up and elaborate on a number of issues already addressed in ‘The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire’. Perhaps, the most pertinent of these is Baudelairean *flânerie*, viewed against the backdrop of Poe’s ‘The Man of the Crowd’ (186–92), with the interesting addition of the Marxist factory worker for whom the natural ‘correspondences’ of shocks are symbolised by the conveyer belt.⁸⁴ I have correspondences in inverted commas, here, for good reason. In her article ‘Benjamin’s “Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire”’: The Secret Architecture of Correspondances’, Beryl Schlossman argues that Benjamin’s exegesis on the Baudelairean experience of modernity essentially leads up to section X. Often referred to as Baudelaire’s ‘aesthetics of *correspondances*’, here, Benjamin addresses the aesthetic merging of shocks as material modernity’s very own form of aesthetic inspiration, comparable to the symbol of the conveyer belt.⁸⁵ I shall return to Benjamin, Schlossman, and Baudelairean *correspondances* in the section on ‘Baudelairean Aesthetics’.

After Benjamin’s essays, the second publication on ‘Baudelaire and modernity’ that Krueger mentions is Eugene Holland’s *Baudelaire and Schizoanalysis: The Sociopoetics of Modernism*.⁸⁶ Holland presents his argument strictly within the Benjaminian tradition and applies the complex methodology of ‘schizoanalysis’ to establish a unique line of thought. For

in the course of the twentieth century and particularly after the Second World War. For a helpful, more contemporary reappraisal, see Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York, NY: Zone Books, 1988). Deleuze was particularly interested in Bergson’s concept of multiplicity.

⁸⁴ E.T.A Hoffman’s ‘The Cousin’s Corner Window’, antedating Poe’s ‘The Man of the Crowd’ by fifteen years, is also addressed as ‘one of the earliest attempts to capture the street scene of a large city’ (189). For the Marxist approach to the alienated factory worker, see Karl Marx, ‘Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts’ and ‘Results of the Immediate Process of Production’, in *Selected Writings*, ed. by David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 83–121 and 547–61 (in particular pp. 85–95 and 547–50).

⁸⁵ Schlossman writes: ‘Benjamin leaves the correspondences in the background of [‘On some Motifs in Baudelaire’] until chapter X, at the strategic climax of his reading of loss and modernity.’ Beryl Schlossman, ‘Benjamin’s “Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire”’: The Secret Architecture of Correspondances’, *MLN*, 107.3, German Issue (April 1992), 548–79 (p. 550).

⁸⁶ Eugene W. Holland, *Baudelaire and Schizoanalysis: The Sociopoetics of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). For a more concise version of Holland’s rather theoretical and highly complex argument, see Eugene W. Holland, ‘A Schizoanalytic Reading of Baudelaire: The Modernist as Postmodernist’, *Postmodern Culture*, 4.1 (1993) <https://muse.jhu.edu/journals/postmodern_culture/v004/4.1holland.html> [accessed 10 April 2015]. Further citations of this latter text will refer to the online version’s numbered paragraphs.

Holland, the specific socio-economic idiosyncrasies of the Second Empire that Benjamin had identified as the most pervasive aesthetic and intellectual stimulus in the Baudelairean œuvre—referred to as material modernity throughout this study—do not merely lead to Modernism as a newly emerging aesthetic of modernity.⁸⁷ Rather, they lead, first and foremost, to an alteration in the individual's 'psychodynamics', causing the fragmentation of identification,⁸⁸ which psychoanalysis labels 'schizophrenia'. The concept of schizoanalysis was first introduced by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their early *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* and is itself based on the methodology of 'decoding' and 'recoding', a 'deconstructionist' approach to cultural studies allowing the philosophers to 'intervene in established philosophical problematics in order to destabilize them, reworking old concepts and forging new connections among the distinctive features composing them'.⁸⁹

It is via the decoding and recoding inherent to schizoanalysis that Holland's argument distances itself from Benjamin:

Benjamin shows how the development of a hyperconscious defence against the shocks of modern city life served Baudelaire as a resource for generating specifically modern lyric poetry from modern urban *experience* itself.⁹⁰ (my emphasis)

For Holland, this 'hyperconscious defence' against material modernity's shocks—namely, Baudelaire's intellectual or critical *distance* from material modernity ('infinite mental efforts') as a form of Benjaminian shock absorber—is only part of the truth;⁹¹ for Holland, Baudelaire identifies (at least attempts to) not only with the figure of the modern artist in the form of the seller ('the melancholic commodity seeking buyers on the open market'),⁹² but also with the

⁸⁷ Note the distinction between 'modernity' and 'Modernism' as hinted at earlier in this review.

⁸⁸ On the fragmentation of identity in Baudelaire from a non-schizoanalytical perspective, see Bersani, *Baudelaire and Freud*. With specific focus on the prose poems, see also Scott, *Baudelaire's 'Le Spleen de Paris'* and in particular her overview of secondary source materials in the introduction; as well as Murphy, *Logiques du dernier Baudelaire*.

⁸⁹ Holland, 'A Schizoanalytic Reading of Baudelaire', para. 1.

⁹⁰ Holland, *Baudelaire and Schizoanalysis*, p. 3.

⁹¹ It should be noted, at this early stage, that the concept of distance features frequently throughout this study. Via Ross Chambers' helpful reflections on *le beau moderne* in Baudelaire, it will be introduced appropriately in the section on 'Baudelairean Aesthetics' in this review.

⁹² *Ibid.*

figure of the buyer. Together, the two symbolise the essence of human relationships in material modernity as a form of mercantile capitalism:

[T]he Baudelairean poet, and particularly the narrator in the prose poem collection, occupies the split positions of buyer *and* seller in turn, without ever completely identifying with either. Such psychic splitting and the disintegration of experience [the reception of shocks] epitomised in Baudelaire's writings are basic configurations of postromantic, modern personality in market society.⁹³ (Holland's emphasis)

To put it as straightforwardly as possible, 'decoding', for Holland, is a mechanism allowing for the deconstruction of the individual's overall identification with material modernity. This, then, enables the critic, firstly, to isolate the identification one has with a specific historical event from the overall identification one has with material modernity—in the case of Baudelaire, for example, the revolution of 1848 ('physiquement dépolitiqué')⁹⁴—and, secondly, to project this isolated identification onto a chosen external system of signs. That system of signs, in turn, allows the isolated identification with a specific historical event to, then, be 'recoded' from a fresh perspective (in the case of Deleuze, Guattari, and, subsequently, Holland, that of 'poststructuralist semiotics').⁹⁵ As a result, what one discovers is not a singular identity, but the fragmentation of sentiments, emotions, thoughts, and actions into multiple identities: schizophrenia, or what Holland also refers to as 'psychic splitting'. Via decoding and recoding, Holland thus aims to 'produce a resolutely anti-historicist, anti-aestheticist reading of Baudelaire'.⁹⁶ In other words, Holland accepts

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Charles Baudelaire, *Correspondances*, ed. by Claude Pichois, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), I, 188. All further references to this edition of the poet's *Correspondances* will be abbreviated B*Corr*.

⁹⁵ Holland, *Baudelaire and Schizoanalysis*, p. 9. The focus on post-structuralism and, by extension, post-Modernism reminds one of Compagnon's final Baudelaire, *le postmoderne*, in reference to Fredric Jameson's reading of the poet. Here, it is interesting to note that Holland argues for a shift from metaphoric to metonymic poetics in the Baudelairean oeuvre ('abandoning and actively rejecting the fixed values imposed in the Symbolic Order, Baudelaire opts instead for a metonymic poetics that approaches the infinite semiosis of a completely decoded Symbolic register'), whereas Jameson argues the very opposite ('the multiplication of metaphorical analogies is therefore a response to such fragmentation, and seeks to throw out a range of scattered frameworks in which the various isolated readers can be expected to find their bearings'). Holland, 'A Schizoanalytic Reading of Baudelaire', para. 10; and Fredric Jameson, 'Baudelaire as Modernist and Postmodernist: The Dissolution of the Referent and the Artificial "Sublime"' (1985), in *The Modernist Papers* (New York, NY: Verso, 2007), pp. 223–37 (p. 230).

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. xv.

the deconstructive challenge to produce a literary history that is truly responsive to historical events, without presuming that literary discourse faithfully represents a history which takes place outside the text itself.⁹⁷

Admittedly, I remain sceptical, though, this is not the place to provide an extensive critique. In many ways, Holland's analytical premise is similar to my own in that material modernity alters the individual's psychodynamics (I shall refrain from using the same term). The crucial difference is that my own research begins with and often focuses on the individual's metaphysical sphere, thus theoretically embracing all of their experience by addressing the very origins of their perception (Kantian a priori space and time) in the same way that Benjamin theoretically embraces all of the individual's identification with material modernity by addressing modern society from the viewpoint of an omnipresent and, as we shall see, homogenising, capitalist, money economy. From this perspective, I disagree with Holland's schizoanalytical 'axiomatisation'—the transformation of 'meaningful qualities into calculable quantities':⁹⁸ the chief problem with his analysis being that historical events are isolated, differentiated, and contextualised as calculable quantities, but the figures of the modern artist, the modern hero, and not least the generic individual are not.⁹⁹ To my mind, the conceptual differences between these 'categories'—if I may apply such an impersonal term—are too stark simply to be neglected. This, then, problematises the rather reductive claim that Baudelaire 'occupies the split positions of buyer *and* seller in turn, without ever completely identifying with either'. Why is the question of identification limited to the figures of buyer and seller? Because it is mercantile capitalism that defines our conception of material modernity? Surely, the majority of personae populating the fantastic scenarios of Baudelaire's poetry—Baudelaire's modern heroes—tell a different story.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 7.

⁹⁸ Following Weber and Lukacs, 'calculable quantities' refers to the result of decoding material modernity, itself considered 'a function of the capitalist market and the predominance of exchange-value'; 'calculable', specifically, because for Deleuze and Guattari these 'quantities' represent the building blocks 'for freedom and permanent revolution'. Holland, 'A Schizoanalytic Reading of Baudelaire', para. 3.

⁹⁹ What exactly I mean by 'the modern artist' and 'the generic individual' will become clear in the course of chapter 3.

If, for just a moment, one does limit the inquiry to the figures of buyer and seller, and reads them literally as such, Holland is correct in saying that Baudelaire identified ‘somewhat’ with both, but only out of practical necessity. Intellectually speaking, the poet’s identification lies resolutely elsewhere, not with the seller or the various figures ‘the seller’ may represent: figures depending on dependence, such as publishers,¹⁰⁰ Second Empire authorities,¹⁰¹ and even Baudelaire’s mother, with whom the identification is largely emotional as well as economic, not intellectual.¹⁰² Nor does Baudelaire identify with the buyer or the various figures ‘the buyer’ may represent: figures furnishing dependence to those who depend on it, such as clients, employees, and even Baudelaire himself from the perspective of his own economic (non-) existence. Both seller and buyer are far too absorbed by the eternal delusion of Marxist commodity fetishism.¹⁰³ The Baudelaire biographer F. W. J. Hemmings once shifted my attention onto a citation from Baudelaire’s correspondence: ‘En somme, je crois que ma vie a été *damnée* dès le commencement, et qu’elle l’est *pour toujours*’ (Baudelaire’s emphasis).¹⁰⁴ Hemmings quickly notes ‘that Baudelaire does not call himself damned, but only his life’.¹⁰⁵ Considering the existential omnipresence of modern, capitalist, money economy in both Benjamin’s as well as Holland’s readings of Baudelaire, perhaps, it is precisely the poet’s non-identification with the selling–buying or production–consumption dichotomy as material modernity’s predominant form of interpersonal relationship, which ultimately led to this claim.

¹⁰⁰ Maria Scott has suggested that with his *dédicace* to Houssaye, Baudelaire is implicitly mocking the editor in chief. See Maria C. Scott, *Baudelaire’s ‘Le Spleen de Paris’: Shifting Perspectives* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 23–29. Briefly, I shall refer to the *dédicace* as well as Scott’s *Shifting Perspectives*, again, towards the end of the section on ‘Baudelairean Poetics’ in this review.

¹⁰¹ It is well-known that the first edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, published in 1857, was taken to court for undermining social morality. Subsequently, six poems were removed and later added to *Les Épaves*, a collection of twenty-three verse poems, published from Brussels in 1866. *Les Épaves* was the last publication Baudelaire was able to oversee himself before his death in 1867.

¹⁰² For most of his adult life, Baudelaire was dependent on his mother’s financial support. Yet, he emotionally struggled with her lack of sympathy and appreciation for his poetic aspirations. See, for example, the poet’s letter to his mother from December 1855: ‘Quant à mes petits projets littéraires,—*mais vous vous y intéressez si peu*,—je vous en parlerai une autre fois’ (my emphasis). *BCorr*, I, 329. On Baudelaire’s relationship to his mother, see also Margaret Miner, ‘(S)(m)othering Baudelaire’, in Patricia A. Ward (ed.), *Baudelaire and the Poetics of Modernity* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2001), pp. 157–71.

¹⁰³ On Marxist commodity fetishism, see Karl Marx, *Capital: A New Abridgement*, ed. by David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 42–50 (in particular pp. 43–44): ‘In [the religious] world the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men’s hands. This I call Fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour, so soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities.’

¹⁰⁴ *BCorr*, I, 303.

¹⁰⁵ F. W. J. Hemmings, *Baudelaire the Damned: A Biography* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1982), p. viii. For a more recent biography of the poet, see Rosemary Lloyd, *Charles Baudelaire* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

The entire synthetic or a posteriori part (II) of my study, but particularly chapter 5 will address this potential non-identification from the viewpoints of ‘exchange’, ‘communication’, and ‘the blasé’.

At this early stage, however, the best way to contextualise Holland’s study from within my own analytical framework stems from his second and complementary book, *Deleuze and Guattari’s Anti-Oedipus: Introduction to Schizoanalysis*.¹⁰⁶ Here, Holland dedicates his lengthy introduction to positioning the *Anti-Oedipus* in the tradition of Kantian Idealism, transforming the latter, via Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche, into a critique of ‘psychoanalytic metaphysics’.¹⁰⁷ While my study will not attempt to turn Kantian metaphysics into a psychoanalytical tool, the application of theoretico-critical retrospection to Kantian Idealism and, especially, its metaphysical dimension (in my case, Benjamin, Bergson, Lefebvre, and Simmel rather than Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche) establishes a common interpretive ground. Be that as it may, returning once more to Holland’s claim that Baudelaire ‘occupies the split positions of buyer *and* seller in turn, without ever completely identifying with either’, I wish, here, to offer a different perspective in the form of an intellectual incentive. As mentioned above, Holland speaks of the alteration of the individual’s psychodynamics in response to material modernity, resulting in the schizophrenic fragmentation of identification. In my own study, this will translate into the fragmentation of the individual’s epistemological process, which, in turn, results in the interruption and fragmentation of communication to the point of non-communication.¹⁰⁸ At this juncture, then, I wonder what could be the most fundamental precondition for any form of identification—isolated or not—if not thriving ‘communication’ in the broadest sense of the term?

Before moving on to the next publication on Baudelairean modernity that Krueger refers to, one final point remains to be considered. Holland’s emphasis on schizophrenia and psychic splitting (as well as the corresponding issues of identification with self and other) feeds into the overall scholarly impression of consistent, often oxymoronic duality in Baudelaire (for example, what Meltzer refers to as Baudelaire’s ‘aesthetic strabismus’). More importantly,

¹⁰⁶ Eugene W. Holland, *Deleuze and Guattari’s Anti-Oedipus: Introduction to Schizoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1999).

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 1–25 (p. 14).

¹⁰⁸ See the section on ‘Exchange, Communication, the Blasé (and the Dandy)’ in chapter 5.

however, it addresses the prevalent discourse on the notion of *dédoublement*, which informs the potent debate on irony revolving around the Baudelairean œuvre, and constitutes the core of Michele Hannoosh's *Baudelaire and Caricature: From the Comic to an Art of Modernity*.¹⁰⁹ In 'De L'Essence du rire et généralement du comique dans les arts plastiques' (1855),¹¹⁰ Baudelaire produces a theory of the comic in which he links the essence of laughter to original sin:

Il est certain, si l'on veut se mettre au point de vue de l'esprit orthodoxe, que le rire humain est intimement lié à l'accident d'une chute ancienne, d'une dégradation physique et morale. (527–28)

In caricature, as the most appropriate merging of aesthetics, laughter, and the comic more generally, the fall of art thus corresponds to the fall of man: a theory from which, as Hannoosh argues, Baudelaire 'posits that most extreme dualistic example, a paradoxical art of modernity'.¹¹¹ Laughter, for Baudelaire, 'est dans l'homme la conséquence de l'idée de sa propre supériorité' (532). Here, contrary to what one may assume, the potential for laughter and the comic does not originate in an external, objective reality ('l'objet du rire' [532]), but, indeed, within the individual themselves ('le rieur' [532]). And this is where one may return to Holland's psychic splitting and the notion of *dédoublement*. Laughter occurs, when *reason* allows for the individual 'de se dédoubler' (532) in order to witness the failure of being absolute ('misère infinie relativement à l'Être absolu' [532])—that is, the failure of the individual's superiority over nature. In short, laughter equals 'l'explosion de [la] colère et de [la] souffrance' (531), stemming from the attempt of being absolute, which the ability *to reason* contradicts. *Reason* allows the individual to comprehend that humans are human after all, as

¹⁰⁹ Michele Hannoosh, *Baudelaire and Caricature: From the Comic to an Art of Modernity* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992).

¹¹⁰ 'De l'Essence du rire et généralement du comique dans les arts plastiques', in *BOC*, II, 525–543. All further references will be provided in-text. Contextualising all three of Baudelaire's essays on caricature ('De l'Essence du rire...', 'Quelques Caricaturistes français', 'Quelques Caricaturistes étrangers') in relation to the poet's broader critical corpus, Hannoosh writes: 'In comparison with his other critical writings, these [essays on caricature] seem repetitious, inconsistent, incomplete and sometimes incoherent, loosely organised, outrageously quirky in their choice of artists and imbalanced in the attention given to them.' Hannoosh, *Baudelaire and Caricature*, p. 1.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4. Moreover, Meltzer points out that, for Baudelaire, the main distinction between caricature and modern aesthetics is the latter's responsibility towards its own subject matter. See Meltzer, *Seeing Double*, pp. 75–76.

opposed to divine.¹¹² In ‘Fusées’ XI, Baudelaire finds two alternative terms: the inclination of being absolute translates as ‘surnaturalisme’; the interference of the doubled self is referred to as ‘ironie’.¹¹³

Caricature is thus always double, representing the existential tension between being absolute and failing to be so:

le dessin et l'idée: le dessin violent, l'idée mordante et voilée: complication d'éléments pénibles pour un esprit naïf, accoutumé à comprendre d'intuition des choses simples comme lui. (529)

It is interesting to note that, in *Défigurations du langage poétique*, Johnson, too, links the fall of art to the fall of man, along the same lines as Baudelaire's own aesthetico-religious causality. Johnson's focus is not on caricature, but on Baudelaire's prose poetry, and it is Maria Scott in her *Baudelaire's 'Le Spleen de Paris': Shifting Perspectives*, who undertakes the meticulous archaeological task of unearthing those Baudelairean ‘complication[s] d'éléments’ that inform the aforementioned debate on irony revolving around his œuvre.¹¹⁴

But I am moving this discussion away from the scholarly maze of Baudelairean modernity. Whereas for Holland, psychic splitting is an unintentional (and undesirable) consequence of material modernity, for Hannoosh, the notion of *dédoublement*, originating in Baudelaire's theory of the comic, represents, more specifically, an aesthetic methodology ultimately leading to an ‘art of modernity’. Both merge in Hannoosh's conception of cosmopolitanism. With regards to the crowd, she explains:

¹¹² I have used the terms ‘subject’ and ‘reason’, here, to begin synchronising terminology with German Idealism and Idealist epistemology, specifically. In the case of ‘reason’, Baudelaire does not use the term in the same way as, for example, Kant and Hegel did. To express its Idealist epistemological connotations, he most likely would have opted for something along the lines of ‘intelligence’ or ‘supériorité’, in the sense of superiority over nature/beasts. Here, *reason*, the ability *to reason*, supplies the individual with such a superiority in the form *distance*. Chapter 1 posits the Idealist epistemological hypothesis that in the course of material modernity, the individual's epistemological process—their ability *to reason*—becomes interrupted and fragmented, increasing the distance between the individual and the divine (and simultaneously decreasing the distance between the individual and nature/beasts), but also ultimately leading towards those Baudelairean concerns accumulating in the notion of *le mal*.

¹¹³ ‘XI’, in ‘Fusées’, in *BOC*, I, 658–60 (p. 658).

¹¹⁴ I shall briefly return to irony in the section on ‘Baudelairean Poetics’ in this review.

The experience of the *flâneur* here reflects the principle of *dédoublement*, the simultaneous doubling that characterises the comic artist. This is not a paralysing, narcissistic self-consciousness; rather, it includes the self-awareness necessary for suppressing the self and adopting another.¹¹⁵

Hannoosh bases her train of thought on the Baudelairean definition of the *flâneur* as an ‘observateur passionné’.¹¹⁶ She argues that ‘*observateur* implies self-containment and [intellectual or critical] *distance* from the object, the impassivity of the dandy; *passionné* implies the identification of self and other, the escape from the self’ (my emphasis of ‘distance’).¹¹⁷ The modern artist, functioning as *flâneur*, thus doubles in order to witness their own participation in and dependence on modern city existence in the form of the crowd; just like the comic artist doubles in order to witness the human inclination and ultimate failure to become divine.¹¹⁸ This also further explains the reservations I have regarding Holland’s limiting view of Baudelaire’s identification with both buyer *and* seller. Whereas material modernity is surely defined by mercantile capitalism as the socio-economic framework from which it ultimately springs, the experience of the crowd, ‘[ce] bain de multitude’, ‘cette ineffable orgie’, ‘cette sainte prostitution de l’âme’,¹¹⁹ as participated in and observed by the modern artist, cannot possibly be confined to that dichotomy. The modern artist doubles and their psyche splits into two: firstly, they remain modern artist, *flâneur*, observer, and dandy, a figure, who guards a *distance* from modern city existence; and, secondly, they become generic individual, member of the crowd, commodity fetishist, a figure, who is *passionately* absorbed by it. In the prose poem ‘Les Foules’, Baudelaire makes this duality explicit: ‘Multitude, solitude: termes égaux et convertibles pour le poète actif et fécond. Qui ne sait pas peupler sa solitude, ne sait pas non plus être seul dans une foule affairée.’¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ Hannoosh, *Baudelaire and Caricature*, p. 291.

¹¹⁶ ‘L’Artiste, homme du monde, homme des foules et enfant’, in ‘Le Peintre’, in *BOC*, II, 691.

¹¹⁷ Hannoosh, *Baudelaire and Caricature*, p. 291.

¹¹⁸ In the context of Romanticism, in chapter 1, Poe’s as well as Baudelaire’s primary aesthetic inspiration has already been defined as the emotion of melancholy: in the context of caricature, for example, the melancholy experienced, when observing one’s ultimate failure to become divine. Questions addressing aesthetic inspiration will be of increasing importance from the section on ‘Second Empire Aesthetics’ onwards. As already mentioned, in the specific context of Second Empire material modernity, eventually, Baudelaire’s primary aesthetic inspiration will be defined as the poet’s ‘ethics of vice’, also in the section on ‘Second Empire Aesthetics’ in this review.

¹¹⁹ ‘Les Foules’, in *Le Spleen de Paris*, in *BOC*, I, 291–92 (p. 291).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* Baudelaire himself writes about cosmopolitanism: ‘Peu d’hommes ont,—au complet,—cette grâce divine du cosmopolitisme; mais tous peuvent l’acquérir à des degrés divers. Les mieux doués à cet égard sont ces

Time, Trauma, Violence

Elissa Marder's *Dead Time: Temporal Disorders in the Wake of Modernity (Baudelaire and Flaubert)* is the next text in Krueger's line and strikes a chord with the argument I propose.¹²¹ Marder bases her study on the Benjaminian argument that with the change of *experience* in material modernity, there is also a change in the way this experience is communicated via specific media. Hence, in a nineteenth-century context, the decline of lyric poetry. She begins by citing from Benjamin's 'On some Motifs in Baudelaire':

If conditions for a positive reception of lyric poetry have become less favourable, it is reasonable to assume that only in rare instances does lyric poetry accord with the experience of its readers. This may be due to a change in the structure of their *experience*.¹²² (my emphasis)

Moreover, she isolates and follows the core Benjaminian concern, arguing that the experience of modernity in the form of shocks derives, partly, 'from an overwhelming increase in external stimuli that prevents the impact of particular experiences from becoming assimilated, processed, and remembered'.¹²³ This is her analytical premise with clear, complementary relevance to this very study. In the argument I propose, the 'increase in external stimuli' is translated into the all-encompassing notion of fragmentation. From this perspective, it is fragmentation that leads to schizophrenia in Holland; it is fragmentation that I shall project onto Kantian a priori space and time and, indeed, onto the epistemological process grounded in the individual's a priori or *pure* perception of fragmented space and time; and it is thus fragmentation that will henceforth theoretically frame my own reading of the Baudelairean

voyageurs solitaires qui ont vécu pendant des années au fond des bois, au milieu des vertigineuses prairies, sans autre compagnon que leur fusil, contemplant, disséquant, écrivant. Aucun voile scolaire, aucun paradoxe universitaire, aucune utopie pédagogique, ne se sont interposés entre eux et la complexe vérité. Ils savent l'admirable, l'immortel, l'inévitable rapport entre la forme et la fonction. Ils ne critiquent pas, ceux-là: ils étudient.' See 'Méthode de critique. De l'idée moderne du progrès appliquée aux beaux-arts. Déplacement de la vitalité', in 'Exposition universelle 1855: beaux-arts', in *BOC*, II, 576–83 (p. 576).

¹²¹ Elissa Marder, *Dead Time: Temporal Disorders in the Wake of Modernity (Baudelaire and Flaubert)* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

¹²² Benjamin, 'On some Motifs in Baudelaire', trans. by Harry Zohn, in *The Writer of Modern Life*, p. 171.

¹²³ Marder, *Dead Time*, p. 2.

experience of modernity.¹²⁴ Thus, while Marder approaches the topic from an a posteriori point, my own argument posits a fundamental change in the a priori conditions of perception.

It may also be helpful to point out, here, that the increase in external stimuli is a prime concern for the German sociologist Georg Simmel. For Simmel, this increase is the essential precondition of becoming blasé: the crown prince of all socio-cultural symptoms in material modernity, signifying nothing less than the existential, socio-collective fatalism or determinism to which the fragmentation of the individual's epistemological process will eventually lead. Chapter 1 has already offered an initial contextualisation of this train of thought, and the section on 'Exchange, Communication, the Blasé (and the Dandy)' in chapter 5 will provide the corresponding analysis. Marder argues that psychic instabilities such as trauma, addiction, and fetishism are manifestations of our increasing inability to perceive time, or to 'live in time':¹²⁵ a trend not merely analogous to an increasing diversity of media, ultimately leaving behind literature as a form of *communication*, but also mirrored by an increasing dependence on measuring time. Within such an analytical framework, then, trauma, addiction, and fetishism become 'temporal disorders': attempts of the psyche to bring the *rapidité* of material modernity to a halt.¹²⁶ By arguing that temporal disorders are a distinctly and increasingly contemporary response to modern human existence, and by analysing how these are manifested in the works of Baudelaire and Gustave Flaubert, Marder essentially considers both authors to be 'our contemporaries', intriguingly demonstrating how they are 'still speaking to us today'.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ See chapter 3 and in particular the section on 'Perceiving Space and Time: Baudelaire's Modern Artist and Child'.

¹²⁵ Marder, *Dead Time*, p. 7. The expression 'to live in time' occurs on several occasions throughout her study. The notion of 'living in time' is what Henri Bergson refers to as *durée*.

¹²⁶ At the very beginning of chapter 1, I already pointed out that Baudelaire perceives the notion of *rapidité* as one of the fundamental characteristics of material modernity and its aesthetic representation, as expressed in a relatively short section of 'Le Peintre', entitled 'Le Croquis de mœurs', in *BOC*, II, 686–87. The relevant passage was also cited at the beginning of chapter 1. Nonetheless, the reader should be reminded, here, that the Idealist epistemology I propose in this study is very much grounded in the idea that *rapidité* is inherent to material modernity, and I shall frequently refer to it.

¹²⁷ Marder, *Dead Time*, p. 13.

The final publication in Krueger's assembly is Patricia A. Ward's edited volume *Baudelaire and the Poetics of Modernity*.¹²⁸ Before addressing it, however, I wish to briefly focus on two of the key concepts featuring in Marder's study—'time' and 'trauma'—and to complement the list with two further monographs: the first (on time) is Krueger's *The Art of Procrastination* itself; the second (on trauma) is Debarati Sanyal's *The Violence of Modernity: Baudelaire, Irony, and the Politics of Form*.¹²⁹

In *The Art of Procrastination*, Krueger argues that a 'lasting enigma of Baudelaire's prose poems lies [...] in their relationship to metaphysical matters of time and mortality',¹³⁰ and that both Baudelaire's verse and prose poetry are a constant reminder that 'time is at stake'.¹³¹ For Krueger, the 'timeless space of [verse] poetry offers a more predictable literary antidote to time's tyranny than does narrative prose'. But Baudelaire's merging of both within the genre of prose poetry leads to 'the art of procrastination' as an aesthetic or poetic means to break through and defend against the linearity of the Second Empire's most prominent 'cultural mandate: progress'.¹³² Simultaneously, it shows Baudelaire engaging in a form of poetry (as opposed to prose) that aims not merely to acknowledge this linearity, but to fill the 'timeless space of [verse] poetry' with its temporal simulacra of plot and narrative. In short, Krueger thus transforms Baudelaire's autobiographical *paresse* or 'indolence des inspirés' into poetic inspiration.¹³³ The production of prose poetry becomes a form of poetic procrastination, which, almost along the same lines as Marder's 'temporal disorders', serves as a coping mechanism for 'modern time' (time objectified by a clock or a watch).¹³⁴ The difference between Krueger and Marder is that the latter's trauma, addiction, and fetishism carry undesirable, even harmful, psychological and physiological consequences. In this context, Baudelaire's verse and prose poems entitled 'L'Horloge' are of particular interest, addressing, respectively, the individual's submission to objectified time (verse) as well as the engagement with what is most aptly

¹²⁸ Patricia A. Ward (ed.), *Baudelaire and the Poetics of Modernity* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2001).

¹²⁹ Debarati Sanyal, *The Violence of Modernity: Baudelaire, Irony, and the Politics of Form* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

¹³⁰ Krueger, *The Art of Procrastination*, p. 12.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹³³ The reference to 'indolence des inspirés' was already pointed out at the beginning of this chapter: 'Auguste Barbier', in 'Réflexions sur quelques-uns de mes contemporains', in *BOC*, II, 144.

¹³⁴ Krueger, *The Art of Procrastination*, p. 36.

described as abstract, or, perhaps, subjective time (prose). Chapter 3 will introduce subjective time via Bergson's concept of *durée*, whereas chapter 4 will provide contextualisation and close readings of both of the 'L'Horloge' poems.

Echoing both Marder's and Krueger's studies, Sanyal's *The Violence of Modernity*, again, addresses poetic production as a coping mechanism.¹³⁵ Marder and Krueger do so by concentrating their efforts on the authorial side of poetic (and prose) production: how Baudelaire and Flaubert speak, or, perhaps, preach to us as contemporaries on how to 'live in time' (Marder), and on how prose poetry aims to acknowledge, and yet resist progress by filling the 'timeless space of [verse] poetry' with the temporal linearity of plot and narrative (Krueger). By contrast, Sanyal examines the complex network of relationship between author and text, reader and text, and thus, by extension, author and reader. As such, she uses the concept of trauma as a starting point, only to then shift focus onto the concept of violence. This allows her to overcome the simplistic division between 'spectators, witnesses, or even victims', on the one hand, and 'agent' or 'executioner' on the other—a deceptive distinction leading us to view 'literature as primarily reactive testimony to the violence of historical processes'.¹³⁶ At this juncture, then, Sanyal's argument also joins the debate on irony, briefly referred to above. She argues that irony essentially represents Baudelaire's aesthetic (and psychological) methodology of coping with Benjamin's less favourable 'conditions for a positive reception of lyric poetry'. It is that altered condition, which Mallarmé later described as 'crise de vers', and which the twentieth century, then, transformed into post-modernity's fully-fledged crisis of representation. Sanyal refers to it as 'counterviolence'. Such a contemporary contextualisation exceeds the scope of my own argument and Sanyal's as well as Marder's monographs provide excellent examples. Nonetheless, the former's take on the Baudelairean 'retreat from content into form'¹³⁷—the poet's merging of ethics, politics, and aesthetics in the prose poetry of *Le Spleen de Paris*—is a highly complementary account to my own take on Baudelaire's *seconde révolution*, which will be given towards the end of this review. Moreover, in my study's conclusion in chapter 6, a close reading of the prose poem 'Les Bons Chiens' (1865) will provide a final opinion on the matter.

¹³⁵ Sanyal also addresses three post-Baudelairean authors: Rachilde, Virginia Despentès, and Albert Camus.

¹³⁶ Sanyal, *The Violence of Modernity*, pp. 1 and 10. The terms 'agent' and 'executioner' are used frequently throughout her study.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

I began the first part of this review by introducing Compagnon's conundrum and the last publication on Krueger's list, Ward's aforementioned *Baudelaire and the Poetics of Modernity*, helpfully serves as a form of conclusion. Similarly to Compagnon, in her preface, Ward hints at the manifold scholarly receptions of Baudelairean modernity: from 'themes of Baudelaire's perception of his time, his rejection of received tradition, his ironic retention of the vocabulary of this tradition, and the urban qualities of his poetry' to a 'discussion of literary modernity, of Baudelaire's relationship to Mallarmé and his successors', and to 'questions of the nature of the self and of the representative quality of language, essential to the lyric in its early history'.¹³⁸ To put it in the words of Sanyal, who provides a concise review of the collection:

The 'poetics of modernity' to which the title alludes is defined by the editors not as a theorizable set of assumptions but, rather, as the complex, unresolvable paradoxes that constitute 'the conditions of the dark sayings or the enigmas of the Baudelairean text [...] the principles behind the rich paradoxes at the heart of Baudelaire's poetry and prose'.¹³⁹

The 'dark sayings or the enigmas', Ward argues, remind one of the biblical expression, '[n]ow we see into a glass, darkly',¹⁴⁰ which, in a terminological as well as conceptual sense, refers us back to Poe's 'The Raven' and its curious speaker opening wide the door: 'Darkness there and nothing more'. Whether or not one interprets 'darkness', here, as enigmatic, fatalistic, symbolic, or, indeed, epistemological: it stands as a conceptual synonym for Baudelaire's perception of modern human existence. It is that which taints the Baudelairean experience of modernity, while constituting a form of aesthetic inspiration in its own right. It represents the melancholy of Poe as well as Baudelaire and, as this study will argue, it is only within the homogenous void of such a conceptual darkness that some of the dualistic, often existential tensions of Baudelairean thought—of his poetry and theory—may eventually be resolved.

¹³⁸ Ward (ed.), *Baudelaire and the Poetics of Modernity* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2001), pp. xi–x.

¹³⁹ Sanyal cites from Ward's preface, where the passage can be found on page x. Moreover, she refers to 'editors' in plural as the cover of the collection reads 'edited by Patricia A. Ward with the assistance of James S. Patty'. Debarati Sanyal, 'Baudelaire and the Poetics of Modernity (review)', *SubStance*, 32.2 (2003), 138–42 (p. 139).

¹⁴⁰ *The Bible*, I Corinthians 13. 12. New International Version.

Coincidentally, Compagnon distinguishes between *four* Baudelairean modernities, while Krueger subsequently suggests *four* distinct publications on Baudelairean modernity, and Ward structures her collection according to *four* fields of interest in relation to Baudelairean modernity: ‘Aesthetic Categories’, ‘Poetry and Painting’, ‘Questions of Genre’, and ‘Reformulations’. In response to Compagnon’s conundrum, scrutinising Baudelairean modernity means taking into account these various and greatly differing approaches, without losing sight of one’s own analytical goal. I hope that the first part of this review has begun to do so to the extent that such an undertaking is possible from within the confines of a literature or, indeed, conceptual review. At this point, then, I wish to shift focus onto the second part of this review, where an enquiry into Baudelaire’s modern aesthetic quest of extracting beauty from evil, *le beau* from *le mal*, sets the scene.

Le Beau dans le mal: Ethics, Politics, ‘Second Empire Aesthetics’

Des poètes illustres s’étaient partagé depuis longtemps les provinces les plus fleuries du domaine poétique. Il m’a paru plaisant, et d’autant plus agréable que la tâche était plus difficile, d’extraire la beauté du Mal.¹⁴¹ (my emphasis)

Extracting beauty from evil (‘d’extraire la beauté du Mal’) describes most concisely Baudelaire’s modern aesthetic quest, as outlined in ‘Le Peintre’: ‘de tirer l’éternel du transitoire’;¹⁴² and, indeed, as already referred to in my introduction as the aesthetic inspiration of *spontanéité* and *circonstance*. Of course, the title of Baudelaire’s collection of verse poetry, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, bears witness to the urgency of the matter by presenting itself as a terminological analogy to that very quest. The most obvious questions, then, are as follows: from a Baudelairean perspective, what is ‘la beauté’ or ‘le beau’?¹⁴³ What is ‘le mal’? And where do both intersect? Firstly, the term ‘intersection’, here, does not connote antagonism.

¹⁴¹ ‘Projets de préface’, in *Les Fleurs du Mal*, in *BOC*, I, 181–86 (p. 181).

¹⁴² ‘La Modernité’, in ‘Le Peintre’, in *BOC*, II, 694–97 (p. 694).

¹⁴³ From this point onwards, I have opted for the masculine *le beau* as it seems to occur more frequently in primary as well as secondary sources on the poet. In the subsequent section, I thus speak of *le beau moderne*, which critics frequently refer to, but which does not, in fact, appear once in the Baudelairean œuvre. The feminine *la beauté moderne* appears only twice, both times in the ‘Salon de 1846’. See ‘De Quelques Dessinateurs’, in *BOC*, II, 458–63 (p. 463) and ‘De l’Héroïsme de la vie moderne’, in *BOC*, II, 493–96 (pp. 495–96).

On the contrary, as we shall see shortly, it signifies causality: the beauty one extracts from evil is exclusively inspired by and found in evil. Secondly, if this relation is, indeed, considered as one of causality, it must be addressed in reverse: in order to understand *le beau* one must first understand *le mal*. This section will argue that in the detrimental shadow of nineteenth-century socio-political and socio-economic upheaval, the two broad academic or philosophical disciplines of ‘ethics’ and ‘politics’ merge within the Baudelairean conception of *le mal*. Furthermore, I shall argue that both—ethics as well as politics—not merely inform Second Empire conceptions of *le beau*, but, indeed, the creation of Baudelaire’s theory of modern aesthetics, prompting the aesthetic shift from *le beau* to *le beau moderne*, a more *spleen*-bound reconception of the *Idéal*.

Le Mal

Compared to purely aesthetic concerns, relatively few scholars within the field of Baudelaire studies have addressed either ethics or politics, specifically (and explicitly), as the poet’s driving aesthetico-inspirational force. For now, I shall concentrate on ethics and the ethical.¹⁴⁴ With a focus on the prose poems, there is, for example, Edward Kaplan’s extensive scholarship. Kaplan provides the only full-length ethical reading of *Le Spleen de Paris*, or *The Parisian Prowler*, as he translates the title (the subtitle to his study reads *The Esthetic, the Ethical, and the Religious*).¹⁴⁵ Moreover, his is one of the very few approaches to consider Baudelaire’s collection of prose poems as a whole, singular entity rather than a heap of fragments,¹⁴⁶ as

¹⁴⁴ In the subsequent approach to *le beau*, ‘politics’ will be added to the discussion via Jacques Rancière’s concept of the distribution of the sensible. For insightful contextualisation of Baudelaire—his life and œuvre—from a political perspective, see e.g. Benjamin, ‘The Bohème’, in ‘The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire’, trans. by Harry Zohn, in *The Writer of Modern Life*, pp. 46–133 (pp. 46–66); Richard Burton, *Baudelaire and the Second Republic: Writing and Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); Richard Burton, *Baudelaire in 1859: A Study in the Sources of Poetic Creativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Dolf Oehler, *Le Spleen contre l’oubli: Juin 1848: Baudelaire, Flaubert, Heine, Herzen*, trans. by Guy Petitdemange (Paris: Payot and Rivages, 1996); and Dolf Oehler, ‘Baudelaire’s Politics’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Baudelaire*, ed. by Rosemary Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 14–30.

¹⁴⁵ Edward K. Kaplan, *Baudelaire’s Prose Poems: The Esthetic, the Ethical, and the Religious* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1990), p. xi. In tandem with his research, Kaplan translated the prose poems into English, now published as *The Parisian Prowler: Le Spleen de Paris, Petits Poèmes en prose* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1997). Kaplan also published an article on ‘Baudelairean Ethics’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Baudelaire*, ed. by Rosemary Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 87–100. I shall return to Kaplan’s work in the section on ‘Baudelairean Poetics’ in this review as well as in chapter 6.

¹⁴⁶ Kaplan contrasts his approach with J. A. Hiddleston, *Baudelaire and Spleen de Paris* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); Jonathan Monroe, *A Poverty of Objects: The Prose Poem and the Politics of Genre* (Ithaca: Cornell

emphasised by Baudelaire himself in his *dédicace* to Houssaye, where the poet famously compares *Le Spleen de Paris* to a serpent that may be cut into fragments volitionally by anyone at any time ('Nous pouvons couper où nous voulons, moi ma rêverie, vous le manuscrit, le lecteur sa lecture').¹⁴⁷ Once again, I shall return to and address specific aspects of Baudelaire's *dédicace* in the section on 'Baudelairean Poetics' later in this review as well as in chapters 4 and 6, respectively. For now, it is important to recognise Kaplan's observation that

Baudelaire's so-called 'prose-poems' emerge as an autonomous genre and parallel the poems added in 1861 [to the second edition of *Les Fleur du Mal*], which emphasize finite reality and its constraints, the "ethical" world of *shared experience*.¹⁴⁸ (Kaplan's emphasis)

Three aspects make this statement particularly relevant. Firstly, it points to Baudelaire's aesthetic trajectory away from any notion of aesthetic Idealism—what I have referred to, so far, as the *Idéal*—inaugurated by the Jena Romantics of the *Athenaeum*, imported into France via Mme de Staël's *De l'Allemagne* (1810/13), and later proliferated by Victor Cousin's philosophical eclecticism as well as by the poetry and prose of young writers such as, for example, Lamartine, Hugo, Musset, Vigny and Nerval.¹⁴⁹ Secondly, it explicitly links 'the ethical' to 'experience', which is, of course, in the context of this study, the Baudelairean experience of modernity. Thirdly, within the context of ethics and the ethical, it defines the Baudelairean experience of modernity as a 'shared', that is, socio-collective experience. It is this socio-collective experience of modernity that I shall address more explicitly as Baudelaire's *a posteriori* in chapters 5 and 6. However, Kaplan's focus on the dynamic between ethics and aesthetics in Baudelaire's prose poetry (as well as his verse poetry to a much lesser degree) helps one only so far in attempting to identify the ethical in Baudelaire with the notion of *le mal*, specifically. It is Damian Catani, who has made this his most recent scholarly undertaking.

University Press, 1987); and Marie Maclean, *Narrative as Performance: The Baudelairean Experiment* (London: Routledge, 1988).

¹⁴⁷ 'Lettre à Arsène Houssaye', in *Le Spleen de Paris*, in BOC, I, 275.

¹⁴⁸ Kaplan, *Baudelaire's Prose Poems*, p. xi.

¹⁴⁹ Michel Brix addresses this transitional period in 'Modern Beauty versus Platonist Beauty', in Ward (ed.), *Baudelaire and the Poetics of Modernity*, pp. 1–14 (in particular pp. 1–5); so does Damian Catani in 'Evil and Modernity: Balzac and Baudelaire', in *Evil: A History in Modern French Literature and Thought* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 35–60 (in particular pp. 35–37).

In *Evil: A History in Modern French Literature and Thought*,¹⁵⁰ published more than two decades after Kaplan's *Baudelaire's Prose Poems*, Catani points towards the

unquestionable critical gap for a new interdisciplinary approach to notions of evil in modern French literature. Existing studies are few, often confined to specific authors or movements [...] and are thus methodologically narrow in that they favour a predominantly aesthetic approach. What is required [...] is that as well as being of aesthetic interest, a number of important post-Enlightenment literary works on evil by both French and Francophone authors reflect a convergence of philosophical, historical, scientific, gender-related and ideological concerns that are crucial to an understanding of our contemporary moral and political dilemmas.

(1)

Two aspects, here, are of great interest to the present enquiry. Firstly, Catani defines 'evil' and, by conceptual extension, 'the ethical' in the form of Kaplan's socio-collective experience: not as an aesthetic as such, but as the cause or impetus ('philosophical, historical, scientific, gender-related and ideological') for an aesthetic, which is, then, scrutinised in the context of 'specific authors or movements'. This leaves us with the 'unquestionable critical gap for a new interdisciplinary approach'. Secondly, Catani indirectly situates 'politics' ('political dilemmas') on the same representational spectrum as 'aesthetics', as two modes of representation drawing on evil as their underlying ethics. The philosophy of Jacques Rancière and particularly his concept of the distribution of the sensible comes to mind, here, and I shall briefly return to his ideas, when shifting attention from *le mal* to *le beau*.

At this juncture, however, it is necessary to address *le mal* for just a moment longer by having a closer look at Catani's two opening sections on 'Evil and Modernity: Balzac and Baudelaire'—for Catani, this is the material modernity that we have been associating, explicitly, with the Second Empire. Here, the critic argues for a shift from what he calls the 'aporia of Romanticism' to 'urban evil' (35–43), the former occurring around the late 1830s.

¹⁵⁰ Damian Catani, *Evil: A History in Modern French Literature and Thought* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013). All further references will be provided in-text. For a slightly more concise version of his argument with specific focus on Baudelaire, see Damian Catani, 'Notions of Evil in Baudelaire', *The Modern Language Review*, 102.4 (October 2007), 990–1007.

‘Up until that point, and since around 1820’, Catani writes, ‘Romanticism had proved itself to be the most socially pertinent and psychologically appropriate outlet for interpreting evil’ (35). Based on the emotional and religious inspiration of pre-Romantic authors (Catani mentions Chateaubriand and Mme de Staël), Romanticism thus allowed for evil to be addressed aesthetically from within a ‘rather “traditional” metaphysical and theological moral framework that perfectly captured the profound disillusionment felt at that time with the secular values of the Enlightenment’ (35). Lyrical poetry, as opposed to the philosophical prose of the previous century, appeared to be its most suitable literary manifestation, allowing for any engagement with evil to be ‘suggestive and nuanced’ (36). The 1755 Lisbon earthquake had given Voltaire and his disciples enough reason to abandon fully any belief in the traditional/biblical dimensions of evil—for no moral evil (sin) could ever justify such largescale physical evil (suffering). For the early Romantics, however, Enlightenment was associated with the 1789 revolution, which, in turn, only signified socio-political and socio-economic instability and upheaval, resulting in socio-collective disappointment and the consequential disbelief in its ‘starkly rationalist and anti-religious terms’ (36).¹⁵¹ Instead, grappling with the concept of evil, the Romantics turned to Satan, ‘a paradoxical figure’ (36), embodying the ‘traditional, biblical incarnation of evil’ but capable of articulating ‘modern man’s deep-seated spiritual and psychological frustration’ (36). This sudden return to the dogmas of Catholicism, sparked, politically, by the Catholic Royalism of the Bourbon Restoration, did not last very long, and by the late 1820s was already considered ‘too conservative, stagnant and oppressive’ (36). With the rise of economic prosperity under the aegis of the ‘bourgeois’ King Louis-Philippe, then, ‘faith in social progress was restored’ (36) and ‘Satanic’ Romanticism ‘gradually gave way to so-called Social Romanticism that now drew inspiration from the values of modern civilisation and its associated utopian political doctrines, chief among which were Saint-Simonism’ (36). Social progress in the form of material modernity (a ‘secular modernity’ [37], as Catani also calls it in this context), promised to provide the ‘antidote to the universal injustices of metaphysical [traditional/biblical] evil’ (37).

¹⁵¹ Catani bases this specific aspect of his argument on Susan Neiman, *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). He states, for example: ‘[Neiman] convincingly argues that the problem of evil was given new and dramatic prominence by the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 and was subsequently intensified by the Holocaust’ (14).

At this point in French nineteenth-century cultural history, the aporia of Romanticism occurs. '[T]he initial optimism and prosperity of the Bourgeois Monarchy', Catani argues, 'was gradually revealing itself to be no more than a series of dashed hopes, false dawns and a recipe for economic corruption and instability' (37). As a consequence, Romanticism 'regressed to a cosmic pessimism that rejected both society and nature as beneficial influences' (37), resulting in an 'increasingly circular, speculative discourse that throughout the following two decades, ultimately served to compound, rather than alleviate, their growing sense of despair' (37). Balzac and Baudelaire were amongst the first to realise that traditional approaches to evil could no longer justify the condition of human existence in material modernity. For Catani, both authors exemplify the intellectual trajectory from a post-Enlightenment Romantic interpretation of traditional/biblical evil to modern human existence as a vision of evil directly linked to material modernity. In different ways and at different stages in the process, both authors 'sought to reconnect evil back to the identifiable rhythms of everyday urban life, presenting it as an integral key to understanding the central ethical dilemmas of material modernity and modern human existence' (38).¹⁵²

This final citation, then, leads us back to this section's opening concern, as regards finding beauty in evil, *le beau dans le mal*. It is this concern that will serve, henceforth, as the aesthetico-theoretical foundation for the argument I present. Explicitly or implicitly, it does so already for virtually every approach to Baudelairean modernity. There are two specific reasons for such a sweeping statement. Firstly, for Catani, *le mal* in Baudelaire is closely tied to the ethics of modern city existence:

[Balzac's and Baudelaire's] timely re-evaluation [of evil] was based on the prescient realisation that a post-Romantic, post-theological reinvigoration of evil was a matter of ethical necessity that would most fruitfully be realised through a

¹⁵² On the 'rhythms' of everyday urban life, see, for example, Michael Sheringham, *Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealist to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press); Henri Lefebvre, *Critique de la vie quotidienne*, 3 vols (Paris: L'Arche 1947–82); Henri Lefebvre, *Éléments de rythmanalyse: introduction à la connaissance des rythmes* (Paris: Syllepse, 1992); Michel de Certeau, *L'invention du quotidien*, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1980); Peter Dayan and David Evans, 'Rhythm in Literature after the Crisis of Verse', *Paragraph: Journal of Modern Critical Theory*, 33.2 (July 2010); Elizabeth Lindley and Laura McMahan (eds.), 'Rhythms: Essays in French Literature, Thought and Culture', *Modern French Identities*, ed. by Peter Collier, 68 (2008).

direct engagement with the previously unexplored urban vice and criminality of the new, expanding capitalist metropolis. (38)

Whether or not one chooses ‘ethics’ as the analytical framework; whether or not ‘the ethical’ in Baudelaire can be identified with *le mal* in the form of Catani’s urban evil; and, indeed, whether or not one adheres to the manifold scholarly readings of Baudelaire, as suggested by Compagnon:¹⁵³ regardless of these uncertainties, the fact that the Baudelairean œuvre ultimately addresses modern city existence as the physical and intellectual environment from which it ultimately sprang, seems to manifest itself as the critical consensus.

Secondly, further following Catani, if it can be agreed that *le mal* encompasses the manifold facets of modern city existence, then, *le beau* must also encompass the manifold facets in which aesthetics may serve as a mode of representation for *le mal* and the ethical in Baudelaire. Kaplan refers to this intimate connection between ethics and aesthetics as ‘ethical irony’ and writes:

[Baudelaire’s] narrators express negative and destructive moods, or feign to admire the depraved, in order to provoke outrage against the manifest immorality. What Victor Hugo names as Baudelaire’s ‘new shudder’ [‘un frisson nouveau’] points to what Baudelaire himself called his ‘horrifying morality’ [‘terrible moralité’], that screen of ethical ambiguity around his poetry, prose poems and some critical essays.¹⁵⁴

I began my reflections on *le mal* by citing Catani on the ‘unquestionable critical gap for a new interdisciplinary approach to notions of evil in modern French literature’. Catani complains that existing scholarship favours a ‘predominantly aesthetic approach’. This is also the case in

¹⁵³ Specifically, Compagnon refers to the reception of Baudelaire as a ‘réaliste, décadent, symboliste, satanique, catholique, athée, classique, moderne, réactionnaire, révolutionnaire, saint, [ou] postmoderne’. The entire passage was cited at the beginning of this review.

¹⁵⁴ Edward K. Kaplan, ‘Baudelairean Ethics’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Baudelaire*, ed. by Rosemary Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 87–100 (p. 89). On Baudelaire’s ethical irony, see also Kaplan, *Baudelaire’s Prose Poems*, pp. 2–4. Michel Deguy would later wonder ‘whether there is still something to be derived from the profanation of revelation and what kind of revelation to remake with this profanation’. Michel Deguy, ‘To Spear it on the Marks, of Mystical Nature’, in Ward (ed.), *Baudelaire and the Poetics of Modernity*, pp. 187–98 (p. 188).

Baudelaire studies, as supported by the seemingly limitless labels that critics have come up with to describe their particular version of Baudelairean aesthetics and poetics. Both terms are, to my mind, often used interchangeably, or at least with a lack of nuanced distinction: ‘aesthetics of transgression’ (Jamison),¹⁵⁵ ‘aesthetics of movement’ (Braswell),¹⁵⁶ ‘poetics of tobacco’ (Derrida),¹⁵⁷ ‘poetics of fashion’ (Saisselin),¹⁵⁸ and so forth. Like Compagnon’s Baudelairean *modernities*, mentioned earlier, each of these attempts at nomenclature is successful in its own right. Each of these critics reads Kaplan’s socio-collective experience of modernity—*le mal*, the ethics of modern city existence, the ethical in Baudelaire—from an idiosyncratic perspective, which then—explicitly or implicitly—informs their respective approaches to Baudelairean aesthetics and poetics in the form of *le beau*. This continuous and concentrated scholarly focus on aesthetics (or poetics), and the lack of nuanced approach to their underlying ethics, is the core rationale behind the argument Catani proposes. Addressing this critical lacuna, Catani shifts the analytical focus from aesthetics to ethics, from *le beau* to *le mal*, thus making a case for the poet’s ‘ethics of vice’, perhaps, in lieu of his ‘aesthetics of vice’.

In order to clarify exactly how Baudelairean ethics, or the ethical in Baudelaire, may be considered as fundamentally informing the poet’s aesthetics, one may also look to the essay ‘Les Drame et les roman honnêtes’, where the poet asks:

L’art est-il utile? Oui. Pourquoi? Parce qu’il est l’art. Y a-t-il un art pernicieux? Oui. C’est celui qui dérange les conditions de la vie. *Le vice est séduisant, il faut le peindre séduisant*; mais il traîne avec lui des maladies et des douleurs morales singulières; il faut les décrire. Étudiez toutes les plaies comme un médecin qui fait son service dans un hôpital.¹⁵⁹ (my emphasis)

¹⁵⁵ Anne Elizabeth Jamison, ‘Any Where Out of this Verse: Baudelaire’s Prose Poetics and the Aesthetics of Transgression’, *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 29.3–4 (Spring–Summer 2001), 256–286.

¹⁵⁶ Suzanne F. Braswell, ‘An Aesthetics of Movement: Baudelaire, Poetic Renewal, and the Invitation of Dance’, *French Forum*, 31.3 (Fall 2006), 23–43.

¹⁵⁷ Jacques Derrida, “‘Counterfeit Money’ I: Poetics of Tobacco”, in *Given Time. I, Counterfeit Money*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 71–107.

¹⁵⁸ Rémy G. Saisselin, ‘From Baudelaire to Christian Dior: The Poetics of Fashion’, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 18.1 (September 1959), 109–115.

¹⁵⁹ ‘Les Drame et les romans honnêtes’, in *BOC*, II, 38–43 (p. 41). I owe the specific context in which this reference is used, here, to Kaplan, ‘Baudelairean Ethics’, p. 87. The conclusion to my argument in chapter 6 will address similar issues in greater detail and with specific reference to Baudelaire’s ‘Projets de préface’.

For Catani, in the context of modern city existence, the intellectual passivity inherent to the causality between sin and suffering, between moral evil and physical evil, translates into the typically Baudelairean ‘energy-sapping state of “ennui”’ (44).¹⁶⁰ The concept of ennui is an integral part in my argument for fatalism as a form of existential, socio-collective determinism inherent to material modernity, and, indeed, inherent to the Baudelairean experience of precisely that modernity: the poet’s concept of ennui is a close relative to Simmel’s concept of the blasé. In fact, this study will argue that it is only Baudelaire’s modern artist and child, who are able to find shelter from it. With focus on the former, in order to do so, they must engage ‘with a new, more dynamic and lucid perception of evil as urban vice’ (44; ‘[é]tudiez toutes les plaies’).¹⁶¹ Catani explains: ‘[T]he ennui that characterises the modern condition can be overcome through the urban vice that is also a product of this very modernity’ (46). The critic makes this explicit in a series of three close readings (‘Au Lecteur’ [43–46], ‘Le Jeu’ [50–52], ‘Mademoiselle Bistouri’ [57–60]), at the end of which he once again stresses the urgent need for scholarship to shift the analytical focus from aesthetics to ethics and, especially, onto the intimate connection between the two, simultaneously providing yet another reason for Baudelaire’s canonical status as the first poet of modernity.¹⁶² Appealing to the poet’s ‘conscience dans le mal’,¹⁶³ Catani makes clear that the modern artist’s engagement with vice is not a dismissive or desperate trope, but is material modernity’s primary source of aesthetic inspiration. It is what leads to the ‘screen of ethical ambiguity’ that Kaplan refers to as

¹⁶⁰ For reasons of clarity and brevity, I am focusing entirely on Baudelaire, leaving Catani’s consideration of Balzac aside. While the modernity–evil dichotomy is presented differently in the works of both authors (e.g., Balzac’s prime creative phase was in the 1830s and 40s, Baudelaire’s was in the 1850s and 60s; Balzac was a ‘Catholic Royalist’, Baudelaire a ‘liberal agnostic’; Balzac was a novelist, Baudelaire was a poet), for Catani, the final conclusion that the modern artist’s engagement with vice translates into material modernity’s primary source of aesthetic inspiration remains the same for both.

¹⁶¹ See the section on ‘Perceiving Space and Time: Baudelaire’s Modern Artist and Child’ in chapter 3. I shall further address the concept of ennui in the section on ‘Society and Existence from the Viewpoint of Death’ in chapter 5. Considering the prominent argument that Baudelaire perceived both *spleen* and ennui as the underlying socio-collective predicament that defines modern human existence, essentially, I shall contextualise both concepts from within the theoretico-philosophical model, as developed and applied throughout this study.

¹⁶² In an article that offers a slightly different, yet equally intriguing reading of Baudelaire’s ‘Le Jeu’ (Existentialism [Sartre] versus Transgression [Bataille]), Catani reminds us ‘that Baudelaire’s widely established and enduring reputation as the first “modern” poet deserves far more detailed consideration from an ethical perspective than exists at present, one that takes into account his profound and sustained engagement with the notion of evil’. See Damian Catani, ‘Modernity, Evil and Ethics: A Sartrean and Bataillean Reading of Baudelaire’s “Le Jeu”’, *Dix-Neuf*, 16.3 (November 2012), 260–70 (p. 260).

¹⁶³ ‘L’Irrémédiable’, in *Les Fleurs du Mal*, in *BOC*, I, 79–80. ‘La conscience dans le mal’ is the poem’s final line. Catani uses it frequently to address the modern artist’s ‘conscious’ ethico-aesthetic engagement with the vice of material modernity. As the poem’s title already suggests, it fits his argument perfectly: leaving traditional/biblical interpretations of evil behind, the figure of the modern artist is positioned beyond the possibility of redemption (‘irrémédiable’).

Baudelaire's 'ethical irony'. To put this in other terms, it is Baudelaire's ethics of vice from which *le beau* emerges.

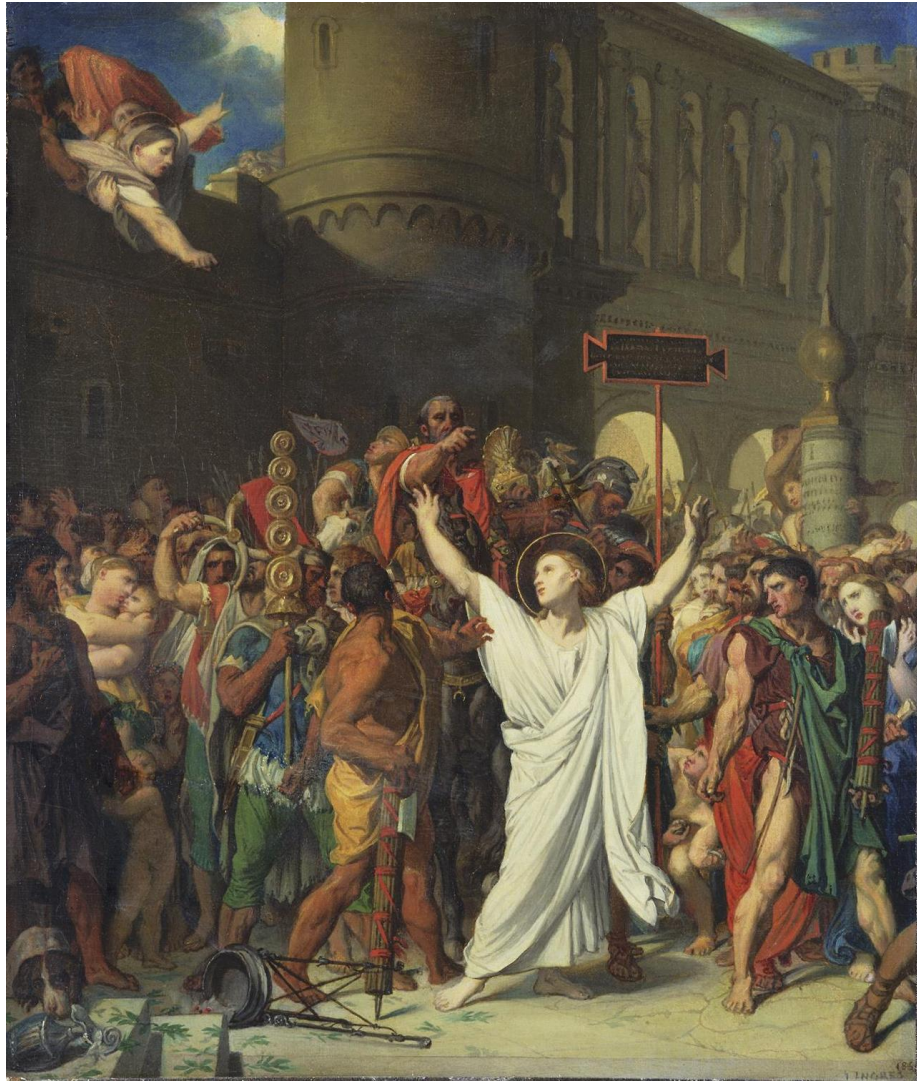


Figure 1: Ingres, *Le Martyre de Saint Symphorien* (1834)



Figure 2: Bertall (pseudonym of Charles-Albert d'Arnoux), *République des arts* (1849)



Figure 3: Delacroix, *Les Écrevisses à Longchamps* (1822)



Figure 4: Delacroix, *La Liberté guidant le peuple* (1830)



Figure 5: Delacroix, *La Justice de Trajan* (1840)



Figure 6: Delacroix, *Entrée des croisés à Constantinople* (1840)

Le Beau

Similarly to *le mal*, the notion of *le beau* is also elusive and rather difficult to determine. The main concern, here, is an often, yet, I believe, unintentionally neglected distinction: between, firstly, Baudelaire's aesthetic theory; secondly, Baudelaire's art criticism (application of theory); and, thirdly, Baudelaire's own poetic production (translation of theory into poetry). Of course, these categories are blurred and more often than not one sees grey, as opposed to black and white. Following Catani's example of cultural-historical contextualisation, in the following, I wish to begin by approaching *le beau* from an art historical and biographical point of view that I have presumptuously labelled 'Second Empire Aesthetics',¹⁶⁴ for such a bird's-eye perspective makes apparent not merely the intimate connections between ethics and aesthetics, but also between ethics and politics as well as politics and aesthetics.

When in 2005, Rancière posed the intriguing title-question 'From Politics to Aesthetics?', he quickly concluded that such a shift of interest is, in fact, an impossibility, for '[t]here is no pure politics, just as there is no pure art or aesthetics.'¹⁶⁵ Instead, Rancière explains, one must concentrate on what he calls 'the distribution of the sensible'; one must concentrate on that which takes place *between* politics and aesthetics, between these two modes of representation that allow for the 'configuration of our "place" in society'.¹⁶⁶ A more detailed introduction to the concept is provided in his *The Politics of Aesthetics*:

I call the distribution of the sensible the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it. A distribution of the sensible therefore establishes at one and the same time something common that is shared and exclusive parts.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ I am aware that 'Second Empire Aesthetics' is a *very* broad label and that my introductory approach could not possibly meet the expectations it may spark. Concentrating on Baudelairean source material (namely, his art criticism), the following will embed the neo-Classicist Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867) as well as the Romantic Ferdinand Victor Eugène Delacroix (1789–1863) into a Second Empire art historical as well as socio-political context, arguing that a reflection on both painters will help to understand the intellectual trajectory that would eventually lead Baudelaire to his theory of modern aesthetics, as outlined in 'Le Peintre'.

¹⁶⁵ Jacques Rancière, 'From Politics to Aesthetics?', *Paragraphe: A Journal of Modern Critical Theory*, 28.1 (March 2005), 13–25 (p. 22).

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁶⁷ Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, trans. and ed. by Gabriel Rockhill (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), in particular pp. 7–14 (p. 7).

One is strongly reminded, here, of Kaplan's definition of the 'ethical world' as the world of 'shared experience', and it is along these lines, too, that I wish to conceptually merge both ethics and politics within the notion of *le mal*: the former, ethics, a reality and a cause; the latter, politics, a representation and a consequence. Both give rise to yet another means of representation in the form of aesthetics.

Essentially, the question Rancière addresses with his concept of the distribution of the sensible is simple: *who in society is able to perceive what and when?* Far more complex, however, is the question of what happens if the 'who', the 'what', and the 'when' change. These are concerns that occupied Rancière's entire career. Taking as its two defining parameters the Labour Movement and the self-identification of Modernism as autonomous art, his argument runs as follows. The aesthetic shift towards Realism, Impressionism, and thus Modernism (the 'aesthetic revolution', as Rancière calls it), occurring throughout the nineteenth century (but with much greater impetus during the second half), could only take place because of a socio-collective change in self-perception represented by the Labour Movement. At the time, this essentially translated into the public hijacking of the existing aesthetic regime, 'rejecting, firstly, its hierarchy of high and low subjects and genres, secondly, the Aristotelian superiority of action over life, and thirdly, the traditional scheme of rationality in terms of ends and means, causes and effects.'¹⁶⁸ But, for Rancière, the aesthetic revolution was far more than 'a new view of art practices and artworks'; rather, 'it involved a new idea of thought itself: an idea of the power of thought outside itself, a power of thought in its opposite'.¹⁶⁹ For the philosopher, then, the 'aesthetic revolution' ('[t]he philosophy of the beautiful'[*OED*]) was, therefore, first and foremost based on an 'aesthetic' revolution (from Greek 'aisthētikos': 'sensitive' or 'perceptive')—that is, a fundamental change in socio-collective 'sense perception'. Rancière thus embeds his argument into the theoretico-philosophical model I develop and apply in this study:

My basic concern, throughout my 'historical' and 'political' research was to point out the aesthetic dimension of the political experience. I mean here 'aesthetic' in a

¹⁶⁸ Rancière, 'From Politics to Aesthetics?', p. 14.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

sense close to the Kantian idea of ‘a priori forms of sensibility’: it is not a matter of art and taste; it is, first of all, a matter of time and space.¹⁷⁰

This study will subsequently address the question of how the Kantian a priori filters into the Baudelairean experience of modernity. At this juncture, however, it is important to note that in response to Rancière’s *revolutions*, the distribution of the sensible—who in society is able to perceive what and when—was no longer determined by its modes of representation—politics and aesthetics—but determined for itself how it wanted to be represented, thus reversing the flow of information. Recalling Catani’s argument for the aesthetico-inspirational qualities of ethics, in this way, Rancière provides us with one possible approach to the complex entanglement of ethics, politics, and aesthetics one faces, when scrutinising the art historical trajectory towards Modernism. To bring together the terms and concepts so far applied in this study: prior to Rancière’s ‘aesthetic’ revolution and subsequent ‘aesthetic revolution’, *le beau* as a form of aesthetic Idealism was rigorously split from *le mal* in that its representational qualities were intentionally, politically, and often, perhaps, propagandistically limited to the aesthetic reach for divine/ideal beauty, or, indeed, the *Idéal*. It is the Baudelairean ‘conscience dans le mal’ that eventually begins to bridge this gap,¹⁷¹ leading not merely to ‘Le Peintre’ as Baudelaire’s theory of modern aesthetics, but also to *Les Fleurs du Mal* and *Le Spleen de Paris* as poetic representations of modern human existence, and thus as poetic manifestations of Modernism: Baudelaire’s poetic ‘avènement du *neuf*’ (Baudelaire’s emphasis).¹⁷²

In 1855, Baudelaire wrote a piece of art criticism on the Universal Exposition taking place in Paris. It was Baudelaire’s first art criticism since his ‘ground-breaking’ ‘Salon de 1846’ (as well as his ‘Salon Caricatural de 1846’). Surprisingly, the poet-turned-critic focuses solely on France’s aesthetic phalanx: neo-Classicist superstar Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867) and the undisputed leader of French Romanticism in the visual arts, Ferdinand Victor Eugène Delacroix (1789–1863). At this point in time, Ingres had not exhibited publicly since 1834, when his *Le Martyre de Saint Symphorien* had been received

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁷¹ This will translate into the terms ‘sensitivity’ (Baudelaire) and ‘intellectualism’ (Delacroix).

¹⁷² ‘Salon de 1845’, in *BOC*, II, 351–407 (p. 407). Baudelaire ends the ‘Salon’ with a plea to all art critics to finally discover the painter of modern life in the year to follow: ‘Puissent les vrais chercheurs nous donner l’année prochaine cette joie singulière de célébrer l’avènement du *neuf*!’ The entire passage is cited below.

badly (see Figure 1). This also meant that since 1834, Ingres had not exhibited in direct comparison to Delacroix as his aesthetic counterpart. In 1855, then, both artists had the privilege to put together a retrospective exhibition of their lives' œuvres, an encounter Baudelaire knows how to acknowledge:

MM. Eugène Delacroix et Ingres se partagent la faveur et la haine publiques. Depuis longtemps l'opinion a fait un cercle autour d'eux comme autour de deux lutteurs. Sans donner notre acquiescement à cet amour commun et puéril de l'antithèse, il nous faut commencer par l'examen de ces deux maîtres français, puisque autour d'eux, au-dessous d'eux, se sont groupées et échelonnées presque toutes les individualités qui composent notre personnel artistique.¹⁷³ (see also Figure 2)

Baudelaire spells it out: the question of aesthetics is inextricably linked to the figure of the artist, and, respectively, Ingres and Delacroix represent the two aesthetics that the Second Empire cultural elite has to offer. One may say that, in 1855, both artists represent the Second Empire's official standpoint on the subject of aesthetics. But, as we know, Baudelaire was looking for more. Already in the conclusion to his 'Salon de 1845', Baudelaire writes:

Le Salon, en somme, ressemble à tous les salons précédents, sauf l'arrivée soudaine, inattendue, éclatante de M. William Hassoullier—et quelques très belles choses des Delacroix et des Decamps. Du reste, constatons que tout le monde peint de mieux en mieux, ce qui nous paraît désolant;—mais d'invention, d'idées, de tempérament, pas d'avantage qu'avant.—Au vent qui soufflera demain nul ne tend l'oreille; et pourtant l'héroïsme *de la vie moderne* nous entoure et nous presse.—Nos sentiments vrais nous étouffent assez pour que nous les connaissions.—Ce ne sont ni les sujets, ni les couleurs qui manquent aux épopées. Celui-là sera le *peintre*, le vrai peintre qui saura arracher à la vie actuelle son côté épique, et nous faire voir et comprendre, avec de la couleur ou du dessin, combien nous sommes grands et

¹⁷³ 'Exposition universelle 1855: beaux-arts', in *BOC*, II, 590. Figure 2 shows Bertall's *République des arts* (1849), a nineteenth-century cartoon of Ingres and Delacroix jousting in front of the *Institut de France*. See also footnote 182.

poétiques dans nos cravates et nos bottes vernies.—Puissent les vrais chercheurs nous donner l’année prochaine cette joie singulière de célébrer l’avènement du *neuf!*¹⁷⁴ (Baudelaire’s emphasis)

As early as 1845, Baudelaire is on a quest to find ‘le *peintre*, le vrai peintre qui saura arracher à la vie actuelle son côté épique’ (‘d’extraire la beauté du Mal’ [‘Projets de préface’]; ‘de tirer l’éternel du transitoire’ [‘Le Peintre’]). As we know, Baudelaire did not find such a painter until late 1859, when, according to Claude Pichois, Constantin Guys appears for the first time in his correspondence.¹⁷⁵ On the one hand, then, Baudelaire perceives the Second Empire’s ‘personnel artistique’ to be represented, entirely, by the respective aesthetics of Ingres (neo-Classicism) and Delacroix (Romanticism).¹⁷⁶ On the other hand, the critic feels that neither of these two aesthetics are suitable to incorporate and embrace the (socio-collective) experience of modernity, which brings us back to Catani and Rancière. Once again, taking into account Catani’s reflections on the ethics of vice as material modernity’s primary source of aesthetic inspiration, and following Rancière’s argument that, within the distribution of the sensible, politics are inextricably interwoven with aesthetics, then, Baudelaire’s quest to find ‘le *peintre*, le vrai peintre’—neither Ingres nor Delacroix—not merely hints at the ethical shift from the aporia of Romanticism to urban evil, but also at an inevitable political as well as aesthetic shift ultimately cumulating in Rancière’s ‘aesthetic revolution’.

In this context, a brief cultural-historical contextualisation of the Second Empire (1852–70) is absolutely key. The great revolution of 1789 had turned the question of legitimisation into the century’s primary political concern. In order to legitimise France’s return to an imperial autocracy, Napoléon III pursued two antagonistic goals. Economically speaking, he let down his guard, acknowledging the influence and power of the bourgeoisie as the ruling elite. Culturally speaking, however, the Second Empire has traditionally been split into two halves: the autocratic Empire of the 1850s and the more liberal Empire of the 1860s. There is a very distinct reason for this. While a blossoming economy was aimed at keeping society and

¹⁷⁴ ‘Salon de 1845’, in *BOC*, II, 407.

¹⁷⁵ Baudelaire’s ‘Le Peintre’ is based on the work of watercolourist Constantin Guys (1802–92). See ‘Notice’ to ‘Le Peintre’, in *BOC*, II, 1413–30 (p. 1414).

¹⁷⁶ I have opted for the term ‘symbolised’, as opposed to ‘represented’, in order to emphasise the singular status of both artists in their respective schools.

in particular the bourgeoisie satisfied, culture (namely, art and its criticism) was emphasised as a means to remind people, superficially, of the glory of the First Empire, and, on a deeper ideological level, of the function and necessity of socio-political authority and hierarchy to preserve socio-economic stability.¹⁷⁷ As a result, the cultural sphere of the fifties was dominated by conservative retrospection, a trend reflected, as Patricia Mainardi has so helpfully pointed out, by the fine-arts budget for the Universal Exposition of 1855 of which 71.6% had a ‘discernible political purpose’. In other words, it was tailored to support propagandistically motivated art.¹⁷⁸ In the sixties, then, the economy increasingly merged with culture in the sense that the bourgeoisie no longer accepted politico-propagandistically motivated art as a means of representing and preserving the cultural status quo. The demand for decorative items such as portraits, landscape, and genre-paintings, better suitable for the homely *salon*, increased rapidly. ‘Deviant’ art-forms such as Naturalism, Realism, and Impressionism began to succeed the Academy’s favoured neo-Classicism and even the already thought-provoking Romanticism. To summarise this brief introduction to the period, Mainardi’s concise sense of French nineteenth-century economico-cultural causality is always welcome:

If culture can be said to follow economics, then one might consider the Revolution of 1789, with its economic shift of power from the aristocracy to the bourgeoisie, as leading inexorably, almost a century later to the aesthetic shift described here.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ The politically-propagandistic abuse of art and its criticism in nineteenth-century France is chronically underresearched, and one has to look far and wide in order to find relevant scholarship. As regards Théophile Gautier, for example, James Kearns distinguishes a man, who ‘liked [...] to say nice things about everybody’, when working as a journalist and editor for *La Presse* (since 1836), a post, which he abandoned in 1855 in favour of *Le Moniteur Universel*, the regime’s official newspaper: a move that ‘brought with it diplomatic and political considerations’. While working for *Le Moniteur*, Gautier wrote the official art criticism of the 1855 Universal Exposition. James Kearns, *Théophile Gautier, Orator to the Artists: Art Journalism of the Second Republic* (London: Legenda, 2007), pp. 3–4. Generally, in this context, I shall frequently be referring to Patricia Mainardi’s authoritative *Art and Politics of the Second Empire: The Universal Expositions of 1855 and 1867* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989). A second valuable study, though, linked to the Second Empire only indirectly, is Susan Siegfried and Todd Porterfield’s *Staging Empire: Napoleon, Ingres, and David* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), which looks, specifically, at the connection between visual arts, propaganda, and what is termed the ‘modern empire’. With regards to the First Empire, Siegfried and Porterfield state: ‘Although short-lived, the Napoleonic Empire was distinctive in its attempt to put the stamp of permanence on the instability of modern political formations. *Its art was designed to do just this*’ (p. 4; my emphasis).

¹⁷⁸ Mainardi, *Art and Politics of the Second Empire*, p. 38.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

From Mainardi's point of view, the Second Empire thus presents us with a cultural microcosm, where, within two decades, the old aesthetic regime was superseded by the new. This is what Rancière names the 'aesthetic revolution'. Mainardi agrees: 'If we compare the art world before and after the Second Empire [...], it is evident that after 1870 the modern system was in place.'¹⁸⁰ The same is true for the political sphere, for after the Second Empire the republic as a form of governance would finally take hold.¹⁸¹ A fundamental shift within the distribution of the sensible had occurred: *le beau* became increasingly grounded in *le mal*, and traditional conceptions of the *Idéal* were reconceived accordingly.

In 1855, then, *le beau* was still split between its two major protagonists, Ingres and Delacroix ('MM. Eugène Delacroix et Ingres se partagent la faveur et la haine publiques'), with Ingres heavily profiting from the support of the most powerful institutional organisms at the time: Government, Church, and *Institut de France*.¹⁸² To put it in Mainardi's words:

From the Government's point of view, Ingres was the most important artist alive, for he had worked for and been honoured by every regime of the nineteenth century. He was most closely identified with the July Monarchy, and most of his friends were Orleanists, a group which Napoléon III was courting second only to the Church.¹⁸³

Ingres personified aesthetic reactionism in support of Napoléon III's incessant attempts to barricade and defend the regime against the loss of political legitimacy. He was not only the most prominent, but one of the last protagonists of an aesthetic that would, automatically, by the very definition of its nature as traditional and conservative, serve the political goals of

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 1.

¹⁸¹ For a recent history of French nineteenth-century political thought, see Jeremy Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic: A History of Political Thought in France since the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). For a recent socio-cultural introduction to the Second Empire, see Anne Green, *Changing France: Literature and Material Culture in the Second Empire* (London: Anthem Press, 2013).

¹⁸² The *Institut de France*, from here on translated only as 'Institute', is comprised of five Academies: *Académie française*, *Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres*, *Académie des sciences*, *Académie des beaux-arts*, *Académie des sciences morales et politiques*. Throughout the nineteenth century, Government and Institute were constantly arguing over the administrative supremacy in the fine arts.

¹⁸³ Mainardi, *Art and Politics of the Second Empire*, p. 49. The Church was a key ally to Napoléon III as it had supported the *coup d'état* of 1851. Moreover, with its traditional endorsement of a conservative socio-hierarchical value system, it ultimately aided the Emperor to legitimise autocracy.

autocracy. Ingres' aesthetic thus made sure to remind the people of the glory of the Empire, and, of course, the governmental incentives to further pursue this direction were not to be dismissed.¹⁸⁴ To summarise the artist's politico-cultural position in the words of art historian Andrew Carrington Shelton:

Ingres considered himself a perpetuator, not an innovator—one who saw as his principal obligation the maintenance of the great classical tradition that ran from Phidias through Raphael to Poussin and David. 'What do these so-called artists mean who preach the discovery of the "new"? ["l'avènement du neuf"] Is there anything new?' the painter at one point wondered. 'Everything has been accomplished; everything has been found. Our task is not to invent but to continue.' Of course, Ingres was by no means alone in holding such opinions; self-effacing subjugation to select 'Old Master' precedent had long constituted a core component of academic orthodoxy. As this tradition came increasingly under attack, the artist's unwavering adherence to its most basic tenets of retrospection and idealisation earned him tremendous official and institutional clout. By the time of his death in January 1867, *Monsieur Ingres, Membre de l'Institut, Sénateur, Grand Officier de la Légion d'honneur*, was the most decorated artist of his age.¹⁸⁵

Upon Ingres' death in 1867, then, his eulogy by Léon Lagrange emphasises not merely the artist's politico-cultural position, but also the 'inextricably interwoven' nature of politics and aesthetics to which Rancière refers with the distribution of the sensible:

¹⁸⁴ As was already mentioned above, Ingres had stopped exhibiting publicly after his *Le Martyre de Saint Symphorien* was badly received at the Salon in 1834 (see Figure 1). The artist had thus to be persuaded by the government to take part in the 1855 Universal Exposition. Mainardi lists the absurdly high demands the artist had in order to comply with the regime's request for his attendance. All of them were granted including a minimum of thirty pictures, arranged by Ingres himself in a 'private room or the far end of a gallery separated in some way according to the general layout of the locale'. The high priority of his presence at the event could thus not be much more obvious. See Mainardi, *Art and Politics of the Second Empire*, p. 51.

¹⁸⁵ I am aware that this is a traditional art historical perspective on Ingres. It is important to note, however, that more recent studies make the artist a subject of Modernist and post-Modernist studies. Shelton's book is one example of such an attempt. See Andrew Carrington Shelton, *Ingres and His Critics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 9. Another is Adrian Rifkin's *Ingres Then, and Now* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005), Kindle eBook.

La nouvelle année s'ouvre sous de tristes auspices. Un grand deuil vient de frapper l'École française. A quelque nuance d'opinion qu'on appartienne, il est impossible de ne pas reconnaître qu'en perdant M. Ingres les Beaux-Arts ont fait une perte irréparable. L'homme qui pendant soixante-six ans a vaillamment tenu le pinceau n'aurait peut-être pas ajouté un chef-d'œuvre de plus à ceux dont il a doté la France. Mais sa présence parmi nous était une garantie, sa vie une sauvegarde. Champion muet des principes du Beau, il n'enseignait plus, il ne prêchait pas, il n'écrivait pas, il avait cessé d'exposer. Mais il vivait, et c'était assez pour imposer le respect, pour ralentir le torrent, pour conjurer bien des tempêtes. Sa mort brise le dernier lien de pudeur qui retenait l'anarchie.¹⁸⁶

The key term of the passage is 'anarchie'.¹⁸⁷ While the direct conceptual link addresses aesthetic production, it remains a political term transmitting a highly political message: the more we, the French nation, 'progress', and the more we tear down the barricades ('lien de pudeur') protecting the value systems and beliefs of the past from a decadent and faithless future, the more we shall drown in political chaos and eventually anarchy. One has to read this message through the eyes of the nineteenth century *Monsieur* and *Madame Tout-le-monde*. Since 1789, France had been a bitter *potpourri* of terror, counter-terror, and regime change. Economic stability and social security were ideas with which a majority of the population and in particular Parisians, could not very well identify. Anarchy, says the message, whether aesthetic or political, would be the inevitable consequence of the ongoing deterioration of conservative values and beliefs. Moreover, in the political sphere, it meant the absence of socio-economic guidance. The bourgeoisie, France's true yet infant ruling elite for most of the century, was only in the process of realising the political magnitude of its socio-economic standing. It was not yet ready to exert power outside of the economic sphere. Napoleon III, on the other hand, knew very well how to exploit a nation weakened by decades of political, social, and economic turmoil, drawing mainly on the national pride that had been branded onto the historical memory of his uncle, Napoleon I.¹⁸⁸ He did so with such cunning political

¹⁸⁶ Léon Lagrange, 'Bulletin mensuel. La Mort de M. Ingres', *Gazette des beaux-arts* (1 February 1867), 206–08.

¹⁸⁷ For a broader perspective on the concept of anarchy in a French cultural-historical context, see also Richard David Sohn, *Sex, Violence, and the Avant-Garde: Anarchism in Interwar France* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010).

¹⁸⁸ Throughout the century, the Napoleonic cult had been kept alive. In 1836, the *Arc de Triomphe* had been completed, celebrating the achievements of the imperial armies. In 1840, the remains of Napoléon I were brought

competence, in fact, that he was not only *elected* President in 1848, but successfully reestablished the Empire by means of popular referendum: a technique he would apply frequently during the first decade of his reign, allowing him to appear as autocrat elect, while diverting attention from the fact that ultimately all executive as well as legislative powers were solely in his hand.

With the death of Ingres, then, there was also the death of an aesthetic as well as political era. But Ingres did not embody a form of omnipresent aesthetic doctrine to which all other artists had to oblige. The bourgeoisie had created market demand for smaller, more decorative genre-paintings and portraits. This was the true aesthetic of the Second Empire, the aesthetic of the public: affordable, practical, perhaps neutral, or, indeed, down-to-earth, with particular focus on themes of greater public interest.¹⁸⁹ Helen Abbott, who has written extensively on Baudelairean aesthetics with regards to the concept of voice, points out that throughout the century novelists (and poets) ‘were beginning to explore the possibility of “reproducing” the voice of “le peuple”’. Zola began to experiment with this idea in *L’Assommoir* in particular, and the Goncourt brothers endeavoured to convey particular qualities of the working-class voice in their work by using non-standard French.¹⁹⁰ It is precisely this idea of an ‘aesthetic of the public’, as opposed to an ‘aesthetic of the Empire’, which will eventually lead us away from Second Empire aesthetics and towards Baudelairean aesthetics, though, not quite yet Baudelairean poetics. In order to enact that shift, one must, of course, have a closer look at Delacroix alongside Ingres.

from Saint Helena to their final resting place in the *Invalides*, a procession witnessed by vast crowds of spectators. Moreover, the Emperor’s ‘legend’ was diffused by veterans of the imperial armies as well as manufactured by printers, publishers, and producers of commemorative objects.

¹⁸⁹ In terms of art criticism, it is interesting to note, here, that already in Baudelaire, Ingres was, in fact, praised for his portraits, while the many odd particularities of his grand-scale history and religious paintings (ranging from disproportionate body parts to subtler breaks with the academic tradition) are partly the reason for his reconsideration as a precursor to Modernism.

¹⁹⁰ Helen Abbott, *Between Baudelaire and Mallarmé: Voice, Conversation, and Music* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 12.

Situating Delacroix accurately in the socio-political canon of ‘his generation’ is not an easy task.¹⁹¹ Politically speaking, Delacroix felt drawn in by the Napoleonic cult all of his life; his father had been a Napoleonic prefect, one of his brothers a general. To put in Allan Spitzer’s words: ‘The fall of the Empire was certainly traumatic for the Delacroix family’ (9). Nonetheless, Spitzer explains:

Before his breakthrough in the Salon of 1822, Delacroix would enlist his talent in the opposition to the Bourbon regime. His sixteen political cartoons (1814–1822) caricaturing the British, the émigré nobility, and the Church more or less obliquely expressed his political views.¹⁹² (12)

While Delacroix tends to be ‘reckoned a Bonapartist *tout court* in the light of his family antecedents’ (12; Spitzer’s emphasis), it is this early political opposition that subsequently led critics to apply more nuanced descriptions such as ‘Liberal-Bonapartist’ (Athanassoglou-Kallmyer) or ‘Revolutionary-Bonapartist’ (Alexander).¹⁹³ Be that as it may, the often cited journal entry from 11 May 1824—‘the life of Napoleon is the epic theme of our century in all the arts’¹⁹⁴—not merely highlights Delacroix’s affiliation with the Napoleonic cult, but also explains the painter’s later involvement with high-ranking Second Empire officials. Mainardi points out that at the time of the Universal Exposition in 1855, Delacroix enjoyed ‘amicable relationships’ with Prince Napoleon, the Emperor’s cousin and president of the Universal Exposition,¹⁹⁵ Frédéric Bourgeois de Mercey (‘as Chef de la section des beaux-arts du ministère d’Etat, he was the highest ranking government art administrator’),¹⁹⁶ and the Count de Mornay, later Duke de Mornay, whom Delacroix had joined on a travel to Spain, Morocco,

¹⁹¹ This brief introduction to Delacroix follows the train of thought as provided by Alan Spitzer in ‘Delacroix in his Generation’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Delacroix*, ed. by Beth S. Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 8–25. By ‘his generation’, Spitzer refers to the generation of 1820, and, more specifically, Delacroix’s cohort of nineteenth-century aesthetic luminaries ‘bounded by the birth dates 1792 to 1803’ (p. 9). All further references will be provided in-text.

¹⁹² For an example of Delacroix’s political cartoons, see Figure 3, *Les Écrevisses à Longchamps* (1822). It depicts members of the conservative political elite—sometimes called ‘crayfish’—as ‘moving backwards’ in the metaphorical or even ideological sense of ‘into the wrong direction’.

¹⁹³ I owe these references to Spitzer. See Nina Maria Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, *Eugène Delacroix, Prints, Politics and Satire 1814–1822* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), p. xii; and R. S. Alexander, *Bonapartism and the Revolutionary Tradition in France: The Fédérés of 1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

¹⁹⁴ Eugène Delacroix, *Journal*, ed. by Hubert Wellington, trans. by Lucy Norton, 3rd edn (London: Phaidon, 2010), p. 40.

¹⁹⁵ Mainardi, *Art and Politics of the Second Empire*, p. 36.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

and Algeria in 1832, when they became ‘close friends’ (17). In 1855, Mornay would become the President of the fine arts section of the Imperial Commission and President of the International Awards Jury for the arts at the Universal Exposition.¹⁹⁷ Thanks to these personal ties, it can be assumed, Delacroix was the only artist appointed to the Imperial Commission, who had not (yet) been elected to the Institute.¹⁹⁸

But Delacroix was not only well established in the circles of the Bonapartist or conservative political elite. As a pupil of the *Lycée Impérial* and later as a student in the atelier of Pierre-Narcisse Guérin, the young Delacroix made acquaintance with a broad and varied range of individuals—artists and intellectuals—who would have a notable impact on the painter’s politics and more importantly on his aesthetics. Spitzer provides helpful guidance: ‘Membership in the various groups through which an educated *jeunesse* established its public identity constituted a nexus of personal relationships that social scientists call “a social network”’.¹⁹⁹ Regarding Delacroix’s later opposition to Ingres, then, a closer look at the painter’s ‘social network’ is key. While still at the *Lycée Impérial*, it included ‘Victor Hugo and his brothers’, ‘Godefroy Cavaignac and future paladins of republicanism’ as well as ‘the generation’s precocious poetic star Casimir Delavigne’. Later,²⁰⁰ in the atelier of Guérin, Delacroix met ‘Ary Scheffer and his brothers’, who were ‘tightly enmeshed in a network of political activists’ and also ‘connected with the Saint-Simonian circle, the young liberals at the *Globe*, the coterie around the brilliant young philosopher Victor Cousin, and the participants in the salons of Lafayette and Etienne Delécluze’ (9–10). Simply put, all of these figures with their various aesthetic and intellectual affiliations constitute, for Spitzer, Delacroix’s social network, or his *generation*.

While Spitzer diagnoses Delacroix’s social network/generation with a ‘latent conservatism’—particularly, in later years (many of them ‘had played at political conspiracy in the 1820s’, but the revolution of 1848 had a socio-collective traumatic effect)—it was precisely this cohort, who had infused the young artist’s spirit with a keen *intellectualism*,

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 52.

¹⁹⁸ The Imperial Commission was the committee in charge of organising the Second Empire Universal Expositions in 1855 and 1867.

¹⁹⁹ Spitzer, ‘Delacroix in his Generation’, p. 9.

²⁰⁰ Delacroix graduated in 1815.

which, from the very beginning, filtered into his ultimate and lifelong passion: art.²⁰¹ Indeed, it was this intellectualism that would allow him to paint, in 1830, the famous *La Liberté guidant le peuple* (see Figure 4), about which Delacroix's coeval, Jules Michelet, wrote a year later: 'After the victory, one looked for heroes and found an entire people [...] the sudden display of the tri-colour flag by the whole of France represented the unanimity of several million men.'²⁰² It was this 'aesthetic shift' (Mainardi) or 'aesthetic revolution' (Rancière), spurred by Delacroix's intellectualism and growing dominance in the world of art, that would ultimately lead away from an aesthetic of the Empire and towards an aesthetic of the public.

Ingres, however, born in 1780, grew up in the last (or penultimate) *generation* still dominated by eighteenth-century Scepticism and Materialism on the one hand, and Roman Catholic doctrines on the other. Two extremes, so to speak, which would only start to merge in later years under the aegis of Victor Cousin's eclecticism.²⁰³ Moreover, as opposed to building and frequenting a network of centre-left-wing artists and intellectuals (at the time, certainly an apt categorisation), in 1801, Ingres won the *Prix de Rome*, though, he did not actually move to Rome until 1807, due to France's poor economic condition. Essentially, however, what was served to him on a golden plate was the opportunity to travel into the very heart of aesthetic reactionism, the Italian annex to the Academy, situated at the Villa Medici in Rome.²⁰⁴

Politically speaking, then, Ingres and Delacroix were not that different: both essentially believed in socio-economic stability as a result of political autocracy—that is to say, neither was a republican. Moreover, both careers profited greatly from this political conservatism, as both were not only happy to maintain close personal relationships with government officials and administrators, but also keen to accept commissions and awards regardless of their political intent and motivation. In fact, both detested the creeping

²⁰¹ Ibid., p. 25.

²⁰² Jules Michelet, *Introduction à l'histoire universelle* (Paris: [n.pub.], 1834), p. 98, as cited and translated by Spitzer in 'Delacroix in his Generation', p. 12.

²⁰³ Eighteenth-century Materialism refers to the philosophical conception that only matter really exists. During the nineteenth century, the term became increasingly associated with growing material wealth and its impact on society, culture, economics, and politics: what we have, so far, referred to as material modernity.

²⁰⁴ The *Prix de Rome* is a scholarship for outstanding artists to move to Rome—haven of the Classical pictorial tradition—to develop their faculties over a period of three to five years. At the time Ingres received the scholarship, it was organised by the *Académie de peinture et de sculpture*, formerly *Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture*, which, in 1816, was merged with the *Académie de musique* and the *Académie d'architecture* to form the *Académie des beaux-arts*.

replacement of traditional aesthetic patronage by market demand, as it slowly rid them of opportunities for official recognition. According to Spitzer, for example, Delacroix did not merely welcome the creation of the Second Empire because of his Bonapartist roots, but, rather, because of his ‘signal distinction’ at the Universal Exposition in 1855. The artist exhibited a total of 36 works, was awarded the *Grande Médaille d’Honneur*, and was named commander of the *Légion d’Honneur*.²⁰⁵

Aesthetically speaking, however, at different stages of their adolescence and young adulthood, the impact of their respective social networks/generations made the decisive difference and a fundamental shift occurred within the distribution of the sensible. While Ingres wallowed in the depths of art history and particularly in the great tradition of the French School, Delacroix was exposed to a new, post-revolutionary spirit that would no longer tolerate an artist’s unquestioning loyalty to the aesthetic doctrines of the Academy. During his entire life, Delacroix would never travel to Italy. In the careers of both, one biographical item makes this particularly clear. At the Salon in 1824, Ingres presented his *Vœu de Louis XIII* and, to the artist’s own surprise, he was celebrated and hailed as the guardian of academic orthodoxy against Romanticism. Soon thereafter, in 1825, Ingres was elected to the Academy, the highest official honour for any painter. Conversely, Delacroix’s first candidacy for a membership took place in 1837; yet the artist, who, for Baudelaire, if suddenly removed, would break ‘la grande chaîne de l’histoire’, was not elected until 1857 upon his eighth try.²⁰⁶

At this juncture, it is time to return to Baudelaire’s antagonistic 1855 account of Second Empire aesthetics as personified by Ingres and Delacroix. For Baudelaire, Delacroix was ‘un curieux mélange de scepticisme, de politesse, de dandysme, de volonté ardente, de ruse, de despotisme, et enfin d’une espèce de bonté particulière et de tendresse modérée qui accompagne toujours le génie’.²⁰⁷ Aesthetically speaking, however, he was not simply a genius with a curious array of character traits. In 1855, at the beginning of the section on Delacroix, Baudelaire gives a spectator’s first impression upon facing Delacroix’s retrospective exhibition:

²⁰⁵ Spitzer, ‘Delacroix in his Generation’, p. 25.

²⁰⁶ Baudelaire writes at the end of his section on Delacroix in the ‘Salon de 1846’: ‘Ôtez Delacroix, la grande chaîne de l’histoire est rompue et s’écoule à terre.’ See *BOC*, II, 441. Spitzer also speaks of Delacroix’s ‘obsession with the academic *fauteuil*’ (p. 16).

²⁰⁷ ‘L’Œuvre et la vie de Delacroix’, in *BOC*, II, 756.

En face des trente-cinq tableaux de M. Delacroix, la première idée qui s’empare du spectateur est l’idée d’une vie bien remplie, d’un amour opiniâtre, incessant de l’art. Quel est le meilleur tableau? on ne saurait le trouver; le plus intéressant? on hésite. On croit découvrir par-ci par-là des échantillons de progrès; mais si de certains tableaux plus récents témoignent que certaines importantes qualités ont été poussées outrance, l’esprit impartial perçoit avec confusion que dès ses premières productions, dès sa jeunesse (*Dante et Virgile aux enfers* est de 1822), M. Delacroix fut grand. Quelquefois il a été plus délicat, quelquefois plus singulier, quelquefois plus peintre, mais toujours il a été grand.²⁰⁸

One is very tempted to mirror this paragraph with a similar one on Ingres, who, in Baudelaire’s art criticism of the Universal Exposition, is, in fact, treated prior to Delacroix. The passage in question reads as follows:

[J]e tiens à constater une impression première senti par beaucoup de personnes, et qu’elles se rappelleront inévitablement, sitôt qu’elles seront entrées dans le sanctuaire attribué aux œuvres de M. Ingres. Cette impression, difficile à caractériser, qui tient, dans des proportions inconnues, du malaise, de l’ennui et de la peur, fait penser vaguement, involontairement, aux défaillances causées par l’air raréfié, par l’atmosphère d’un laboratoire de chimie, ou par la conscience d’un milieu fantasmatique, je dirai plutôt d’un milieu qui imite le fantasmatique; d’une population automatique et qui troublerait nos sens par sa trop visible et palpable extranéité. Ce n’est plus là ce respect enfantin dont je parlais tout à l’heure, qui nous saisit devant les *Sabines*, devant le *Marat* dans sa baignoire, devant *Le Déluge*, devant le mélodramatique *Brutus*. C’est une sensation puissante, il est vrai,—pourquoi nier la puissance de M. Ingres?—mais d’un ordre inférieur, d’un ordre quasi maladif. C’est presque une sensation négative, si cela pouvait se dire.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸ ‘Exposition Universelle 1855: beaux-arts’, in *BOC*, II, 590. At the Salon in 1822, Delacroix’s *Dante et Virgile aux enfers* was critically acclaimed and subsequently purchased by the government.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 584–85. All paintings mentioned are by Jacques-Louis David except *Le Déluge*, which is by Anne-Louis Girodet, a pupil of David.

At the end of two careers,²¹⁰ Baudelaire's judgement of Ingres could not have been more damning, nor could the endorsement of Delacroix have been more elevating. Delacroix understands the nature of *le beau* ('toujours il a été grand'); Ingres, however, 'almost' does not ('presque une sensation négative'). The analytical task that remains, then, is to determine the following. How do Second Empire aesthetics, as personified by Ingres (neo-Classicism) and Delacroix (Romanticism), filter into Baudelairean aesthetics via the poet's 'conscience dans le mal' and, indeed, via Catani's ethics of vice as material modernity's primary source of aesthetic inspiration? How do Second Empire aesthetics inform Baudelaire's choice of Constantin Guys as 'le peintre, le vrai peintre qui saura arracher à la vie actuelle son côté épique, et nous faire voir et comprendre, avec de la couleur ou du dessin, combien nous sommes grands et poétiques dans nos cravates et nos bottes vernies' ('d'extraire la beauté du Mal' ['Projets de préface']; 'de tirer l'éternel du transitoire' ['Le Peintre'])?²¹¹ And, finally, how does a closer look at Baudelaire's art criticism, as regards Second Empire aesthetics, eventually lead towards a clearer understanding of what exactly I mean, when referring to a more *spleen*-bound reconception of the *Idéal* in the form of *le beau moderne*?

As Dolf Oehler shows in great detail, Baudelaire was not the type of political thinker that would condemn Ingres for the content of propagandistically motivated art. If anything, Baudelaire blamed bourgeois society for the 'suffering of the post-aristocratic period, and not least for the fact that art ha[d] gone to rack and ruin, that poets and artists like himself now belong[ed] to the *déclassés*'.²¹² Two of his most famous dedications, the ironic 'Aux Bourgeois' of his 'Salon de 1846' and the polemic 'Au Lecteur' in *Les Fleurs du Mal* make this unmistakably clear.²¹³ Nonetheless, Oehler continues,

²¹⁰ The reader should be reminded, here, that both Ingres and Delacroix put on retrospective exhibitions of their lives' œuvres at the Universal Exposition in 1855.

²¹¹ 'Salon de 1845', in *BOC*, II, 407.

²¹² Dolf Oehler, 'Baudelaire's Politics', in *The Cambridge Companion to Baudelaire*, ed. by Rosemary Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 24.

²¹³ Particularly in reference to the controversial dedication of his 'Salon de 1846', it has been argued that there are strong conceptual links between the Baudelairean œuvre and specific political ideologies such as Fourier's vision of a social utopia. I personally agree with the dominant view that Baudelaire's politics were of a different nature, addressing perpetual socio-cultural change as a consequence of the ethico-political shifts addressed, here, in this review. For an enlightening discussion of purely political readings of Baudelaire's 'Aux Bourgeois', see James A. Hiddleston, *Baudelaire and the Art of Memory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), pp. 272–81. See also Ross Chambers, 'Baudelaire's Dedicatory Practices', *Substance*, 17.2 [56] (1988), 5–17. As mentioned, previously, I shall return to the irony of Baudelaire's *dédicace* to Houssaye in the section on 'Baudelairean Poetics' in this review.

[i]t is part of Baudelaire's modernity that he reacted with extreme *sensitivity* to the political and social movements of his time and it is part of his sensitivity that he, like Flaubert, distanced himself from those clichés with which his contemporaries expressed their aspirations, viewpoints, political programmes, historical philosophy and so forth. And that remains the case even when he was sympathetic to these ideas.²¹⁴ (my emphasis)

Moreover, Oehler later concludes: 'The despair, the spleen that is expressed in so many of [Baudelaire's] poems is not simply metaphysical, but also has a completely concrete political and social basis.'²¹⁵ This distinction between a metaphysical and a concrete political basis echoes strongly in Catani's argument regarding the ethical shift from the aporia of Romanticism to urban evil. Indeed, Oehler's addition of the term 'social' only further supports this claim by making the link between politics and the ethical world of socio-collective experience (Kaplan) explicitly clear.

At this point, it seems helpful to draw a first conclusion on the complex entanglement between ethics, politics, and aesthetics during the Second Empire. Essentially, Oehler's argument posits that politics is as much intertwined with aesthetics in the sphere of aesthetic *representation* (Rancière), as it is intertwined with ethics in the sphere of aesthetic *inspiration* (Catani). In other words, in Baudelaire, the political merges as much with the ethical in the notion of *le mal*, as it merges with the aesthetic in the notion of *le beau*. Projecting this train of thought onto Second Empire aesthetics, as personified by Ingres and Delacroix, it seems that Baudelaire was less concerned with Ingres' primary source of aesthetic inspiration, as he was with the strong influence of Ingres' neo-Classicism within the sphere of Second Empire aesthetics, originating from the painter's rigid adherence to traditional aesthetic doctrine, as opposed to his close personal relationships with the Second Empire political elite. The lack of *imagination*, or lack of subjective individuality, necessary—as this study will argue—to aesthetically represent the ethical world of socio-collective experience in material modernity, triggered in Baudelaire the ethico-political *sensitivity* that Catani and Oehler attribute to the poet. Eventually, it was this sensitivity that brought Baudelaire to Delacroix, a

²¹⁴ Oehler, 'Baudelaire's Politics', p. 15.

²¹⁵ Ibid., p. 24.

sensitivity somewhat synonymous with the keen intellectualism that Spitzer associates with the painter and his social network/generation. Paul Valéry calls it Baudelaire's 'critical intelligence'.²¹⁶ While Delacroix's intellectualism was the artist's driving force in never surrendering to the doctrines of the Academy, it was Baudelaire's ethico-political sensitivity that saw in Delacroix not merely a colourist, opposed to Ingres the draughtsman, but an ethico-political thinker. Indeed, I am inclined to argue, it is this very judgement call, manifested in the form of a published art criticism, which transforms any discussion of Baudelairean aesthetics into an ethico-political discourse.

Finally, then, in a leap towards Baudelairean aesthetics in the form of *le beau moderne*, it is time to assess how the aesthetic differences between Ingres and Delacroix are manifested in the practical technicalities of their respective aesthetic methodologies. In his theory of colour, as brought forward in one of the introductory sections of the 'Salon de 1846',²¹⁷ Baudelaire vividly advertises the idea that colour is the very basis of what I refer to, for now, as 'aesthetic movement'; at the time, perhaps, he did so without realising what decisive impact these contemplations would have on his later theory of modern aesthetics, as outlined in 'Le Peintre'. Moreover, when I speak of aesthetic movement, what I have in mind is a twofold construct: a 'general' and a 'particular' movement, to use a Baudelairean concept,²¹⁸ or, once again, perhaps, a cause and a consequence. I wish to introduce my approach by citing a beautiful passage from 'De la couleur':

A mesure que l'astre du jour se dérange, les tons changent de valeur, mais, respectant toujours leurs sympathies et leurs haines naturelles, continuent à vivre en harmonie par des concessions réciproques. Les ombres se déplacent lentement, et font fuir devant celles ou éteignent les tons à mesure que la lumière, déplacée elle-même, en veut faire résonner de nouveaux. Ceux-ci se revoient leurs reflets, et, modifiant leurs qualités en les *glaçant* de qualités transparentes et empruntées,

²¹⁶ Paul Valéry, 'The Position of Baudelaire', trans. by William Aspenwall Bradley, in *Variety: Second Series* (New York, NY: HBJ, 1938) <http://supervert.com/elibrary/charles_baudelaire/the_position_of_baudelaire> [accessed 17 March 2016].

²¹⁷ 'De la couleur', in 'Salon de 1846', in *BOC*, II, 422–26.

²¹⁸ At the beginning of the opening section in 'Le Peintre', 'Le Beau, la mode et le bonheur', Baudelaire uses the terms 'general' and 'particular' to describe two forms of beauty. The general beauty of the Classical tradition and the particular beauty of *circonstance*: the 'sketch of manners' ('trait de mœurs'). The focus of 'Le Peintre', then, quickly shifts onto the latter with the subsequent section entitled 'Le Croquis de mœurs'. See *BOC*, II, 683–86 (p. 683) and 686–87.

multiplient à l’infini leurs mariages mélodieux et les rendent plus faciles. Quand le grand foyer descend dans les eaux, de rouges fanfares s’éclatent à l’horizon, et le vert s’empourpre richement. Mais bientôt de vastes ombres bleues chassent en cadence devant elles la foule des tons orangés et rose tendre qui sont comme l’écho lointain et affaibli de la lumière. Cette grande symphonie du jour, qui est l’éternelle variation de la symphonie d’hier, cette succession de mélodies, où la variété sort toujours de l’infini, cet hymne compliqué s’appelle la couleur.²¹⁹ (Baudelaire’s emphasis)

Terms such as ‘symphony’, ‘harmony’, and ‘melody’ all strongly connote the idea of movement, seamless transition, synaesthesia, and aesthetic *éternité* (‘l’éternelle variation de la symphonie d’hier’, ‘la variété sort toujours de l’infini’).²²⁰ Nothing is fixed, everything is fluid. *le beau* may only emerge from this complementary contradiction of tones. Moreover, the entire terminology is effectively taken from music. Abbott argues that ‘[m]usic has the advantageous property of being able to communicate and create a resonance even though, its voices may be incomprehensible, foreign, strange, or abstract’.²²¹ Just as the various different instruments, the different ‘voices’ of a score unite into comprehension (‘symphony’, ‘harmony’, ‘melody’), so, too, do the colours, the different ‘tones’ within a painting.²²²

²¹⁹ ‘De la couleur’, in ‘Salon de 1846’, in *BOC*, II, 423.

²²⁰ The concept of aesthetic *éternité* will occur frequently throughout this study. It links directly to the paradox contained in Baudelaire’s definition of modernity in ‘Le Peintre’, already referred to at the beginning of this review with regards to Meltzer and Compagnon. To remind the reader, within only a few lines, Baudelaire suggests, firstly, that modernity means to extract the poetic from history, the eternal from the transitory, and, secondly, that modernity is itself the transitory, the fugitive, and the contingent. Chapter 4 will demonstrate how exactly the transitory is transformed into the eternal, or, indeed, how the instant is transformed into aesthetic *éternité*.

²²¹ Abbott, *Between Baudelaire and Mallarmé: Voice, Conversation, and Music*, p. 9.

²²² I am aware of the scepticism regarding musical terminology in literary criticism, as expressed, for example, in Steven Paul Scheer’s well-known ‘How Meaningful is “Musical” in Literary Criticism’, in *Word and Music Studies: Essays on Literature and Music (1967–2004)*, ed. by Walter Bernhart and Werner Wolf (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004). While, of course, one should take care, when applying and merging terminology from various disciplines, here, I merely pick up vocabulary, as provided by Baudelaire, and project it onto my analysis. Moreover, in his essay on ‘Richard Wagner et Tannhäuser à Paris’, Baudelaire himself interlinks poetical and musical qualities. For example, he states: ‘En effet, sans poésie, la musique de Wagner serait encore une œuvre poétique, étant douée de toutes les qualités qui constituent une poésie bien faite; explicative par elle-même, tant toutes choses y sont bien unies, conjointes, réciproquement adaptées, et, s’il est permis de faire un barbarisme pour exprimer le superlatif d’une qualité, prudemment *concaténées*’ (Baudelaire’s emphasis). See *BOC*, II, 779–815 (p. 803). Such a statement is mirrored in the synaesthetic qualities often associated with Baudelaire’s *le beau moderne*, commonly also referred to as his ‘aesthetics of *correspondances*’. How exactly the notion of ‘explicative par elle-même’ functions in painting (as opposed to poetry and music) will be addressed momentarily. On the connections between poetry and music, see also David Evans, ‘État Présent: Word and Music Studies: The

For Baudelaire (as well as for Abbott), this coherence transcends the confines of an artwork, whether musical or pictorial, to include the listener or spectator. As regards Delacroix, for example, Baudelaire writes in 1855:

[I]l faut remarquer, et c'est très important, que, *vu à une distance trop grande pour analyser ou même comprendre le sujet*, un tableau de Delacroix a déjà produit sur l'âme une impression riche, heureuse ou mélancolique. *On dirait que cette peinture*, comme les sorciers et les magnétiseurs, *projette sa pensée à distance*. Ce singulier phénomène tient à la puissance du coloriste, à l'accord parfait des tons, et à l'harmonie (préétablie dans le cerveau du peintre) entre la couleur et le sujet. *Il semble que cette couleur*, qu'on me pardonne ces subterfuges de langage pour exprimer des idées fort délicates, *pense par elle-même*, indépendamment des objets qu'elle habille. Puis ces admirables accords de sa couleur font souvent rêver d'harmonie et de mélodie, et l'impression qu'on emporte de ses tableaux est souvent quasi musicale.²²³ (my emphasis)

Baudelaire, once more, emphasises the musical qualities of colour ('harmonie', 'mélodie') to the extent that it is completely self-sufficient ('pense par elle-même'). In the context of Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, the critic also writes that poetry, like music, must be 'explicative par elle-même'²²⁴—transcending an artwork to draw in the spectator ('cette peinture [...] projette sa pensée à distance').²²⁵ Finally, Baudelaire makes clear that for the colourist, as opposed to the draughtsman, a clearly discernible subject is only of secondary importance: the ultimate aesthetic goal, however, must be the representation of the subject's intimate sensory and

Nineteenth Century', *French Studies*, 63.4, 443–52; and Helen Abbott, 'Editorial: Poetry, Performance, Music in Nineteenth Century France', *Dix-Neuf*, 17.1 (April 2013), 1–8.

²²³ 'Eugène Delacroix', in 'Exposition universelle 1855: beaux-arts', in *BOC*, II, 590–97 (pp. 594–95).

²²⁴ 'Richard Wagner et Tannhäuser à Paris', in *BOC*, II, 803.

²²⁵ In this very spirit, referring to *le beau moderne* of previous epochs in history—that is, of epochs preceding the nineteenth century and Second Empire material modernity, specifically—Baudelaire later writes in 'Le Peintre': 'L'imagination du spectateur peut encore aujourd'hui faire marcher et frémir cette *tunique* et ce *schall*' (Baudelaire's emphasis), thus highlighting that every epoch has its very own modernity and that 'modern aesthetics' essentially only means to transform the transitory, the fugitive, and the contingent of any given epoch into aesthetic *éternité*. See 'Le Beau, la mode et le bonheur', in 'Le Peintre', in *BOC*, II, 684. I owe this reference to Sonya Stephens, 'Esquisse d'Incomplétude: Baudelaire, Guys and Modern Beauty', *Neophilologus*, 89 (2005), 527–38 (p. 533). In the context of Idealist epistemology, the question of how exactly the transitory, the fugitive, and the contingent is transformed into aesthetic *éternité* will be addressed most explicitly in chapters 3 and 4.

emotional dynamic—or dialectic, as we shall see in the chapters to come²²⁶—with the situation in which it is depicted.²²⁷

At this point, one must return to the idea of colour enabling aesthetic *movement*. Baudelaire's theory of colour is essentially about projecting sensations and emotions onto the spectator—a scenario only made possible by the symphonic, harmonic, melodic coherence within and beyond the painting, established by the use of colour as the most suitable aesthetic methodology. But how does this theory stand in relation to the draughtsmanship characterising neo-Classicism? In other words, if the key aesthetic quality of Delacroix's Romanticism is to project sensations and emotions over distance, what key aesthetic quality in neo-Classicism allows for a clearly discernible subject? Baudelaire writes on this topic:

La qualité d'un pur dessinateur consiste surtout dans la finesse, et cette finesse exclut la touche: or il y a des touches heureuses, et le coloriste chargé d'exprimer la nature par la couleur perdrait souvent plus à supprimer des touches heureuses qu'à rechercher une plus grande austérité de dessin.

La couleur n'exclut certainement pas le grand dessin, celui de Véronèse, par exemple, qui procède surtout par l'ensemble et les masses; mais bien le dessin du détail, le contour du petit morceau, où la touche mangera toujours la ligne.²²⁸

The crux of the matter is essentially a shift away from an 'aesthetic of rigid lines' (neo-Classicism) towards an 'aesthetic of lines blurred by colour' (Romanticism): lines that would allow for *movement* between the tones of a painting. Baudelaire calls it 'la ligne brisée', when arguing in the 1846 'Salon' that aesthetic Idealism 'est une bêtise' because in nature 'il n'y a pas de circonférence parfaite'.²²⁹ Both form and colour thus need to merge, intimately, in order

²²⁶ See in particular chapter 4.

²²⁷ The reader should also be reminded of Poe's statement in 'The Philosophy of Composition' that 'the death of a beautiful woman is unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world', in *The Complete Poems and Stories*, ed. by Edward H. O'Neill, 2 vols (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), II, 978–87 (p. 982).

²²⁸ 'De la couleur', in 'Salon de 1846', in *BOC*, II, 426.

²²⁹ 'De l'idéal et du modèle', in 'Salon de 1846', in *BOC*, II, 454–58 (p. 455). We are approaching the section on 'Baudelairean Aesthetics' in this review, where questions regarding 'aesthetic inspiration' and 'aesthetic production' will be discussed in greater detail and with specific focus on Baudelaire (as opposed to Delacroix and Ingres). At this point, however, it should be noted that it can be difficult to address 'nature', explicitly, as an aesthetic

to produce the sensations and emotions—the ‘impression riche’—that allow for the spectator to become absorbed by a Delacroix painting.²³⁰

The important influence of Baudelaire’s theory of colour on the aesthetic doctrines that have since governed the evolution of Modernism becomes, once again, particularly clear in the direct comparison between Ingres and Delacroix almost a decade later.²³¹ And it is here, too, that for the first time the idea of *la ligne brisée*—that *particular* movement within a painting—becomes specifically relevant for the aesthetic representation of some of material modernity’s most prominent characteristics: crowds, tumult, and overall *furor*.²³² In 1855, the only two Delacroix paintings Baudelaire describes in some detail (‘la critique doit chercher plutôt à pénétrer intimement le tempérament de chaque artiste et les mobiles qui le font agir qu’à analyser, à raconter chaque œuvre minutieusement’²³³) are *La Justice de Trajan* (1840; see Figure 5) and *Entrée des croisés à Constantinople* (1840; see Figure 6). With regards to the former, Baudelaire offers the following praise:

La Justice de Trajan est un tableau si prodigieusement lumineux, si aéré, si rempli de tumulte et de pompe! L’empereur est si beau, la foule, tortillée autour des colonnes ou circulant avec le cortège, si tumultueuse, la veuve éplorée, si dramatique!²³⁴

inspiration in Baudelaire. The poet despises the attempts to ‘copy nature’ (see ‘La Reine des facultés’, in ‘Salon de 1859’, in *BOC*, II, 619–23), so inherent to aesthetico-Idealist doctrine as well as photography—for Baudelaire, perhaps, the most extreme form of aesthetic Idealism. In this context, Baudelaire famously cites Delacroix: ‘La nature n’est qu’un dictionnaire’ (for example, in ‘L’Œuvre et la vie d’Eugène Delacroix’, in *BOC*, II, 742–72 [p.747]). Nonetheless, Felix Leaky has shown that Baudelaire’s engagement with nature as an aesthetic inspiration is far more nuanced than that. See F. W. Leakey, *Baudelaire and Nature* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1969).

²³⁰ Meltzer would later argue that the methodological principles governing the aesthetic of lines blurred by colour acted as ‘material manifestations for [Baudelaire’s] own mental architecture’. See Meltzer, *Seeing Double*, p. 78.

²³¹ ‘De l’idéal et du modèle’, in ‘Salon de 1846’, in *BOC*, II, 425.

²³² I refer exclusively to paintings, here, for the sake of coherence. It should be noted, however, that the same is true for all of aesthetic production in material modernity. Addressing sculptures in his ‘Salon de 1859’, for example, Baudelaire writes: ‘De même que la poésie lyrique ennoblit tout, même la passion, la sculpture, la vraie, solennise tout, même le mouvement’. See ‘Sculpture’, in ‘Salon de 1859’, in *BOC*, II, 669–80 (p. 671). I owe this reference to Ross Chambers, ‘Modern Beauty: Baudelaire, the Everyday, Cultural Studies’, *Romance Studies*, 26.3 (July 2008), 249–70 (p. 256). In this very context, interestingly, Chambers also addresses *le mal*: ‘The reader of a poem must be led to *take a step* comparable to the movement that brings the statue’s dimensionality into view, and in doing so come to perceive the fixity of ‘la vie universelle’—the inescapable presence of “le Mal”—that the solemn stillness of the stone ghost, enforcing movement on the viewer’s part, symbolizes’ (257; Chambers’ emphasis).

²³³ ‘Ingres’, in ‘Exposition universelle 1855: beaux-arts’, in *BOC*, II, 583–90 (p.583).

²³⁴ ‘Eugène Delacroix’, in ‘Exposition universelle 1855: beaux-arts’, in *BOC*, II, 592.

And, then, with regards to the latter:

[L]e tableau des *Croisés* est si profondément pénétrant, abstraction faite du sujet, par son harmonie orageuse et lugubre! Quel ciel et quelle mer! Tout y est tumultueux et tranquille, comme la suite d'un grand événement. La ville, échelonnée derrière les *Croisés* qui viennent de la traverser, s'allonge avec une prestigieuse vérité. Et toujours ces drapeaux miroitants, ondoyants, faisant se dérouler et claquer leurs plis lumineux dans l'atmosphère transparente! Toujours la foule agissante, inquiète, le tumulte des armes, la pompe des vêtements, la vérité emphatique du geste dans les grandes *circonstances* de la vie!²³⁵ (my emphasis)

One would almost not be surprised if in the midst of this spectacle the *croisés* would attempt to communicate with a beautiful *passante*.²³⁶ Be that as it may, in both accounts, the strong focus lies on the painting's aesthetic representation of sensations and emotions as well as the spectator's perception of movement. As we know, the technical precision and clarity, as regards the painting's subject—the emperor in *Justice*, the crusaders in *Croisés*—is only of secondary importance. What truly counts is the depiction not of the subject itself, but of the situation in which the subject is immersed. Projected over distance ('cette peinture [...] projette sa pensée à distance'), eventually, this allows for the spectator to become immersed as well, and to experience the sensations and emotions that the depicted situation might have triggered, had the spectator been present themselves. What counts is for the spectator to become part of the crowd.

In comparison, the judgement cast upon Ingres is not quite as damning as Baudelaire's initial impression of his exhibition ('presque une sensation négative') would have led one to believe. After all, Baudelaire did believe in Ingres' talent as an artist. But he missed that crucial component, which Delacroix seemed to display in excess: the ability to ground

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ The sonnet, 'A une passante', has become a prime example of what will be referred to as Baudelaire's attempt at 'seizing the instant' within his poetics of the 'here and now': a form of poetics, specifically engaging with the *rapidité* of material modernity and, indeed, addressing the difficulty, if not impossibility, of 'communication' as a consequence of modern human existence. At one point or another, 'A une passante' features in most studies on Baudelairean modernity and often provides the source material for extensive close readings. I shall return to the sonnet directly in the section on 'Idealist Epistemology in "A une passante"' in chapter 4. I shall also address the issue of communication in material modernity in the section on 'Exchange, Communication, the Blasé (and the Dandy)' in chapter 5.

himself in the situations he aimed to capture on canvas. Towards the end of the section on Ingres, Baudelaire thus writes:

D'après tout ce qui précède, on comprendra facilement que M. Ingres peut être considéré comme un homme doué de hautes qualités, un amateur éloquent de la beauté, mais dénué de ce tempérament énergique qui fait la fatalité du génie. Ses préoccupations dominantes sont le goût de l'antique et le respect de l'école. Il a, en somme, l'admiration assez facile, le caractère assez éclectique, comme tous les hommes qui manquent de fatalité. Aussi le voyons-nous errer d'archaïsme en archaïsme; Titien (*Pie VII tenant chapelle*), les émailleurs de la Renaissance (*Vénus Anadyomène*), Poussin et Carrache (*Vénus et Antiope*), Raphaël (*Saint Symphorien* [see Figure 1]), les primitifs Allemands (tous les petits tableaux du genre imagier et anecdotique), les curiosités et le bariolage persan et chinois (la petite *Odalisque*), se disputent ses préférences. L'amour et l'influence de l'antiquité se sentent partout, mais M. Ingres me paraît souvent être à l'antiquité ce que le bon ton, dans ses caprices transitoires, est aux bonnes manières naturelles qui viennent de la dignité et de la charité de l'individu.²³⁷

I must reiterate, here, once more, that the subject matter of Ingres' choosing (for example, various themes from antiquity) is, in fact, not a crucial concern for Baudelaire. Sure, Ingres' preoccupation with these and similar themes eradicated his chance of ever being selected as the first and foremost painter of modern life, but that is not the issue. As Baudelaire demonstrates with the long list of Ingres' aesthetic antecedents, the friction between both is predominantly caused by latter's aesthetic methodology of 'copying' from others—not by plagiarising their œuvre—but by following the aesthetic of rigid lines in order to stay true to the 'select "Old Master" precedent' (Carrington Shelton). As a result, Ingres never actually grounds himself in the situations he aims to capture on canvas—Ingres never tries to aesthetically represent and project over distance its sensations and emotions, its dynamic, its *movement*—not realising that it is precisely this aesthetic faculty, which made the aspirations of his predecessors so distinguished. Delacroix, on the other hand, has this ability refined to perfection. Manifested in the aesthetic of lines blurred by colour, the rich movement that

²³⁷ 'Ingres', in 'Exposition universelle 1855: beaux-arts', in *BOC*, II, 588.

characterises his paintings would eventually become the very hallmark of modern aesthetics, guiding art history from Ingres' neo-Classicism to the post-Impressionist era of the twentieth century. This is the secondary definition of what I call aesthetic *movement*: the *general* movement of its historical progression. In Baudelaire's 'Exposition universelle 1855: beaux arts', a brief yet telling statement appearing shortly after the critic's first impression of Delacroix's exhibition ('toujours il a été grand') tentatively acknowledges the painter's seminal role in the establishment and cultivation of Romanticism as a precursor to Modernism. Baudelaire writes: 'M. Delacroix a traité tous les genres; son *imagination* et son savoir se sont promenés dans toutes les parties du domaine pittoresque' (my emphasis).²³⁸ And, once again, it seems, Baudelaire is purposefully juxtaposing the accounts of Ingres and Delacroix. As regards the former, Baudelaire's first impression ('presque une sensation négative') is followed up: 'Plus d'*imagination*, partant plus de *mouvement*' (my emphasis).²³⁹ On the concept of Baudelairean *imagination*, Margaret Gilman would later write:

The vocabulary, like the whole method, is experimental; a word, a set of words, is tried, found adequate for the moment (at times almost made so, it seems), but with a new experience a new set of words comes into play. The most striking example is, I think, the way in which Baudelaire, from the beginning of his criticism, is feeling for the inclusive word that will crystallize his entire thought; he tries *originalité*, *naïveté*, *idéal*, *correspondances*, which, with his conceptions of beauty and of art, are gradually absorbed into the quintessential and all-embracing *imagination*.²⁴⁰ (Gilman's emphasis)

²³⁸ 'Eugène Delacroix', in 'Exposition universelle 1855: beaux-arts', in *BOC*, II, 591.

²³⁹ 'Ingres', in 'Exposition universelle 1855: beaux-arts', in *BOC*, II, 585.

²⁴⁰ To my knowledge, Gilman is the only scholar to have published a full-length study addressing Baudelaire's critical corpus in its entirety. Margaret Gilman, *Baudelaire the Critic* (New York, NY: Octagon Books, 1971), pp. 224–25.

Le Beau moderne: Correspondances, Déchéance, 'Baudelairean Aesthetics'

*Le beau est toujours bizarre.*²⁴¹

*Le Beau est toujours étonnant.*²⁴²

*[L]e beau est toujours [...] d'une composition double.*²⁴³

At this point, it is time to shift scrutiny from Second Empire aesthetics, as personified by Ingres and Delacroix, to Baudelairean aesthetics: the poet's conception of *le beau* as dualistic ('*le beau est toujours [...] d'une composition double*') as well as the aesthetic shift from *le beau* to *le beau moderne*,²⁴⁴ a more *spleen*-bound reconception of the *Idéal*. When addressing the concept of beauty in the Baudelairean œuvre, two of the verse poems in the 'Spleen et Idéal' cycle of *Les Fleurs du Mal* stand out immediately: 'La Beauté' (1857) and 'Hymne à la beauté' (1860).²⁴⁵ Most intriguing, however, is how they seem to address or mirror Ingres' neo-Classical and Delacroix's Romantic beauty, respectively. 'La Beauté', then, reads very similarly to Baudelaire's 1855 account of Ingres' retrospection on his life's œuvre, while 'Hymne à la beauté' seems to be doing the same for Delacroix. 'La Beauté' in full:

Je suis belle, ô mortels! comme un rêve de pierre,
Et mon sein, où chacun s'est meurtri tour à tour,
Est fait pour inspirer au poète un amour
Éternel et muet ainsi que la matière.

²⁴¹ 'Méthode de critique. De l'idée moderne du progrès appliquée aux beaux-arts. Déplacement de la vitalité', in 'Exposition Universelle 1855: beaux-arts', in *BOC*, II, 575–83 (p. 578).

²⁴² 'Le Public moderne et la photographie', in 'Salon de 1859', in *BOC*, II, 614–19 (p. 616).

²⁴³ 'Le Beau, la mode et le bonheur', in 'Le Peintre', in *BOC*, II, 685.

²⁴⁴ Scholarship tends to direct the reader to the 'Salon de 1846' (in particular the final section on 'De l'héroïsme de la vie moderne') as well as to 'Le Peintre' as the key primary sources on Baudelaire's *le beau moderne*. For the former, see *BOC*, II, 415–96 (in particular pp. 493–96); for the latter, see *BOC*, II, 683–724. Additionally, in the 'Salon de 1846', I suggest the section on 'Qu'est-ce que le Romantisme?', where Baudelaire writes, inter alia: 'Qui dit romantisme dit art moderne,—c'est-à-dire intimité, spiritualité, couleur, aspiration vers l'infini, exprimées par tous les moyens que contiennent les arts.' See *BOC*, II, 420–22 (p. 421). The preceding section on 'A quoi bon la critique?' is also helpful and applies the later principles of modern aesthetic production to the practice of art criticism. See *BOC*, II, 417–19. Finally, Baudelaire's 'Salon de 1859' is always helpful, and in the context of *le beau moderne*, the four opening sections on 'L'Artiste moderne', 'Le Public moderne et la photographie', 'La Reine des facultés' as well as 'Le Gouvernement de l'imagination' are particularly important. See *BOC*, II, 608–82 (in particular pp. 608–28).

²⁴⁵ 'La Beauté' and 'Hymne à la beauté', in *Les Fleurs du Mal*, in *BOC*, I, 21 and 24–25.

Je trône dans l'azur comme un sphinx incompris;
J'unis un cœur de neige à la blancheur des cygnes;
Je hais le mouvement qui déplace les lignes,
Et jamais je ne pleure et jamais je ne ris.

Les poètes, devant mes grandes attitudes,
Que j'ai l'air d'emprunter aux plus fiers monuments,
Consumeront leurs jours en d'austères études;

Car j'ai, pour fasciner ces dociles amants,
De purs miroirs qui font toutes choses plus belles:
Mes yeux, mes larges yeux aux clartés éternelles!

What one encounters in the sonnet is Ingres' neo-Classical beauty—the aesthetic of the Empire and rigid lines—from a poetic, as opposed to art critical perspective. Beauty, here, is still presented as divine/ideal beauty: as the *Idéal*. The first line makes this explicit by introducing beauty as a form of self-conscious deity, existing in opposition to *spleen*, or the ugly, secular existence of 'ô mortels'.²⁴⁶ This also connotes that some form of transcendence has to occur between the realms of *spleen* and *Idéal*: a requirement, of course, only the modern artist is able to meet.

For Baudelaire, specifically, it takes the modern artist's two key faculties to build this aesthetico-transcendental bridge: memory and *imagination*.²⁴⁷ For the poet, aesthetic

²⁴⁶ It may be worth reminding the reader of Jonathan Culler's definition of the term 'spleen' as referring to 'a state of depression or youthful world-weariness, marked by a sense of the oppressiveness of life'. Jonathan Culler, 'Introduction', in Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, trans. by James McGowan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. xi–xxxvii (p. xvii). Moreover, chapter 5 and in particular the section 'Society and Existence from the Viewpoint of Death' will argue that the concept of the blasé, in Baudelaire, essentially translates into the socio-collective predicament of *spleen* and ennui.

²⁴⁷ The importance of the term 'imagination' in Baudelaire has already been hinted at in chapter 1, and, in reference to Gilman's scholarship on *Baudelaire the Critic*, the concept behind the term has been introduced, tentatively, at the very end of the preceding section on 'Second Empire Aesthetics' in this review. In the context of Idealist epistemology, both memory as well as *imagination* will be explored in greater detail throughout chapter 4, but particularly in the section on 'Photography, Memory, Imagination (and Happiness)'. On the crucial function of memory in Baudelairean aesthetics, see also J. A. Hiddleston, *Baudelaire and the Art of Memory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1999) and in particular the opening chapter, 'In Search of an Aesthetic', pp. 1–49.

production is an elitist task.²⁴⁸ At several occasions in the Baudelairean œuvre, the notion of elitism, as regards aesthetic production, is addressed by the modern artist's metaphorical *escrime* with nature. Most famously, then, in the verse poem 'Le Soleil' of the 'Tableaux parisiens' cycle,²⁴⁹ Baudelaire's speaker describes his flânerie as follows:

Quand le soleil cruel frappe à trait redoublés
Sur la ville et les champs, sur les toits et les blés,
Je vais m'exercer seul à ma fantasque escrime,
Flairant dans tous les coins les hasards de la rime. (ll. 3–6)

For the modern artist, flânerie is a constant 'fantasque escrime', where the aesthetic duel for the extraction of *le beau* from *le mal* may be waiting around each and every corner. As we shall see, this is, metaphorically speaking, a dangerous situation to be in, for the modern artist is likely to lose the *escrime* ('Flairant dans tous les coins les hasards de la rime'). With a nod towards the transitory, the fugitive, and the contingent in material modernity, Baudelaire expresses a similar concern, when writing in 'Le Peintre':

Maintenant, à l'heure où les autres dorment, celui-ci [le peintre de la circonstance/vie moderne] est penché sur sa table, dardant sur une feuille de papier le même regard qu'il attachait tout à l'heure sur les choses, *s'escrimant* avec son crayon, sa plume, son pinceau, faisant jaillir l'eau du verre au plafond, essuyant sa plume sur sa chemise, pressé, voilent, actif, comme s'il craignait que les images ne lui échappent, querelleur quoique seul, et se bousculant lui-même.²⁵⁰ (my emphasis)

Also in 1857, Baudelaire writes with reference to Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and the decline of public interest, as regards aesthetic production, or, perhaps, aesthetic quality ('Depuis plusieurs années, la part d'intérêt que le public accorde aux choses spirituelles était singulièrement diminuée'). Here, Baudelaire speaks of 'une forte escrime',²⁵¹ while four years earlier, in 1853, the poet addresses the *l'Art pour l'Art* doctrine of the *École païenne* and

²⁴⁸ The notion of 'elitism' in its opposition to 'collectivism' will be further addressed throughout chapter 4.

²⁴⁹ 'Le Soleil', in *Les Fleurs du Mal*, in *BOC*, I, 83. The poem was part of the 'Spleen et Idéal' cycle in 1857.

²⁵⁰ 'L'Artiste, Homme du monde, home des foules et enfant', in 'Le Peintre', in *BOC*, II, 693.

²⁵¹ 'Madame Bovary par Gustave Flaubert', in *BOC*, II, 76–86 (pp. 79–80).

laments about ‘une escrime dans le vide’.²⁵² Finally, while *escrime* is not referred to, specifically, the aforementioned epithet of the prose poem ‘Le *Confiteor* de l’artiste’ simply suggests that the modern artist’s duel with beauty always ends in defeat and that *le beau* can never truly be extracted from *le mal*: ‘[l]’étude du beau est un duel où l’artiste crie de frayeur avant d’être vaincu’.²⁵³

Let us briefly reflect on the train of thought so far presented. The first line of the sonnet ‘La Beauté’ already suggests that beauty, here, is deified—the *Idéal*—and thus exists in opposition to *spleen*. Bridging this transcendental gap means aesthetic production—the *escrime*—a difficult if not impossible undertaking for Baudelaire. It is most certainly an elitist task to be attempted only by those who have the modern artist’s two key faculties—memory and *imagination*—refined to perfection. The difficulty that Baudelaire associates with aesthetic production, however, is twofold; and it is here, too, that we must distinguish rather carefully between what I mean by *le beau* and *le beau moderne*. On the one hand, Baudelaire is not entirely an admirer of the type of divine/ideal beauty that I have, so far, associated not merely with the *Idéal*, but also with Poe’s neo-Platonism, Ingres’ neo-Classicism, and all which embraces the aesthetic of the Empire and rigid lines. In this context, the difficulty of aesthetic production turns into an impossibility because the artist’s reach for the *Idéal* as a form of aesthetic Idealism can never truly be realised. On the other hand, Baudelaire firmly believes in the function and value of aesthetic production and, indeed, in its nature as an elitist task. The extraction of *le beau* from *le mal* may always remain a difficult undertaking, but it is far from impossible and certainly not synonymous with the aesthetic reach for divine/ideal beauty. At this juncture, *le beau moderne* comes into play: a Baudelairean reconception of *le beau* and as such of the *Idéal* itself.

Valéry, who essentially reads Baudelaire as either a Romantic or a Classicist, points to this crucial distinction between *le beau* and *le beau moderne* with the following:

Baudelaire, in the midst of romanticism, reminds us of a classic, but he merely reminds and nothing more. He died young, and he moreover lived under the execrable impression given to men of his time by the *miserable survival of the old*

²⁵² ‘L’École païenne’, in *BOC*, II, 44–49 (p. 48).

²⁵³ ‘Le *Confiteor* de l’artiste’, in *Le Spleen de Paris*, in *BOC*, I, 279.

classicism of the Empire. It was in no sense a question of breathing life into what was distinctly dead but, perhaps, of reaching by other means the soul which no longer inhabited the corpse.²⁵⁴ (my emphasis)

This Baudelairean reconception of *le beau* and the *Idéal* began as early as 1846, when the poet-turned-critic insisted in the ‘Aux Bourgeois’ section of his ‘Salon’: ‘L’art est un bien infiniment précieux, un breuvage rafraîchissant et réchauffant, qui rétablit l’estomac et l’esprit dans l’équilibre naturel de l’idéal.’²⁵⁵ The reference to ‘breuvage rafraîchissant et réchauffant’, along with the link between ‘l’estomac et l’esprit’, clearly points to a more down-to-earth, or, as I have previously called it, a more *spleen*-bound reconception of the *Idéal*. This is something Baudelaire further elaborates in his section on ‘De l’Idéal et du modèle’:

Ainsi l’idéal n’est pas cette chose vague, ce rêve ennuyeux et impalpable qui nage au plafond des académies; un idéal, c’est l’individu redressé par l’individu, reconstruit et rendu par le pinceau ou le ciseau à l’éclatante vérité de son harmonie native.²⁵⁶

At this juncture, the important connections between my previous approach to Second Empire aesthetics and the current focus on Baudelairean aesthetics are further refined. Firstly, returning to the first line of ‘La Beauté’—‘Je suis belle, ô mortels! comme un rêve de pierre,’—in the context of divine/ideal beauty, as represented by Ingres’ neo-Classicism, one may easily understand the ‘rêve ennuyeux’ from the passage above as synonymous with the ‘rêve de pierre’ of ‘La Beauté’. Secondly, Baudelaire’s mention of ‘académies’ leads us back to the institutionalisation of aesthetics under the aegis of Government, Church, and Institute in order to ensure that ‘aesthetics’ may serve or,²⁵⁷ indeed, may be exploited for a ‘discernible political purpose’ (Mainardi). Ingres personified this version of the *Idéal*: an aesthetic Idealism in theory, yet thoroughly perverted by a politico-propagandistic cause (what I referred to as the aesthetic of the Empire and rigid lines). In the eyes of Baudelaire, then, Delacroix begins to alter this cultural status quo by exploring the *Idéal* from the viewpoint of the public (what I

²⁵⁴ Valéry, ‘The Position of Baudelaire’, <http://supervert.com/elibrary/charles_baudelaire/the_position_of_baudelaire> [accessed 17 March 2016].

²⁵⁵ ‘Aux Bourgeois’, in ‘Salon de 1846’, in *BOC*, II, 415–17 (pp. 415–16).

²⁵⁶ ‘De l’idéal et du modèle’, in ‘Salon de 1846’, in *BOC*, II, 456.

²⁵⁷ See footnote 182.

referred to as the aesthetic of the public and lines blurred by colour). One could argue that, with Delacroix, the *Idéal* is slowly commencing its Icarian fall. His *La Liberté guidant le peuple* (see Figure 4) provides one example of the aesthetico-political antagonism between both painters, Ingres and Delacroix. The stark difference in success, as regards the academic *fauteuil*, provides another.

But let us focus for just a little longer on Baudelaire's 'La Beauté' in its conceptual association with Ingres' neo-Classicism and the *Idéal* as a form of aesthetic Idealism. Line 2 reads as follows: 'Et mon sein, où chacun s'est meurtri tour à tour'. It is an indirect reference, once again, to aesthetic production as a form of duel or *escrime*. In that spirit, it is also an indirect reference to the impossibility of aesthetic production so long as its goal remains the aesthetic reach for divine/ideal beauty. The sonnet's inherent art criticism, then, introduced as early as line 1, concludes rather straightforwardly in the final tercet by suggesting that the *Idéal*, deified, here, as a 'sphinx incompris', can, in fact, never be manifested in the form of divine/ideal beauty (for example, an Ingres painting). Rather, it only ever exists in the eye of the beholder (for example, Ingres and his disciples):

Car j'ai pour fasciner ces dociles amants,
De purs miroirs qui font toutes choses plus belles:
Mes yeux, mes larges yeux aux clartés éternelles! (ll. 12–14)

The eyes of divine/ideal beauty deified act as aesthetico-Idealist mirrors of human existence, turning 'toutes choses plus belles', that is, the secular existence of 'ô mortels' into aesthetic *éternité*, and *spleen* into the *Idéal*. How *harmonious* would it all be, were it not for the terminological sting of 'dociles'. Quite literally, yet almost unnoticeably, the term cages aesthetic Idealism and its disciples ('amants') within their own orthodoxy by connoting, simply, a lack of memory and *imagination*. The eyes of the 'sphinx incompris' remain mirrors, sure, but mirrors framed by the prison bars of objective reality ('la grande barbarie éclairée du gaz' ['Edgar Poe, sa vie et ses œuvres']). The eyes of the sphinx would later manifest as photographic plates in the wake of Daguerre.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁸ I address Baudelaire's disdain for photography and the intrinsic aesthetic opposition between 'copying nature' and 'imagination' in chapter 4 and particularly in the section on 'Photography, Memory, Imagination (and Happiness)'.

There is one additional line in ‘La Beauté’ that I have not yet explicitly mentioned, but whose importance is rather obvious, leading us back to the twofold construct of aesthetic movement, as previously discussed in the context of Delacroix’s aesthetic of the public and lines blurred by colour:²⁵⁹ ‘Je hais le mouvement qui déplace les lignes.’ Indirectly, of course, the line refers to Baudelaire’s art criticism of Ingres, where I have argued that Ingres’ aesthetic of the Empire and rigid lines not merely connotes standstill in the diachronic progression of art history, but, first and foremost, promotes the concept of beauty as static (Ingres), as opposed to fluid (Delacroix). Allegories such as ‘rêve de pierre’ and ‘sphinx incompris’ only further emphasise this point.

The static conception of beauty associated with Ingres and the aesthetic Idealism he personified for most of the nineteenth century is challenged, when, three poems later, the reader of *Les Fleurs du Mal* faces what can only be described as a ‘critical’ counterpart to ‘La Beauté’: Baudelaire’s ‘Hymne à la Beauté’. The poem opens with the following two lines:

Viens-tu du ciel profond ou sors-tu de l’abîme,
Ô Beauté? ton regard, infernal et divin, (ll. 1–2)

This opening question connects the poem to the aesthetic Idealism still dominating ‘La Beauté’: ‘Je trône dans l’azur comme un sphinx incompris’. Once again, like a deity, beauty watches over all those earthly philistines (‘ô mortels’), caught up in their emotions, and thus tangled in the strings of their petty, secular existence (‘Et jamais je ne pleure et jamais je ne ris’). But suddenly, one can no longer help but wonder whether or not the concept of beauty, here, is truly divine/ideal—a manifestation of traditional conceptions of the *Idéal*. Perhaps more importantly, one wonders whether or not beauty being considered as a manifestation of such an *Idéal* is relevant in the first place.

The opening question of ‘Hymne à la beauté’, as cited above, recalls, once again, Poe’s ‘The Raven’: ‘Bird or beast’, ‘bird or devil’, ‘bird or fiend’, Poe’s speaker keeps wondering in response to this raven ‘perched above [his] chamber door’. The raven symbolises the poem’s primary poetic *inspiration* (the emotional state of Romantic longing or

²⁵⁹ I have addressed the twofold construct of ‘aesthetic movement’ in the preceding section on ‘Second Empire Aesthetics’.

melancholy), but also, simultaneously, its primary poetic *representation* (fatalism as a form of existential, socio-collective determinism). Thus, the raven is conceptually placed right between *spleen* (poetic inspiration) and the *Idéal* (poetic representation), absorbing humanity's continuous existential struggle in the fatalistic outlook of 'nevermore'. In Baudelaire's 'Hymne à la beauté', beauty is taking the raven's place. The final two stanzas in full:

Que tu viennes du ciel ou de l'enfer, qu'importe,
Ô Beauté! monstre énorme, effrayant, ingénu!
Si ton œil, ton souris, ton pied, m'ouvrent la porte
D'un Infini que j'aime et n'ai jamais connu?

De Satan ou de Dieu, qu'importe? Ange ou Sirène,
Qu'importe, si tu rends,—fée aux yeux de velours,
Rythme, parfum, lueur, ô mon unique reine!—
L'univers moins hideux et les instants moins lourds?

A number of signifying terms and textual mechanisms are at work, here, in order to create the intended 'effect', as Poe would have had it. Both stanzas sum up the poem's ultimate task of placing the concept of beauty in the newly established aesthetic twilight zone of 'not quite the *Idéal*', yet 'not quite *spleen*' either ('Que tu viennes du ciel ou de l'enfer'; 'De Satan ou de Dieu'). This uncertainty seems intentionally created in order to promote the sensations and emotions of—and I am reading between the lines, here—*circonstance*.

In order to clarify this point, one has to look closer at the use of 'qu'importe', for in both stanzas it is conditional, granting permission to *blur the lines* between *spleen* and the *Idéal* only *as long as* the beauty derived from this process identifies, exclusively, with neither of these two existential boundaries. Who cares if beauty is an enormous, fearful, and ingenuous monster *as long as* the aesthetic inspiration from which it springs, opens wide the door ('m'ouvre la porte'; 'here I opened wide the door' ['The Raven']) for the poet to escape ennui? Facing the epistemological darkness that emerges from this recent and thus unknown entanglement of *spleen* and the *Idéal* ('Darkness there, and nothing more' ['The Raven']), the poet may, then, discover something new ('l'avènement du *neuf*' ['Salon de 1845']) by creating beauty from fragments with the verbal or written brushstroke of a Delacroix. Here, for Poe as

well as Baudelaire, beauty may as well equal death—‘qu’importe’—*as long as* imagination (‘ô mon unique reine’) renders the universe less hideous (‘l’univers moins hideux’) by turning vice into virtue:²⁶⁰ by extracting *le beau* from *le mal* (‘d’extraire la beauté du Mal’ [‘Projets de préface’], ‘de tirer l’éternel du transitoire’ [‘Le Peintre’]). It is precisely this type of aesthetic inspiration in material modernity that Catani refers to as the ethics of vice.

The final line of ‘Hymne à la beauté’, then, and in particular its second half (‘les instants moins lourds’) is key to our understanding of *le beau moderne*. Within only a few words, Baudelaire reduces the broadest possible conception of human existence (‘l’univers’) to its most intimate metaphysical building blocks (‘les instants’). The former is directly depending on the latter, for the latter is weighing heavily on our souls (‘lourds’). The instant, here, is transformed into humanity’s ultimate vice, informing Baudelaire’s broadest possible conception of human existence in the shape of a hideous universe. From this perspective, extracting *le beau* from *le mal* in Baudelaire can thus only mean one thing: the instant must become *circonstance*, material modernity’s primary source of aesthetic inspiration (‘le peintre de la circonstance’/‘vie moderne’), rendering beauty ‘toujours bizarre’ and ‘toujours étonnant’. It is the core of an aesthetic, which one may refer to as Baudelaire’s *le beau moderne*: the poet’s seminal reconception of the *Idéal* as more *spleen*-bound.

Quite a few of the ideas only hinted at above will be addressed in the course of this study. There is, for example, the immediate question of why Baudelairean modernity and in particular the poet’s concept of *le beau moderne* as well as, by extension, his concept of aesthetic *éternité*, should be addressed on the basis of the instant-turned-*circonstance*. Of course, there is Baudelaire’s most famous definition of modernity as ‘le transitoire, le fugitif, le contingent’, discussed in ‘Le Peintre’,²⁶¹ and already referred to on several occasions in this study. But the issue goes much deeper than this, as my chapters 3 and 4 will demonstrate. There is also the question of why beauty may as well equal death. Chapter 1 has already provided some pointers via Poe’s aesthetic focus on Romantic longing for lost love (‘the death of a beautiful woman is unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world’ [‘The Philosophy of

²⁶⁰ For Baudelaire’s approach to *imagination* as ‘La Reine des facultés’, see ‘Salon de 1859’, in *BOC*, II, 619–23. The concept of *imagination* as one of the modern artist’s key faculties, will become increasingly important in the argument I present, and it will be addressed in greater detail in the section on ‘Photography, Memory, Imagination (and Happiness)’ in chapter 4.

²⁶¹ ‘La Modernité’, in ‘Le Peintre’, in *BOC*, II, 695.

Composition’]). The section on ‘Society and Existence from the Viewpoint of Death’ in chapter 5 will further elaborate, arguing that the notions of death and fatalism as forms of existential, socio-collective determinism are intrinsic to the Baudelairean œuvre. In short, however, at this very early stage, one could carefully suggest that it is the newly established *spleen*-bound nature of the *Idéal* allowing for the aesthetico-inspirational qualities of the macabre, the morbid, and the moribund to come into fruition.

Be that as it may, in providing an initial conclusion to the issues addressed so far, I wish to return to the notion of *circonstance* in ‘Hymne à la beauté’, Baudelaire’s theory of colour, and the 1855 criticism of Delacroix’s *La Justice de Trajan* (see Figure 5) and *Entrée des croisés à Constantinople* (see Figure 6). As was argued above, the fundamental difference between ‘La Beauté’ and ‘Hymne à la beauté’ is that the former emphasises beauty as a static concept, whereas the latter promotes the aesthetico-inspirational qualities of *circonstance*—in other words, aesthetic production on the basis of the sensations and emotions initiated by the experience of *circonstance*. These are the two antagonistic conceptions of beauty, as represented, respectively, by Ingres’ aesthetic of the Empire and rigid lines as well as Delacroix’s aesthetic of the public and lines blurred by colour. Once again, the latter is ultimately based on Baudelaire’s theory of colour, where the emphasis lies on musical coherence within and beyond an artwork. Here, terms such as ‘symphony’, ‘harmony’, and ‘melody’ strongly connote the idea of *movement*, seamless transition, synaesthesia, and aesthetic *éternité* (‘l’éternelle variation de la symphonie’, ‘la variété sort toujours de l’infini’ [‘Salon de 1846’]), where nothing is static and everything is fluid. Applied as an art critical methodology to Delacroix paintings such as the *Justice* and the *Croisés*, this effectively translates into well-known Baudelairean imagery: ‘rempli de tumulte’ and ‘la foule, tortillée autour des colonnes’, when addressing the former painting; and, with respect to the latter, ‘harmonie orageuse et lugubre’, ‘[t]out y est tumultueux’, ‘[l]a ville, échelonnée’, ‘ces drapeaux miroitants, ondoyants, faisant se dérouler’, ‘la foule agissante, inquiète’, ‘le tumulte des armes’, ‘la pompe des vêtements’, and, finally, in a helpful manner, ‘les grandes *circonstances* de la vie’ (my emphasis).²⁶² Prior to Baudelaire’s interest in Constantin Guys, then, it is Delacroix—colourist, as opposed to draughtsman—who occupies the position of ‘le

²⁶² ‘Eugène Delacroix’, in ‘Exposition universelle 1855: beaux-arts’, in *BOC*, II, 592.

peintre de la circonstance'²⁶³—that is, of course, 'le peintre de la vie moderne'. Now, if it truly is the beauty of *circonstance* and not divine/ideal beauty, which is addressed in 'Hymne à la beauté', as is suggested by the poem's continuous conceptual positioning of beauty between *spleen* and the *Idéal*, 'abîme' and 'ciel', 'couchant' and 'aurore', 'gouffre' and 'astres', 'Satan' and 'Dieu', then, perhaps, the addition of the term 'hymne' to 'la beauté' in the poem's title makes all the difference. I have cited the passage before in reference to Delacroix:

A mesure que l'astre du jour se dérange, les tons changent de valeur, mais, respectant toujours leurs sympathies et leurs haines naturelles [antipathies], continuent à vivre par des concessions réciproques.²⁶⁴

The continuous reciprocal concessions between antipathies and sympathies, between *spleen* and the *Idéal*, represent precisely the existential dualities already addressed in 'Hymne à la beauté'. Baudelaire explains: 'cet *hymne* compliqué s'appelle la couleur' (my emphasis).²⁶⁵

The conceptual oscillation between *spleen* and the *Idéal*, then, is primarily what Baudelaire refers to, when arguing in 'Le Peintre' that 'le beau est toujours [...] d'une composition double'. The poet further elaborates:

Le beau est fait d'un élément éternel, invariable, dont la quantité est excessivement difficile à déterminer, et d'un élément relatif, *circonstanciel*, qui sera, si l'on veut, tour à tour ou tout ensemble, l'époque, la mode, la morale, la passion. Sans ce second élément, qui est comme l'enveloppe amusante, titillante, apéritive, du divin gâteau, le premier élément serait indigestible, inappréciable, non adapté et non approprié à la nature humaine ('presque une sensation négative' ['Exposition universelle 1855: beaux-arts']; my emphasis).²⁶⁶

²⁶³ In reference to Constantin Guys, Baudelaire writes: 'Il est le peintre de la circonstance et de tout ce qu'elle suggère d'éternel.' See 'Le Croquis de mœurs', in 'Le Peintre', in *BOC*, II, 687. See also the introductory section on Poe and Baudelaire in chapter 1.

²⁶⁴ 'De la couleur', in 'Salon de 1846', in *BOC*, II, 423.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁶ 'Le Beau, la mode, et le bonheur', in 'Le Peintre', in *BOC*, II, 685. A comprehensive approach to Baudelaire's aesthetic dualism can be found in Hannoosh's final chapter on 'The Comic in Modernity' and particularly in the first two sections entitled 'The *Salon de 1846*' and 'The Dualism of Art'. By the nature of her study and as the chapter title suggests, Hannoosh enriches her reading with reflections on the comic. See Hannoosh, *Baudelaire and Caricature*, pp. 251–307 (in particular pp. 255–68). For my own approach to Hannoosh's study, see the subsection on 'Benjamin, Schizophrenia, *dédoublement*' in this review.

Following the aesthetic antagonism between *spleen* and the *Idéal*, as addressed in the passage above and, indeed, as discussed up until this point, scholarship on Baudelaire's *le beau moderne* also tends to take two rather antagonistic approaches. The first is well-known and commonly referred to as *correspondances*, or, perhaps, as Baudelaire's 'aesthetics of *correspondances*'. The second sets the focus not on the fluidity that characterises the musical coherence of Romanticism and Modernism—in the context of *correspondances*, specifically, often referred to as 'synaesthesia'—but on the opposing notion of *déchéance* as a conceptual reflection of modern human existence.

Correspondances

In Baudelaire studies, the concept of *correspondances* refers back to the title of an early sonnet in the 'Spleen et Idéal' cycle of *Les Fleurs du Mal*:

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

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

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

Ayant l'expansion des choses infinies,
Comme l'ambre, le musc, le benjoin et l'encens,
Qui chantent les transports de l'esprit et des sens.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁷ 'Correspondances', in *Les Fleurs du Mal*, in BOC, I, 11.

In the context of Baudelaire's *le beau moderne*, one must begin by addressing a common misconception. Baudelaire knew the writings of Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg and the title of the sonnet is surely based on the philosopher's doctrine of correspondences; but the poet's conception of *le beau moderne* contained therein is only indirectly or partially attributable to Swedenborg, if at all.²⁶⁸ For Swedenborg, the concept of correspondences is a form of Transcendentalism, a continuous intimate dynamic between the material and the spiritual world, indeed, between *spleen* and the *Idéal*:

For nothing at all comes into being in the natural creation that does not have a correspondence with the spiritual world; it has no cause from which it may be brought into being and from which it may be kept in being. Things existing in the natural world are nothing else than effects; their causes exist in the spiritual world, while the causes behind those causes, which are the ends, exist more internally in heaven. No effect can remain in being unless its cause is present within it constantly; for the instant a cause ceases to exist, so does its effect.²⁶⁹

The relevance of this passage from Swedenborg's *Arcana Cœlestia* is twofold. Firstly, the Transcendentalism outlined, here, may or may not be reflected in the Baudelairean conception of aesthetic *éternité*: of an artwork *transcending* the confines of modern human existence. Secondly, as we know, the transcendence—the *correspondances*—between material and spiritual world—the conceptual oscillation between *spleen* and the *Idéal*—does extend to aesthetics: 'For nothing at all comes into being in the natural creation that does not have a correspondence with the spiritual world'. As such, it must, indeed, play a crucial role in any analysis of either Baudelairean aesthetics or poetics. But it does not necessarily inform the definition of Baudelaire's *le beau moderne* as an aesthetic of *correspondances*. All of this, of course, feeds into our discussion of a more *spleen*-bound reconception of the *Idéal* as an aesthetic emphasising fluidity, musical coherence, and, indeed, synaesthesia by shifting the

²⁶⁸ The important influence of Swedenborg on Baudelaire and other writers of the European nineteenth-century intelligentsia seems underexplored. As Steven P. Sondrup points out in his review of Lynn R. Wilkinson's *The Dream of an Absolute Language: Emanuel Swedenborg and French Literary Culture* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1996): 'Noting the importance of Swedenborg for Balzac and Baudelaire has become a critical cliché and often just a repeated formulation that remains painfully and embarrassingly superficial.' Steven P. Sondrup, 'The Dream of an Absolute Language: Emanuel Swedenborg and French Literary Culture (review)', *Scandinavian Studies*, 69.4 (Fall 1997), 520–22 (p. 521).

²⁶⁹ Emanuel Swedenborg, *Arcana Cœlestia: Principally a Revelation of the inner or spiritual meaning of Genesis and Exodus*, trans. by John Elliott, 12 vols (London: Swedenborg Society, 1990), VII, 428.

focus away from the objective reality informing aesthetic Idealism and onto the subjective individuality informing Baudelaire's *le beau moderne*.

For Swedenborg to remain part of the equation, then, it is important to note that the sensory complexities of synaesthesia—addressed in the sonnet as well as in Baudelaire's art criticism of Delacroix (here, in the form of musical coherence within and beyond the painting)—are only of secondary importance in our attempt to define Baudelairean *correspondances*. In this context, *correspondances* function merely as a means to incorporate human sensations and emotions into an artwork, similar to the notion of *la ligne brisée*, which is, by definition, reserved for the visual arts. Correspondances as well as the concept of synaesthesia, here, may as well be defined as an aesthetic consequence to a sensory or emotional cause. The sonnet's final line—'Qui chantent les transports de l'esprit et des sens'—makes this explicit by clearly linking the spirit and the senses to the overall synaesthetic atmosphere created throughout: 'Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent.'

Benjamin agrees. For the critic, too, Baudelairean *correspondances* with its inherent synaesthetic qualities represents much more than, simply, an aesthetic methodology allowing one to incorporate human sensations and emotions into an artwork. As such, the concept 'is concomitant but not explicitly linked with the notion of "modern beauty"'.²⁷⁰ Benjamin addresses the issue in section X of his 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire', beginning his enquiry with the following statement: 'According to Bergson, it is the actualisation of *durée* that rids man's soul of the obsession with time' (196). This is particularly interesting, of course, as both time and Bergson's concept of *durée* feature extensively throughout this study. In order to understand Benjamin's statement, it suffices, for the moment, to note that *durée* signifies the individual's internal, subjective perception of time, as opposed to external, objectified time. For Benjamin, it is thus within the concept of Baudelairean *correspondances* that the actualisation of *durée* takes place. Benjamin bases his reading on the following statement from Marcel Proust's 'A propos de Baudelaire': 'Le monde de Baudelaire est un étrange sectionnement du temps où seuls de rares jours notables apparaissent; ce qui explique les fréquentes expressions telles que "Si quelque soir" etc.'²⁷¹ For Benjamin, these are 'days of completing time', 'days of recollection ['Eingedenken']'; 'They are not connected with other

²⁷⁰ Benjamin, 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire', p. 197. All further references will be provided in-text.

²⁷¹ Marcel Proust, 'A propos de Baudelaire', *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, 16 (1921), 641–63 (p. 652).

days, but stand out from time' (197). In Baudelaire, then, it is *correspondances* that provide the 'substance' of precisely these days of recollection.

In this context, for Benjamin, based on Proust, the various aesthetic connotations or implications, as regards Baudelairean *correspondances*—that which is commonly referred to as Baudelaire's 'aesthetics of *correspondances*'—are slightly self-evident ('Proust no longer fusses about the artistic variations on this phenomenon that results from synaesthesia' [197]). Far more important is the fact that Baudelairean *correspondances* incorporate rituality, and here is why. For Benjamin, before the socio-collective experience of modernity translates into aesthetic inspiration in Baudelaire, it signifies loss: the loss of history, the loss of memory, the loss of nature, the loss of individuality, the loss of subjectivity, and so forth, beginning with the loss of an audience's appreciation for lyric poetry ('Baudelaire envisaged readers to whom the reading of lyric poetry would present difficulties' [170]). In Benjamin's essay, these 'motifs' are treated individually, yet in connection to one another, leading up to the detailed discussion of *correspondances* in section X.²⁷² In the context of those Proustian 'days of recollection', then, for Benjamin, the concept of Baudelairean *correspondances*

can be described as an experience which seeks to establish itself in crisis-proof form. This is possible only within the realm of ritual. If it transcends this realm, it presents itself as the beautiful. In the beautiful, ritual value appears as the value of art. *Correspondances* are the data of recollection. (198)

Rituality, then, appears to be the connection between Swedenborg's correspondences as a form of transcendence and the scholarly focus on Baudelairean *correspondances* as an aesthetic methodology allowing one to incorporate human sensations and emotions by making use of the sensory complexities of synaesthesia. Here, the data of *correspondances*, the data of recollection, manifests itself in rituality, which, in turn, is exemplified by yet another 'Spleen et Idéal' sonnet entitled 'La Vie antérieure'. It will suffice to cite the opening quatrains:

²⁷² For a detailed discussion of Benjamin's take on Baudelairean *correspondances* within the overall framework of his 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire', see Beryl Schlossman, 'Benjamin's "Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire": The Secret Architecture of Correspondances', *MLN*, 107.3, German Issue (April 1992), 548–79. Briefly, I already referred to her article in the subsection 'Benjamin, Schizophrenia, *dédoublement*' in this review.

J'ai longtemps habité sous de vastes portiques
Que les soleils marins teignaient de mille feux,
Et que leurs grands piliers, droits et majestueux,
Rendaient pareils, le soir, aux grottes basaltiques.

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.²⁷³

The opening 'J'ai longtemps habité' is mirrored by 'C'est là que j'ai vécu' at the beginning of the following tercets. Both frame the data of recollection, as presented by the quatrains; both provide the *correspondances* between the data of recollection and Baudelaire's *le beau moderne*; both represent 'ritual value [appearing] as the value of art'. By appreciating Proust's 'rares jours notables', it is thus via *correspondances* that one may actualise Bergsonian *durée*. Both merge within the Benjaminian notion of rituality, for in this instance recollection and rituality become synonymous: the former springing from intellect, the latter from practice.

At this juncture, then, it seems important to return to the actual sonnet: Baudelaire's 'Correspondances'. Benjamin writes in his unedited 'Central Park': 'The contradiction between the theory of natural correspondences and the repudiation of nature. How is this to be resolved?'²⁷⁴ Once again, based on Benjamin, I have, so far, argued that this contradiction is resolved in rituality as a form of actualisation of *durée*; but how is all this poetically represented in 'Correspondances'? The first quatrain gives ample insight into the textual mechanisms enabling the sonnet to symbolise this contradiction as much as its resolution:

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

²⁷³ 'La Vie antérieure', in *Les Fleurs du Mal*, in *BOC*, I, 17–18.

²⁷⁴ Benjamin, 'Central Park', p. 136.

The first line resolves the contradiction between nature and city by transforming organic into artificial. Moreover, the term ‘temple’ (as well as, to some extent, ‘piliers’) links Swedenborgian spirituality with Benjaminian rituality by referring to architecture (organic turned artificial) purposefully built for the repeated celebration (rituality) of metaphysical concepts such as God (spirituality). The second line shifts focus from Swedenborgian spirituality onto the sensory complexities of synaesthesia so frequently associated with Baudelairean *correspondances*; for ‘paroles’ should not be read literally as a form of verbal communication, but, rather, as a calling—a calling for the involvement of the senses as a means to turn metaphysical spirituality into physical rituality. This claim would not hold without the sudden introduction of ‘l’homme’ in the third line. Here, human sensations and emotions are placed right at the centre of what has turned from ephemeral ‘paroles’ to fully grown ‘forêts de symboles’. Tentatively, then, *correspondances* occur between spirituality in the form of rituality and the concept of synaesthesia as the underlying aesthetic methodology in which the Baudelairean conception of *le beau moderne* may or may not be grounded. I have cited the entire sonnet at the beginning of this section and there is no need for repetition. Suffice it to say that the second quatrain and the following tercets continue to paint the sonnet’s overall synaesthetic atmosphere as experienced by man (‘l’homme’). To some extent, this also explains the strong focus of scholarship on the concept of synaesthesia despite its limited relevance in Swedenborgian correspondences, which, as pointed out above, is often cited as the primary inspiration not merely for the sonnet’s title, but for the aesthetic methodology developed therein.

Finally, in attempting to contextualise the sonnet from the broader viewpoint of Baudelairean modernity (as opposed to Baudelaire’s *le beau moderne*, specifically), two further idiosyncrasies strike me as particularly valuable. The first is that, in the midst of man’s synaesthetic experience, Baudelaire suddenly seems to provide a glimpse of what truly substitutes for nature as the birthplace of spirituality in material modernity: the modern city. The poet does so very subtly and in reference to the specific sensations composing the synaesthetic experience inherent to ‘Correspondances’: the olfactory, the visual, and the audible (‘les parfums, les couleurs, et les sons’), as highlighted in the last line of the second quatrain. In the following tercet, these are described by the adjectives ‘frais’, ‘verts’, and ‘doux’, respectively. At this point, the reader encounters a dash, introducing the final line of the first tercet: ‘—Et d’autres, corrompus, riches et triomphants.’ It could be suggested, here,

that the dash's textual function is to highlight the final line of the first tercet within the sonnet's textual corpus—it is the only line brought to the fore in such a way. Additionally, the sudden change in the type of adjective provided may suggest that a different set of sensations is described from those triggered by the sonnet's natural setting. More specifically, it seems to me that all three of these additional adjectives describe characteristics far more frequently associated with material modernity and modern human existence than with any form of synaesthesia, as triggered by nature; the fact that their respective meanings seem somewhat alien to the sonnet's natural setting further supports this claim. Moreover, the order in which these three adjectives are presented, also seems intended, with the straightforward 'corruptus' tainting the reader's reception of the slightly more ambivalent 'riches' and 'triumphants'. Recalling Catani's concept of the ethics of vice as the artist's primary source of aesthetic inspiration in material modernity, perhaps, what one encounters, here, is the aforementioned glimpse of what truly substitutes for nature as the birthplace of spirituality in material modernity; it is a glimpse of what constitutes the synaesthetic experience of modern city existence.

The second remaining reflection is that, as it stands, the sonnet's final line—'Qui chantent les transports de l'esprit et des sens'²⁷⁵—aids in concluding this discussion on Baudelairean *correspondances*. Associating the various sensations that constitute the synaesthetic experience of (modern) man, inherent to the sonnet, with the explicit mention of 'l'ambre, le musc, le benjoin et l'encens' in the second line of the second tercet, it is interesting to point out, here, that the relative pronoun 'qui' refers to precisely those sensations. In a helpful coincidence, the concept of synaesthesia thus serves as a means for the transcendence (Swedenborg) of metaphysical spirituality ('l'esprit'), as celebrated by the senses ('des sens'): it becomes that which Benjamin refers to as ritual.

²⁷⁵ One senses an almost Rousseauistic element, here, suggesting the corruption of a pure state of nature by civilization.

Déchéance

In scholarship, there is a second (though, by no means secondary) approach to the Baudelaire's *le beau moderne*, and, interestingly, it stands in rather stark opposition to the concept of *correspondances*. In his article on 'Modern Beauty: Baudelaire, the Everyday, Cultural Studies',²⁷⁶ Ross Chambers argues that one has to *distance* oneself from the everyday in order to know the everyday and—in the specific case of aesthetic production in material modernity—to be able to aesthetically represent the everyday in the form of *le beau moderne*. In the context of this study, 'distance', for Chambers, is thus essential for the acquisition of experience and the creation of knowledge, and only from such a distance can '[t]he unnoticed, when it is noticed [become] noteworthy—that is, it ceases to be recognised as ordinary and becomes its opposite'.²⁷⁷

Similarly to Oehler's take on Baudelairean politics, as addressed earlier,²⁷⁸ Chambers also attributes to the poet a '*sensitivity* to the historical transformations undergone in the course of his lifetime by French society in general and the urban scene in particular' (my emphasis).²⁷⁹ In reference to Baudelaire's verse poetry, Chambers cites the well-known parenthesis from 'Le Cygne'—'(la forme d'une ville // Change plus vite, hélas! Que le cœur d'un mortel)'—as the archetypal poetic representation of precisely these 'historical [urban] transformations' in Baudelaire. Considering this parenthesis, Chambers' approach to modern aesthetic production echoes Baudelaire's *dédicace* to Houssaye, where the poet expresses the hope that prose poetry ('le miracle d'une prose poétique') will eventually allow the modern artist to aesthetically 'adapt' to these historical urban transformations and, specifically, to their impact on the modern artist's sensations and emotions ('s'adapter aux mouvements lyriques de l'âme, aux ondulations de la rêverie, aux soubresauts de la conscience'). It is, however, in relation to the Idealist epistemology that I propose in this study—already tentatively outlined in the 'Hypothesis', 'Methodology', and 'Trajectory' subsections in chapter 1—where Chambers' argument becomes truly relevant: and in particular his emphasis on the *distance*

²⁷⁶ Ross Chambers, 'Modern Beauty: Baudelaire, the Everyday, Cultural Studies', *Romance Studies*, 26.3 (July 2008), 249–70.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

²⁷⁸ See the section on 'Second Empire Aesthetics' in this review.

²⁷⁹ Chambers, 'Modern Beauty', p. 250.

between the individual and the everyday, between what I have previously referred to as subjective individuality and objective reality. Once considered in tandem with the relationship of cause and effect between external, *physical fragmentation* ('historical [urban] transformations') and internal, *psychological fragmentation* ('mouvements lyriques de l'âme', and so forth)²⁸⁰—as already referred to in chapter 1, highlighted in the passage from Baudelaire's *dédicace* as cited above, and certainly further supported by the parenthesis from 'Le Cygne'—this distance, as we shall see, also becomes fragmented. In the context of Baudelaire's *le beau moderne*, Chambers simply refers to this fragmentation of distance as *déchéance*.²⁸¹ Moreover, with his emphasis on distance between—in short—subject and object, Chambers clearly grounds his approach in the Idealist epistemological tradition. At this crossroads between philosophy and cultural studies, after a short introductory paragraph, the critic, then, opts fully for the latter (cultural studies). A good thing, I suppose, for it is with a similar focus on the acquisition of experience and the creation of knowledge as the key faculty allowing one to transform '[t]he unnoticed, when it is noticed [into something] noteworthy' that my chapter 3 will begin its enquiry, opting instead for the former (philosophy). The concept of distance that Chambers proposes thus constitutes a core component of the Idealist epistemology I propose in this study and will be referred to frequently.²⁸²

In 2005 and thus three years prior to Chambers, Sonya Stephens offers a similar, yet slightly different perspective on Baudelaire's *le beau moderne* in an article entitled 'Esquisse d'Incomplétude: Baudelaire, Guys and Modern Beauty'.²⁸³ As the title suggests, whereas Chambers' approach is essentially one of cultural history ('historical [urban]

²⁸⁰ For a more detailed approach to precisely this passage from Baudelaire's *dédicace*, see chapter 4.

²⁸¹ Chambers, 'Modern Beauty', p. 262. The term 'déchéance' occurs at a later point in Chambers' argument, when he states in reference to 'Le Cygne': 'For here the swan functions [...] as a figure of the poetic *soul* in modernity, lost and out of place and living, as it were, its own *déchéance* and demise' (my emphasis of 'soul'). In a slightly different context, Sanyal uses the term 'dissonance' as the counterpart to 'correspondance'. Sanyal, *The Violence of Modernity*, p. 129.

²⁸² The concept of distance, in Chambers, carries much theoretico-philosophical weight, and by opting for a focus on cultural studies (as opposed to philosophy), the critic successfully circumvents the need for a more detailed explanation. In the course of this study, I shall do so in his stead by looking closely at the specific epistemological mechanics that define its function as the necessary precondition for the acquisition of experience and the creation of knowledge. In this context, 'distance' refers to the distance between subject and object as well as between subject and subject necessary for epistemological dialectic to take place. In the context of Simmel's sociology, as addressed in chapter 5, this essential 'distance' will turn into essential 'difference', which, in modern, capitalist, money economy, is increasingly challenged by an 'indifference' in the form of the blasé. See the section on 'Exchange, Communication, the Blasé (and the Dandy)' in chapter 5.

²⁸³ Sonya Stephens, 'Esquisse d'incomplétude: Baudelaire, Guys and Modern Beauty', *Neophilologus*, 89 (2005), 527–38.

transformations'), Stephens' focus is set on Baudelaire's theory of modern aesthetics, as outlined in 'Le Peintre', claiming that 'there has been surprisingly little attempt to identify or elaborate on the aesthetic that leads [Baudelaire] to select Guys as the Painter of Modern Life'.²⁸⁴ I have provided some insight from an art historical and biographical point of view in the section on 'Second Empire Aesthetics' in this review. Indeed, from a contextualising perspective, the train of thought presented thus far has already incorporated most of Stephens' argument, situating Baudelairean aesthetics and Baudelaire's *le beau moderne*, specifically, within the existential boundaries and aesthetic antagonism of *spleen* and the *Idéal*. There seems no longer the need to elaborate in detail. Essentially, Stephens argues that the shift away from divine/ideal beauty towards a more *spleen*-bound reconception of the *Idéal* translates into a 'desired unfinishedness' in Baudelairean aesthetics,²⁸⁵ which, in 'Le Peintre', the poet attributes to Guys' aesthetic methodology. The passage in question reads as follows:

Elle ['la méthode'] a cet incomparable avantage, qu'à n'importe quel point de son progrès, chaque dessin a l'air suffisamment fini; vous nommerez cela une ébauche si vous voulez, mais *ébauche parfaite*.²⁸⁶ (my emphasis)

'Ébauche', 'esquisse', 'croquis': Stephens discusses the nature as well as suitability of each these terms and concepts in some length, and I shall leave this argument in her capable hands. At this point, nearing the end of my reflections on Baudelairean aesthetics, it is important to understand that for both Chambers as well as Stephens the concept of *le beau moderne* in Baudelaire signifies a sort of compromise between the secular and the divine, *spleen* and the *Idéal*, resulting in a more *spleen*-bound reconception of the latter. This reconception can only be achieved by embracing 'fragmentation' in the broadest possible sense of the term. For Chambers, this translates into the notion of *déchéance*. For Stephens, it is represented by the idea of an 'ébauche parfaite', or, as she labels it, an 'esquisse d'incomplétude'. For both, however, it points towards Baudelaire's later aesthetic preoccupation with prose, as opposed to verse poetry and, indeed, the poetic production thereof.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 527.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ 'L'Art mnémonique', in 'Le Peintre', in *BOC*, II, 697–700 (p. 700).

Referring to Baudelaire's 'poetic realism', Chambers, for example, maintains that the *déchéance* experienced in the modern everyday gives 'poetic form [the] new mission [...] of conveying to readers the subjective shock [...] that is occasioned by the strangeness of the everyday in its new, modern configuration' (Chambers' emphasis).²⁸⁷ Again, the by now well-known statement from Baudelaire's *dédicace*, as regards 'le miracle d'une prose poétique', provides the necessary conceptual contextualisation. Similarly, Stephens projects her approach to the 'esquisse d'incomplétude', as regards Guys' aesthetic methodology, onto poetic production in the form of the 'esquisse littéraire', arguing that by the time Baudelaire is 'espousing Guys' sketch art in 1859, he is moving towards a conception of the prose poems as a work which can be read in any order [...] and to a style which suggests an engagement with the *instant*' (my emphasis).²⁸⁸ Stephens, here, refers back to Guentner's definition of the 'esquisse littéraire' as a 'rhétorique du *spontané* qui suggère une volonté de coïncider avec l'*instant*' (my emphasis).²⁸⁹ As we know, the concept of the instant constitutes a core component of the Idealist epistemology I shall propose in the course of the subsequent chapters, for the instant in Baudelaire is much more than 'just' a theoretical concept-turned-aesthetic methodology. As material modernity's newly emerging temporal unit, the instant interrupts and fragments the *distance*, which, for Chambers, is the essential precondition for the acquisition of experience and the creation of knowledge: for the transformation of the 'unnoticeable' into something 'noteworthy'. Moreover, considering Chambers' argument that

²⁸⁷ Chambers, 'Modern Beauty', p. 250. This new poetic mission will be addressed further in the subsequent and final section on 'Baudelairean Poetics' in this review.

²⁸⁸ In order to contextualise this citation appropriately, two aspects should be clarified. Firstly, the idea that the prose poems can be read in any order stems, of course, from Baudelaire's famous exclamation in the *dédicace* that the collection 'n'a ni queue ni tête, puisque tout, au contraire, y est à la fois tête et queue, alternativement et réciproquement.' See 'Lettre à Arsène Houssaye', in *Le Spleen de Paris*, in *BOC*, I, 275. I shall return to this passage from the *dédicace* in chapter 6. Secondly, Stephens perceives an intellectual trajectory eventually leading towards Baudelaire's 'aesthetic of the discontinuous, or fragmented'. It begins with encountering Guys' aquarelles in 1859 (I have mentioned this before in the section on 'Second Empire Aesthetics' in this review), moves on to the production of prose poetry, and ultimately accumulates in the 'incomplétude', that is, the fragmented nature of 'Mon Cœur mis à nu' and 'Fusées'. In an endnote, the critic mentions that she intentionally leaves out the 'Journaux intimes' as, according to Pichois, it is 'unlikely that Baudelaire ever intended it to be published work'. Stephens, 'Esquisse d'incomplétude', p. 538.

²⁸⁹ Stephens directs the reader to Wendelin Guentner, *Esquisses littéraires: Rhétorique du spontané et récit du voyage au XIXe siècle* (Saint-Genouh: Nizet, 1997), but cites, here, from Guentner's article 'La Poétique de l'esquisse littéraire: L'Italie d'hier des frères Goncourt', *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 26.1–2 (1997–98), 204–19. Guentner's definition of the 'esquisse littéraire' is particularly interesting as it provides a direct conceptual link between Baudelaire's conception of *le beau moderne* as well as aesthetic *éternité*, and the instant, which, as we know, forms a crucial component of the theoretico-philosophical model I develop and apply throughout this study. Intentionally or not, at a later point in her argument, Stephens, too, refers to the instant, when linking the 'esquisse littéraire' directly to Baudelaire's prose poems. See Stephens, 'Esquisse d'incomplétude', p. 535. I cite the relevant passage in-text.

essentially all aesthetic production is based on this distance, it follows that maintaining it becomes the essential precondition of virtually everything so far associated with Baudelairean modernity: the turning of vice into virtue in the way Catani argues; the creation of musical coherence within and beyond a Delacroix painting; the ‘actualisation of *durée* that rids man’s soul of the obsession with time’,²⁹⁰ as Benjamin sees it; and the aesthetic shift from *le beau* to *le beau moderne* that features so prominently in the respective scholarship of Mainardi and Rancière. Nonetheless, prior to providing one possible perspective on the epistemological mechanics that transform the instant into such a conceptual superstar, one has to conclude the train of thought, as presented in this review, beginning with Compagnon’s conundrum and now inevitably leading to Baudelaire’s very own ‘avènement du *neuf*’: the establishment of prose poetry as a literary genre.

La Seconde Révolution: Prose, Poetry, ‘Baudelairean Poetics’

Baudelairean aesthetics in the form of *le beau moderne* exist in the aesthetic twilight zone of ‘not quite the *Idéal*’, yet ‘not quite *spleen*’ either. There remains the question of how Baudelairean aesthetics translate into Baudelairean poetics. In other words, how is Baudelaire’s theory of modern aesthetics applied to the poet’s very own poetic production. In scholarship, Baudelaire’s collection of prose poems, *Le Spleen de Paris*, tends to be considered as the poet’s most refined and elaborate poetic representation of material modernity and modern human existence; next to his ‘predecessor’ Aloysius Bertrand and his ‘successors’ Stéphane Mallarmé and Arthur Rimbaud, Baudelaire is frequently considered as one of the founders of the prose poetry genre. While that remains debatable for various reasons,²⁹¹ it does ascribe to Baudelaire a key position within the establishment of prose poetry as a literary genre; and one wonders if the conceptual tension between *spleen* and the *Idéal* in Baudelairean aesthetics simply translate in to ‘prose’ and ‘poetry’ in Baudelairean poetics.²⁹² In the introduction to her authoritative study, *Le Poème en prose: De Baudelaire jusqu’à nos jours*,²⁹³ Suzanne Bernard identifies two

²⁹⁰ Benjamin, ‘On Some Motifs in Baudelaire’, p. 197.

²⁹¹ For concise approaches to pre-Baudelairean conceptions of the prose poem genre, see, for example, David Scott and Barbara Wright, *Baudelaire: La Fanfarlo and Le Spleen de Paris* (London: Grant and Cutler, 1984) as well as Jean-François Castille, ‘Le poème en prose avant le poème en prose’, *Questions de style*, 8 (May 2011), 29–40.

²⁹² Both Kaplan and Chambers refer to the aesthetico-inspirational qualities of material modernity as ‘prosaic’. See Kaplan, *Baudelaire’s Prose Poems*, p.12; and Chambers, ‘Modern Beauty’, p. 249.

²⁹³ Suzanne Bernard, *Le Poème en prose: de Baudelaire jusqu’à nos jours* (Paris: Librairie Nizet, 1959).

main difficulties, when approaching prose poetry as a literary genre: its aesthetic definition as well as its aesthetic inspiration. As for the former, Bernard settles on ‘unité’, ‘gratuité’, and ‘brièveté’: the first emphasising that a ‘poem’ must always represent an ‘univers fermé’; the second that its goals must always be ‘uniquement poétiques’; and the third, of course, that it must be short—shorter, at least, than other prose pieces such as ‘la nouvelle’, ‘le roman’, and ‘l’essai’.²⁹⁴ Again, some of the nuances are debatable, but it will not concern our present enquiry.

Far more relevant in the context of Baudelaire and Baudelairean modernity, specifically, is the question of aesthetic inspiration: what exactly inspires the establishment of prose poetry as a literary genre? Of course, such a question leads us straight back to the modern aesthetic quest of extracting *le beau* from *le mal*: the Baudelairean quest for an aesthetic inspired by and grounded in material modernity.²⁹⁵ To put it in Bernard’s own words:

Peut-on parler d’*évolution* à propos d’un genre aussi libre, aussi résolument individualiste que le poème en prose? Non, si l’on entend par là la transformation continue et progressive d’un genre; oui, si l’on admet que, en même temps qu’évoluent les conceptions politiques et sociales, les goûts et les conceptions artistiques, les besoins intellectuels et spirituels des individus, on voit évoluer aussi non seulement l’idée de poésie, mais aussi la *forme* poétique, et qu’il existe une invisible mais nécessaire corrélation entre une époque et la poésie qu’elle se donne.²⁹⁶ (Bernard’s emphasis)

In simple terms, ‘la forme poétique’ is a crucial component of Baudelairean modernity—in this specific case, the poetic representation of material modernity, which I am defining, here, as Baudelairean poetics. The prose poems thus must be considered as a final step in Baudelaire’s aesthetico-methodological trajectory towards poetic Modernism. In this context, Bernard’s ‘évolution’ quickly turns into ‘révolution’—and, in Baudelaire, *révolution* also occurs in a doubled fashion.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 14–15.

²⁹⁵ See the section on ‘Second Empire Aesthetics’ in this review.

²⁹⁶ Bernard, *Le Poème en prose*, p. 16.

La Première Révolution

The first edition of Baudelaire's collection of verse poetry, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, was published in 1857 and, to put it in Kaplan's words, it 'marks the boundary between romanticism and what we know as the modern era'.²⁹⁷ Slightly less succinctly phrased, but with direct reference to Baudelaire's modern aesthetic quest of extracting *le beau* from *le mal*, Barbara Johnson states:

La Beauté et le Mal, censés être incompatibles, doivent donc fournir, dans leur incompatibilité même, la dynamique inédite d'une poésie irrémédiablement et voluptueusement *déchirée* [*déchéance*] par ses propres contradictions. En cherchant à planter ses *Fleurs* dans la province la moins 'fleuries' du domaine poétique, en essayant d'inclure dans la poésie ce qui jusqu'alors lui avait été extérieur, Baudelaire dans *Les Fleurs du Mal* tente donc une première sorte de 'révolution' ou de renversement du langage poétique traditionnel—une révolution qui, à en juger par la condamnation judiciaire du livre, a en effet réussi au-delà de toute espérance.²⁹⁸ (my emphasis)

Baudelaire's *première révolution*, his 'révolution volontaire', as Johnson argues, essentially represents the argument proposed thus far: it represents the shift away from traditional conceptions of the *Idéal* and towards *spleen*. It is that which marks the boundary between Romanticism and Modernism (Kaplan). Baudelaire's *première révolution* is the recognition and acceptance of *le mal* as an aesthetico-inspirational force in order to transform *le beau* into *le beau moderne*, just as I have been arguing on the basis of Catani's ethics of vice.

The same year Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* was accused of undermining social morality for its depiction of adultery, Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* was censored for its immoral depiction 'of contemporary spiritual and social life; readers resisted [its] subversion of romantic utopianism'.²⁹⁹ Johnson perceives Baudelaire's *première révolution* to have exceeded all expectations ('une révolution qui, à en juger par la condamnation judiciaire du

²⁹⁷ Edward K. Kaplan, 'Introduction', in Charles Baudelaire, *The Parisian Prowler: Le Spleen de Paris, Petits Poèmes en prose*, trans. by Edward K. Kaplan, 2nd edn (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1997), p. xvii.

²⁹⁸ Barbara Johnson, *Défigurations du langage poétique: la seconde révolution baudelairienne* (Paris: Flammarion, 1979), p. 17.

²⁹⁹ Kaplan, 'Introduction', in Baudelaire, *The Parisian Prowler*, p. xvii.

livre, a en effet réussit au-delà de toute espérance’). Baudelaire not only accepted, but frankly embraced public dismissal, turning vice into virtue, or dismissal into aesthetic inspiration by further infusing his ‘renversement du langage poétique traditionnel’ with the *spleen* of modern human existence. Baudelaire reconceives the *Idéal* as more *spleen*-bound. For Kaplan, this occurs in the form of the ‘Tableaux Parisiens’; for Johnson, it occurs in the form of prose poetry.

La Seconde Révolution

Johnson’s and Kaplan’s respective approaches to Baudelaire’s *seconde révolution* thus differ only insofar as Kaplan traces it to the second edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, whereas Johnson perceives its manifestation in the form of *Le Spleen de Paris*. Both are correct, for in both cases the driving aesthetic inspiration behind Baudelaire’s *seconde révolution* remains the same:

A travers le double sort de son œuvre, Baudelaire, très littéralement, apparaît comme un homo duplex: d’un côté, un ‘premier’ Baudelaire consacré et vulgarisé par l’enseignement, de l’autre, un ‘second’ Baudelaire plus obscur mais peut-être plus poétiquement fécond.³⁰⁰

Almost in passing, then, Johnson embeds Baudelaire in the aesthetic shift or aesthetic revolution addressed frequently so far in reference to Mainardi and Rancière, and there is no further need to recapitulate. Suffice it to say that ‘vulgarisé par l’enseignement’ strongly reminds one of Government, Church, and Institute—and, indeed, their love for Ingres, as argued in the section on ‘Second Empire Aesthetics’. Of interest, here, is the ‘second’ Baudelaire: the Baudelaire for whom urban evil and the ethics of vice have become the modern artist’s primary source of aesthetic inspiration; the Baudelaire, in other words, who turns vice into virtue.

In Kaplan’s scholarship, this is the Baudelaire, who responds to the 1857 criticism of *Les Fleurs du Mal* not by admitting defeat, but by adding a total of thirty-two poems including the ‘Tableaux Parisiens’ cycle to the second edition. A bold response, a step of

³⁰⁰ Johnson, *Défigurations du langage poétique*, p. 15.

conviction—one has to admit—considering the poet’s continuously (and increasingly) precarious financial situation. In the context of Poe’s economic hardship, Baudelaire himself would refer to the intellectual defiance of precisely such an economic hardship as signalling the difference between ‘génie’ and ‘talent’. Paraphrasing two biographers, in ‘Edgar Poe, sa vie et ses œuvres’, Baudelaire complains about the often dismissal and unjustified critical perception of the poet’s life and work:

Un biographe nous dira gravement,—il est bien intentionné, le brave homme,—que Poe, s’il avait voulu *régulariser* son génie et appliquer ses facultés créatrices d’une manière plus appropriée au sol américain, aurait pu devenir un auteur à argent, *a money making author*;—un autre,—un naïf cynique, celui-là,—que, quelque beau que soit le génie de Poe il eût mieux valu pour lui n’avoir que du talent, le talent s’escomptant toujours plus facilement que le génie.³⁰¹ (my emphasis of ‘régulariser’)

Poe did not want to ‘regularise’ his writing in order to suit the public taste, not for the purpose of becoming a ‘money making author’. Whether intentionally or not, Poe chose genius over talent. So, too, did Baudelaire in 1857 and subsequently, of course, in 1861, when the second edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal* was eventually published.

For Johnson, meanwhile, the second Baudelaire is the Baudelaire increasingly committed to prose, as opposed to verse poetry, and she wonders:

Une question, alors se pose. Le second projet poétique de Baudelaire jouerait-il par rapport au premier un rôle subversif analogue? *Les Petits Poèmes en prose* problématiseraient-ils la poétique même des *Fleurs du Mal*? La mise en prose de la poésie en serait-elle une *remise en question*? Serait-on justifié de parler de deux révolutions baudelairiennes?³⁰² (Johnson’s emphasis)

³⁰¹ ‘Edgar Poe, Sa vie et ses œuvres’, in *BOC*, II, 269–319 (p. 298).

³⁰² Johnson, *Défigurations du langage poétique*, p. 16.

In other words, is the second Baudelaire's engagement with prose poetry what ultimately leads to Baudelaire's second revolution? The key term of the passage is, of course, 'subversif' as the adjective of 'subversion'. Kaplan would later use the verb 'to subvert', when wondering: 'Perhaps the author *subverted* his didacticism [‘un “premier” Baudelaire consacré et vulgarisé par l’enseignement’] even more vehemently after *Les Fleurs du Mal* had been so utterly misunderstood, for the magistrates did not fathom the author's ethical irony' (my emphasis).³⁰³ The subversion of an establishment and its inherent notion of predetermination is the ultimate goal of any revolution. Is it safe to assume, then, that Baudelaire aimed for the subversion of poetry by prose (for Kaplan, by the addition of the 'Tableaux Parisiens' to the second edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal*), in order to represent, poetically, the subversion of the *Idéal* by *spleen* as a consequence of material modernity? In short, was subversion the only possible way to extract *le beau* from *le mal* and to reconceive the *Idéal* in the form of *le beau moderne*?

At first glance, none of the above seems to be the case. As is well-known, the poet admits in his *dédicace* to Houssaye:

J'ai une petite confession à vous faire. C'est en feuilletant, pour la vingtième fois au moins, le fameux *Gaspard de la Nuit*, d'Aloysius Bertrand (un livre connu de vous, de moi et de quelques-uns de nos amis, n'a-t-il pas tous les droits à être appelé *fameux*?) que l'idée m'est venu de tenter quelque chose d'analogue, et d'appliquer à la description de la vie moderne, ou plutôt d'une vie moderne et plus abstraite, le procédé qu'il avait appliqué à la peinture de la vie ancienne, si étrangement pittoresque.³⁰⁴ (Baudelaire's emphasis)

Baudelaire does not seem to have revolution or subversion in mind. On the contrary, seemingly humbled ('humilité', 'humiliation'),³⁰⁵ perhaps by the experiences of 1857, his stated intention is marginal originality on the basis of imitation: 'C'est en feuilletant [...] le fameux *Gaspard de la Nuit*, d'Aloysius Bertrand [...] que l'idée m'est venu de tenter quelque chose d'analogue, et d'appliquer à la description de la vie moderne'. From Johnson's deconstructionist

³⁰³ Kaplan, *Baudelaire's Prose Poems*, pp. 3–4.

³⁰⁴ 'Lettre à Arsène Houssaye', in *Le Spleen de Paris*, in *BOC*, I, 275.

³⁰⁵ See Johnson, *Défigurations du langage poétique*, p. 20.

perspective, if one accepts such a dedicatory emphasis on humiliation as sincere, the statement must ultimately invite the following logic:³⁰⁶ firstly, Baudelaire did not perceive the originality of prose poetry as revolutionary or subversive, or, indeed, as something specifically new; secondly, the tentative imitation of Bertrand's *Gaspard* caused a form of 'révolution involontaire', as Johnson calls it—that is, the subversion of the imitation itself as much as the subversion of poetry by prose, or of the *Idéal* by *spleen*.

Nonetheless, Johnson perceives a certain insincerity, driven by the 'ambiguïté même de cette dédicace':³⁰⁷

Car si Baudelaire a tenu à donner à Bertrand la paternité de son œuvre, c'était pour souligner le caractère 'accidentel' de la discontinuité par laquelle il se trouve non-héritier. Si l'originalité n'est qu'une imitation accidentée, et si le modèle n'est là que pour n'être pas imité, la différence entre filiation et singularité n'est plus une différence de *valeur*, mais une pure *différence*, aussi irréductible qu'indéterminable. Si donc les *Petits Poèmes en prose* comportent une 'seconde révolution' dans l'accident même de leur avènement ['l'avènement du *neuf*'], cette seconde révolution ne consiste pas dans une seconde et meilleure *nouveauté*, dans une trouvaille supplémentaire d'*originalité*, mais dans la façon dont 'l'accident' subvertit le fondement même de l'opposition entre Imitation et Originalité.³⁰⁸ (Johnson's emphasis)

For Johnson, the scholarly focus on the polarity between imitation and originality is misleading: what is, in fact, subverted by Baudelaire's revolutionary take on poetry is precisely that polarity itself. Conceived as such, this most Modernist stand engenders the never-concluded debate on the function and definition of the concept of *mimēsis*, beginning with Plato's *Republic*, Aristotle's *Poetics*, and Horace's *Ars Poetica*. Be that as it may, Johnson concludes this first part of her argument with a discussion of Baudelaire's implied humbleness, eventually making a case that the *dédicace* does, in fact, not suggest a theory of prose poetic

³⁰⁶ I am following Johnson's train of thought. *Ibid.*, pp. 17–23.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 19–20.

genealogy, but, paradoxically, ‘le problème de sa [poésie en prose] propre lecture’: ‘C’est par les interférence de ses indécidabilités que la *Dédicace* se donne à lire; c’est dans “le croisement de leurs innombrables rapports” qu’elle nous invite à errer’.³⁰⁹

Following on from Johnson, critics have increasingly focussed on this apparent insincerity of the *dédicace*, reading it through the lens of irony (I hinted at this earlier in the context of *dédoublement*). Two of the more recent full-length studies on Baudelaire’s prose poetry, Sonya Stephens’ *Baudelaire’s Prose Poems: The Practice and Politics of Irony* and Maria Scott’s aforementioned *Shifting Perspectives*, are prominent examples. For Stephens, along the same lines as Johnson’s argument, the *dédicace* presents the reader ‘a prose poem on the prose poem which provides a commentary on the title and the dedicatory act and, in form and function, speaks of genre’.³¹⁰ Essentially, Stephens asserts of the *dédicace*: ‘[i]t is a preface’.³¹¹ For Johnson, on the other hand, it is ‘un moulin donquichottesque, un moulin qui finit par pulvériser toutes les définitions qu’on essaie d’en extraire’.³¹² The notion of ‘pulvérisation’, when connoting something approximate to ‘subversion’ and ‘révolution’, as it likely does for Johnson, may offer precisely the definition of prose poetry that Baudelaire had in mind—a definition that is none, so to speak. In Stephens’ approach, the critic opts for an emphasis on theory, frequently applying the work of Gérard Genette as her analytical framework. Scott, however, emphasises socio-cultural contextualisation, and does so with virtuoso precision. Particularly noteworthy is her take on what, perhaps, initially inspired the irony or insincerity in Baudelaire’s *dédicace*: that is, inter alia, Houssaye’s reputation as a plagiarist.³¹³ Essentially, Scott argues that the strong insincerity, intrinsic to the *dédicace*, pervades the entirety of *Le Spleen de Paris*. One could argue that this intimate dynamic between the *dédicace* and the fifty prose poems that follow presents itself as a most suitable example of turning vice into virtue.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 23.

³¹⁰ Sonya Stephens, *Baudelaire’s Prose Poems: The Practice and Politics of Irony* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 15.

³¹¹ Ibid., p. 14. Scholarship tends to agree with Stephens in the sense that the *dédicace* is traditionally used as a preface for *Le Spleen de Paris*. Focusing on the unity of the collection, Kaplan argues the opposite, stating: ‘[Baudelaire’s] handwritten memorandum does not include either the dedication “To Arsène Houssaye”, normally considered to be the preface, or the verse “Epilogue”, now placed, rightfully, with the projected third edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal*’. In his own translation of the prose poems, Kaplan places the *dédicace* in an appendix. See Kaplan, *Baudelaire’s Prose Poems*, p. x.

³¹² Johnson, *Défigurations du langage poétique*, p. 28.

³¹³ See Scott, *Baudelaire’s ‘Le Spleen de Paris’*, p. 26.

More importantly, however, in the context of this review, for Kaplan, it is precisely Baudelaire's *seconde révolution* that finally integrates ethics into aesthetics,³¹⁴ thus completing Catani's ethical shift from the aporia of Romanticism to urban evil. In the second edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal* (Kaplan) as well as in *Le Spleen de Paris* (Johnson), the ethics of vice, as the primary source of aesthetic inspiration in material modernity, finally take hold. With a focus on politics, as opposed to ethics, Sanyal would later refer to this integration as the 'ideological investments' of aesthetic form in *Le Spleen de Paris*.³¹⁵ In Baudelaire's prose poetry, ethics as well as politics thus merge not merely within the contemporary definition of aesthetics as '[t]he philosophy of the beautiful' (*OED*), but also within the Kantian conception of aesthetics as essentially addressing sensation and perception (from Greek 'aisthētikos'). From this perspective, a fundamental shift occurs within Rancière's distribution of the sensible and Baudelaire's prose poetry is no longer, simply, 'a matter of art and taste; it is, first of all, a matter of time and space'.³¹⁶

As we know, this study will eventually centre on the notion of time, as opposed to space; and, while it is not an active element of the Idealist epistemology I propose in the following chapters, it is hard to imagine any study addressing Baudelairean modernity that will not eventually face the continuous, conceptual oscillation between *spleen* and the *Idéal*. In conclusion, it is thus interesting to note that for Kaplan the poet's 'renversement [or, perhaps, "subversion" or "pulvérisation"] du langage poétique traditionnel' is predominantly driven by the modern 'artist [transforming into] a self-aware critic, who replaces the transcendent [the *Idéal*] with *temporality* [a core component of *spleen*]' (my emphasis). For Kaplan, this self-aware critic is the figure of the Parisian prowler, the modern artist, who, as we have seen, occupies an uncertain position in relation to aesthetic production in material modernity: 'Deep into that darkness peering, long [he] stood there wondering, fearing, // Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before' ('The Raven'). From that vantage point, the modern artist-turned-self-aware critic may eventually extract *le beau* from *le mal*, the eternal from the transitory, guiding their audience straight into the heart of material modernity and, indeed, modern city existence. Baudelaire was such a Parisian prowler, and, perhaps, an

³¹⁴ Kaplan writes under the subheading 'Conversion to the Real': 'Baudelaire's "second revolution" integrates ethics and art.' Kaplan, *Baudelaire's Prose Poems*, p. 4.

³¹⁵ Sanyal, *The Violence of Modernity*, p. 53.

³¹⁶ Rancière, 'From Politics to Aesthetics?', p. 13.

exemplary one. Keeping in mind, here, Chambers' analytical focus on *knowledge* as the essential precondition for the aesthetic representation of the everyday, from an Idealist epistemological point of view, this study will now make use of the Baudelairean experience of modernity as a cultural-critical gateway, attempting to answer two core questions: firstly, how is knowledge created in material modernity, and, secondly, how does this knowledge—or, perhaps, lack thereof—then, affect modern human existence? In order to make a start, one must return to Baudelaire as the first poet of modernity.

The a priori of Experiencing Modernity: A Return to Charles Baudelaire as the First Poet of Modernity

*Everything is now ultra [...] Nobody knows the self any longer. Nobody comprehends the element in which we roam and work; nobody understands the fabric of our activities. [...] Young people are excited far too early, swept away by the current of time. Richness and all sorts of communication are what the educated world aims for, only to persevere in mediocrity.*³¹⁷

In a letter to a friend dating from 1825, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe expressed the very plain discovery that we no longer comprehend ourselves ('everything is now ultra [...] nobody knows the self any longer'). Goethe remains vague as to why exactly that is the case, but it is helpful that, in his observation, he identifies three specific elements that could be considered the epistemological frame of the individual's sensory perception:³¹⁸ space, time, and society. How exactly these concepts 'frame' the individual's sensory perception is of crucial importance in the argument I propose. First and foremost, however, it is essential to note that in Goethe's statement, space, time, and society are under assault by some sort of phantom menace: 'Nobody comprehends the element in which we roam and work' (space); 'Young people are excited far too early' (time); 'Richness and all sorts of communication are what the educated world aims for, only to persevere in mediocrity' (society). Stability, here, seems shaken. What was previously known is now ultra, extreme, and thus out of the ordinary. Goethe perceived a fundamental change in the fabric of human existence.

³¹⁷ The original citation reads as follows: 'Alles ist jetzt ultra [...] Niemand kennt sich mehr. Niemand begreift das Element, worin er schwebt und wirkt, Niemand den Stoff, den er bearbeitet. [...] Junge Leute werden viel zu früh aufgeregt und im Zeitstrom fortgerissen. Reichthum und alle möglichen Facilitäten der Communication sind es, worauf die gebildete Welt ausgeht, sich zu überbilden, und dadurch in der Mittelmäßigkeit zu verharren [*sic*].' As cited in: Heinrich Döring, *Johann Wolfgang von Goethes Biographie* (1853) (Bremen: Europäischer Hochschulverlag, 2009), pp. 133–34. All translations are my own. In Goethe's letter, the term 'ultra' has no directly discernible political context. Of the various definitions suggested by the *OED*, the following is the most suitable: 'Going beyond what is usual or ordinary; excessive, extreme, immoderate.'

³¹⁸ I have chosen 'sensory perception' over 'cognition' in order to facilitate terminological access to the argument I propose, 'perception' being a crucial term and concept in any approach to Idealist epistemology.

But how exactly do space, time, and society frame the individual's sensory perception? At first glance, all three concepts have little more in common than theoretical complexity. Following on from the Cartesian efforts to visualise algebraic values in the form of Euclidian geometry, space is traditionally conceived as a mathematical construct, comprised of three dimensions (X, Y, Z).³¹⁹ Time, then, is complementary in its function as the fourth dimension, allowing one to discard any notion of space as static and to perceive it as a continuum.³²⁰ As we know, the research focus of this study is set on time, and it is partly the aim of this chapter to disentangle, conceptually, Cartesian spatial dimensions from their temporal counterpart. Even more importantly, however, at this early stage, and in the spirit of Idealist epistemology, it is crucial to return to the metaphysical origins of both—space and time—in order to avoid being distracted by existing, often discipline-specific preconceptions.³²¹ In cultural studies the notion of space seems mostly limited to physical space, for example, in the form of urban versus rural or, indeed, public versus private space. Time, on the other hand, is often reduced to functioning as a synonym for the diachronic passing thereof. History, in other words. In literary studies, then, space is frequently addressed as textual space, the space filled by text as well as the space created by text. Time is also addressed, but mostly with regards to the reception or production of narrative as well as the specific percolation of time within narrative: narrative time.

So let me return to metaphysics. In his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781),³²² Immanuel Kant posits at the beginning of his introduction that '[t]here can be no doubt that all

³¹⁹ For a helpful introduction to Cartesian geometry, see Mary Domski, 'Descartes' Mathematics', *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2013), ed. by Edward N. Zalta <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/descartes-mathematics>> [accessed 12 April 2015].

³²⁰ The reference to space as a continuum serves initial clarity only. Most naturally, however, the notion of fragmentation, as applied throughout this study, will challenge the concept of continuity. For a more detailed nineteenth-century philosophical perspective on continuous and fragmented (or, perhaps, homogenous and heterogeneous) space and time, see Henri Bergson, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (1889), ed. by Frédéric Worms (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2007). I shall refer to and explain some aspects of his argument at a later stage in this chapter.

³²¹ The *OED* definition of 'metaphysics' reads as follows: 'The branch of philosophy that deals with the first principles of things or reality, including questions about being, substance, time and space, causation, change, and identity (which are presupposed in the special sciences but do not belong to any one of them); theoretical philosophy as the ultimate science of being and knowing.'

³²² Initially, I have used the scholarly German edition: Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1781), ed. by Wilhelm Weischedel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974). For the purpose of citation, however, I have used the scholarly English translation by Norman Kemp Smith, *Immanuel Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason'* (London: Macmillan, 1929). Smith has also provided a useful commentary on Kant's *Critique*: Norman Kemp Smith, *A Commentary to Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason'*, 2nd edn (New York, NY: Humanities Press, 1950). The

our knowledge begins with experience'.³²³ Shortly afterwards, however, Kant complicates the matter at hand: 'But though all our knowledge begins with experience, it does not follow that it all arises out of experience.'³²⁴ As oxymoronic as it may seem at first, this is Kant's analytical premise. According to the philosopher, it is an extremely difficult, if not impossible task to determine whether the knowledge one may create is resolutely grounded in 'experience' ('Erfahrung'), or whether experience is itself composed of 'sensibility' and 'comprehension', or 'perception' and 'conception' ('Sinnlichkeit' and 'Verstand').³²⁵ From this duality, Kant, then, launches the core concern of his *Critique*: to inquire whether there is knowledge independent of experience, being based *purely* on sensibility, as opposed to comprehension, or perception, as opposed to conception. 'Such knowledge is entitled *a priori*, and distinguished from the *empirical*, which has its sources in *a posteriori*, that is, in experience' (Kant's emphasis).³²⁶

Specifically investigating the acquisition of experience and the creation of knowledge prior to (a priori) experience (a posteriori), Kant quickly makes a case for space and time as the only two sensory stimuli to be perceived a priori; the only two sensory stimuli thus to be considered metaphysical. Both encompass the individual's (self-) consciousness. For Kant, in other words, the individual does not need 'to think' or 'to reason' ('denken') in order to be (cogito ergo sum); the individual simply *is*, because they are, always, by the very nature

following part of my argument is based on Kant's 'Introduction' as well as the immediately succeeding first part of his 'transcendental doctrine of elements' ('transzendente Elementarlehre'), pp. 41–91.

³²³ Smith, *Immanuel Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason'*, p. 41.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

³²⁵ Terminologically speaking, I am manoeuvring through murky waters, and, on this one occasion, I have steered away from Smith in order to provide slightly more suitable alternatives. The specific 'experience' referred to, here, Kant labels 'Erfahrungserkenntnis', which Smith translates as 'empirical knowledge'; 'sensibility' and 'comprehension' also refer to 'Eindrücke', which Smith translates as 'impressions'; finally, 'perception' and 'conception' also refer to 'Erkenntnisvermögen', which Smith translates as 'faculty of knowledge'. For a helpful commentary on the two mental faculties that make up experience ('sensibility' and 'comprehension' or 'perception' and 'conception'), see Patricia W. Kitcher, 'Introduction', in Werner S. Pluhar, *Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason'* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1996), pp. xxxii–xxxv (in particular p. xxxii). Two further details should be noted at this point: firstly, I have used 'comprehension' as a synonym for Smith's translation of 'Verstand' as 'understanding' in order to provide terminological coherence within the argument I propose; secondly, as Kitcher points out, 'perception' and 'conception' are more contemporary translations of Kantian 'sensibility' and 'understanding', and I have opted for the former. Moreover, when referring to Kant directly, I have tried to maintain the distinction between perception and conception. It was, however, impossible to do so throughout this study as it would have overburdened the argument—any argument—with theoretical and terminological complexity. When moving away from Kant, I have thus opted for 'perception' as well as for the verb 'to perceive' in the broadest possible sense of the term, including a priori as well as a posteriori perception. As we know, in the case of the latter, for Kant, perception turns into conception.

³²⁶ Smith, *Immanuel Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason'*, pp. 42–43.

of their being, embedded in a priori space and time. Subsequent to his introduction, Kant thus proposes the concept of ‘transcendental aesthetic’ (‘transzendente Ästhetik’). Both terms are problematic. ‘Transcendental’ designates the ‘transcendence’ of space and time within the individual’s a priori sensibility/perception. It has no (or only indirect) ties with later schools of thought such as Transcendentalism or Mysticism, as previously addressed with reference to Swedenborg and Baudelairean *correspondances*.³²⁷ Moreover, as already hinted at by Jacques Rancière, ‘aesthetic’, in Kant’s first *Critique*, refers to the etymological meaning of ‘sensitive’ or ‘perceptive’ (from Greek ‘aisthētikos’), rather than to the more contemporary definition of ‘[t]he philosophy of the beautiful’ (*OED*).³²⁸ In order to avoid confusion and to streamline terminology, ‘transcendental aesthetic’ will simply be referred to as ‘epistemology’, although I shall largely limit my approach to its metaphysical dimension.

Kantian epistemology, then, is grounded in the individual’s metaphysical sphere and begins, specifically, with the idea of ‘intuition’ (‘Anschauung’) and with the basic understanding that all intuition is linked to the individual’s ability ‘to perceive’ (‘empfinden’) objectivity via the senses—via the individual’s sensibility/perception. This, too, may offer an explanation as to why English translations of Kant’s *Critique* seem to struggle with opting for either ‘sensibility’ or ‘perception’ for the German ‘Sinnlichkeit’. The former seems to be placing an emphasis on the senses, the latter turning passivity into activity. Via sensibility/perception, then, *thinking* or *reasoning* enables the mind to transform ‘objects’ (‘Gegenstände’) into ‘concepts’ (‘Begriffe’). Sensibility, here, is turned into comprehension, and perception becomes conception. The key statement in full reads as follows:

Objects are *given* to us by means of sensibility, and it alone yields us *intuitions*; they are thought through the understanding [comprehension], and from the understanding arise *concepts*. But all thought must, directly or indirectly, by way of certain characters, relate ultimately to intuitions, and therefore, with us, to sensibility, because in no other way can an object be given to us.³²⁹ (Kant’s emphasis)

³²⁷ On this problematic, see Kitcher, ‘Introduction’, in Pluhar, *Kant’s ‘Critique of Pure Reason’*, pp. xxvii–xxxii (in particular p. xxxii).

³²⁸ The more contemporary definition of the term ‘aesthetic’, as provided by the *OED*, is addressed in Kant’s third and final *Critique of Judgement* (1790).

³²⁹ Smith, *Immanuel Kant’s ‘Critique of Pure Reason’*, p. 65.

To put it slightly more straightforwardly: a priori sensibility/perception allows the individual to perceive objects, which are, first and foremost, considered intuitions. Intuitions are not always objects, but objects are always intuitions. This distinction occurs, when, via the individual's ability *to think* or *to reason*, that is, via the individual's comprehension/conception, intuitions turn into concepts. A concept is never an object; it only ever refers to an object. To say it with Kantian obscurity: 'Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind.'³³⁰ Imagine a wooden board with four legs hovering through space. For as long the individual does *not* perceive the wooden board with four legs, it remains an object. If the individual perceives the wooden board with four legs *without knowing* (not yet having acquired that experience) what 'a table' is, the wooden board with four legs becomes an intuition. But the intuition is blind and the thought is empty. However, if the individual perceives the wooden board with four legs *knowing* what 'a table' is (already having acquired that experience), then, the intuition becomes a concept. The intuition is no longer blind, the thought is filled with content.³³¹ In both cases, the individual's sensibility/perception provides the epistemological foundation.

Early on in the lengthy and often obscure discussion of his epistemology, Kant, then, identifies two sensory stimuli that can be perceived a priori:³³² before any form of experience has had an impact on the individual's sensibility/perception, before sensibility turns into comprehension, perception into conception, and a priori into a posteriori. As we know,

³³⁰ Ibid., p. 93. In the context of a priori space and time, Paul Guyer states: '[T]he key claim is that the representations of space and time cannot be concepts abstracted from repeated experience of particular objects, because such objects, and presumably the experience of them, can only be individuated by separating them from each other through their location in different positions in space and time.' See 'Absolute Idealism and the rejection of Kantian Dualism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Idealist Epistemology*, ed. by Karl Ameriks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 37–56 (p. 44).

³³¹ The examples are mine. Terminologically speaking, Kant also refers to an object as 'sensation' ('Empfindung') and 'empirical intuition' ('empirische Anschauung'). In his commentary, Smith not only provides a helpful guide through this terminological maze, but also points out Kant's pragmatism in choosing 'intuition' over the much more accessible 'sensation': the latter 'could not be made to cover space and time'. See Smith, *A Commentary to Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason'*, pp. 79–98 (p. 79).

³³² Once again, a continuous challenge is the *purely* theoretical nature of Kant's argument. To make it explicit: the individual's a priori objectivity—their sensibility/perception—can only ever be *purely* theoretical as some form of experience and knowledge is always already in existence. This explains the title of his first critique: *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781; my emphasis). The term 'pure', here, signifies that subjectivity is not yet 'tainted' by objectivity, that perception is not yet conception, that experience has not yet been acquired and that knowledge has not yet been created. In more practical terms, the individual's perception of a priori objectivity can only ever occur *subconsciously*. The moment the individual becomes conscious of experience and knowledge, a priori turns into a posteriori. Kant addresses these challenges in the subsequent *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788; my emphasis).

these two sensory stimuli are space and time; for Kant, space and time constitute the individual's only possible a priori objectivity.³³³ Perceiving space and time thus enables and initiates the individual's epistemological process of *thinking* or *reasoning*; space and time provide the epistemological foundation for the creation of all knowledge in Idealism.³³⁴ Kant explains: 'Time and space are, therefore, two sources of knowledge from which bodies of a priori [...] knowledge can be derived.'³³⁵ A return to Baudelaire's 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne' (1863), coupled with a brief self-experiment, clarifies the Kantian approach.

Perceiving Space and Time: Baudelaire's Modern Artist and Child

In 'L'Artiste, homme du monde, homme des foules et enfant',³³⁶ Baudelaire famously juxtaposes the modern artist's faculties—particularly, their sublime *imagination* as 'la reine des facultés'³³⁷—with the child's ability to see 'tout en *nouveauté*; il [the child] est toujours *ivre*' (Baudelaire's emphasis).³³⁸ What do these terms—'nouveauté', 'ivre'—mean in a Baudelairean context and how may they help us understand the Kantian metaphysical sphere of the individual's a priori sensibility/perception?³³⁹ In simple terms, a child, so the idea goes, has not yet acquired experience and has thus not yet created knowledge. Perception is still fresh, unfiltered, and untainted. Perception is not yet conception. The child sees everything for

³³³ Kant reiterates this throughout his argument: space and time constitute the individual's a priori objectivity. Almost thirty years after the publication of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), it is Hegel, who argues in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) that, next to space and time, the object 'by itself' is also perceived a priori. See the section on 'Idealist Epistemology in "A une passante"' in chapter 4.

³³⁴ Hegel would later write: 'Reason is the certainty of consciousness that it is all reality; thus does idealism express its Notion [*sic*].' Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, 'The Certainty and Truth of Reason', in 'Reason', in *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 139–210 (p. 140). I shall return to this citation in my conclusion to chapter 4. On the difficulty of defining the concept of *reason*, particularly in the transition from Enlightenment to Idealism, see Frederick Beiser, 'The Enlightenment and Idealism', in *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*, ed. by Karl Ameriks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 18–36.

³³⁵ Smith, *Immanuel Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason'* (London: Macmillan, 1929), p. 80.

³³⁶ 'L'Artiste, homme du monde, homme des foules et enfant', in 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne', in *BOC*, II, 687–94.

³³⁷ 'La Reine des facultés' is a pivotal section in Baudelaire's 'Salon de 1859'. It refers to the modern artist's *imagination* as the last line of defence against objectified nature in the form of photography. See *BOC*, II, 619–23. The reader should also be reminded of Margaret Gilman's definition of Baudelairean *imagination* as 'all-embracing'. See Margaret Gilman, *Baudelaire the Critic* (New York, NY: Octagon Books, 1971), pp. 224–25. Baudelaire's concerns, as regards photography, will be addressed, more explicitly, in the section on 'Photography, Memory, Imagination (and Happiness)' in chapter 4.

³³⁸ 'L'Artiste, homme du monde, homme des foules et enfant', in 'Le Peintre', in *BOC*, II, 690.

³³⁹ From this point onwards, I shall exclusively refer to 'perception' and 'conception' as the more contemporary translations of Kantian 'Sinnlichkeit' and 'Verstand'.

the first time ('tout en nouveauté') and becomes intoxicated ('ivre') by the sensory excitement occurring in the wake of continuous discovery. This is a privileged position, as it endows the child with the rare gift of sheltering subjective individuality (where objects are turned into intuitions) from an otherwise objective reality (where intuitions are turned into concepts). This is of particular importance within the specific context of material modernity and modern human existence. In the Baudelairean universe, the child comes closest to the philosophical conception of a priori as a form of sensibility/perception existing prior to experience. It is a fading power, though, as the level of objective reality taking over subjective individuality, of conception taking over perception, stands in an isomorphic relationship to the increasing level of maturity as the child grows older. Artistic genius is the only means to defend against such a decay and—as we shall see towards the end of this chapter—eventual depletion of subjective individuality in the form of socio-collective homogenisation. A little later, Baudelaire thus writes: 'le génie n'est que l'enfance retrouvée à volonté' (Baudelaire's emphasis).³⁴⁰ The modern artist's *imagination*—their exclusive genius—allows, as far as possible, the exclusion of conception from perception. In the specific context of aesthetic production, the modern artist's *imagination* allows for objective reality to be infused with subjective individuality, which, then, filters into an artwork at a later stage. I shall further define this process as 'mnemonic filtering' in the course of chapter 4.³⁴¹ At this point, however, the reader should simply be reminded of the crucial importance of subjective individuality in the context of Baudelaire's *le beau moderne*, as discuss in the chapter 2.

Returning to the second term, 'ivre', we may note that the prose poem 'Enivrez-vous' (1864) approaches precisely this dynamic—or dialectic, as chapter 4 will argue—between subjective individuality and objective reality,³⁴² and particularly the defence of the former against the latter. Interestingly, time features as the scenario's omnipresent villain. The poem is relatively short and worth citing in full:

Il faut être toujours ivre. Tout est là: c'est l'unique question. Pour ne pas sentir l'horrible fardeau du Temps qui brise vos épaules et vous penche vers la terre, il faut vous enivrer sans trêve.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ See in particular the section on 'Photography, Memory, Imagination (and Happiness)'.

³⁴² 'Enivrez-vous', in *Le Spleen de Paris*, in BOC, I, 337.

Mais de quoi? De vin, de poésie ou de vertu, à votre guise. Mais enivrez-vous.

Et si quelquefois, sur les marches d'un palais, sur l'herbe verte d'un fossé, dans la solitude morne de votre chambre, vous vous réveillez, l'ivresse déjà diminuée ou disparue, demandez au vent, à la vague, à l'étoile, à l'oiseau, à l'horloge, à tout ce qui fuit, à tout ce qui gémit, à tout ce qui parle, demandez quelle heure il est; et le vent, la vague, l'étoile, l'oiseau, l'horloge, vous répondront: 'Il est l'heure de s'enivrer! Pour n'être pas les esclaves martyrisés du Temps, enivrez-vous; enivrez-vous sans cesse! De vin, de poésie ou de vertu, à votre guise.'

One may read 'Enivrez-vous' through the lens of Kantian epistemology and, specifically, the notion that time in conjunction with space—as the only two sensory stimuli to be perceived a priori—enables the individual to become conscious of the self. In my reading of the poem, time is perceived from the position of the generic individual, neither modern artist nor child, but the Second Empire *Monsieur* and *Madame Tout-le-monde*. This is signified by the symbolisation of time (note the capitalisation of 'Temps') as a burden weighing heavily on our souls, slowing us down, distracting us from achieving what truly matters, before death manifests itself as our predetermined end ('qui brise vos épaules et vous penche vers la terre').³⁴³ The generic individual's (self-) consciousness revolves around this domination (and modern disfiguration) of time and eventually turns into (self-) identification: the generic individual turns into a cog in the machinery called industrialisation—exact, efficient, reliable—for, as we all know, time is money. The only means of protecting oneself from such a temporal oppression is intoxication, or *ivresse*.

While this, of course, feeds into the many (medical or psychoanalytic) discourses addressing substance abuse in the name of escapism, the final paragraph makes very clear that this is not the poet's intent. The same *ivre* that comes naturally to Baudelaire's modern artist and child—in either their genius or inexperience—can also be created 'artificially' by the appreciation of the manifold beauty revolving around us. The term 'artificial', here, suggests

³⁴³ My reading of the verse poem 'L'Horloge' (1860) in the section on 'Photography, Memory, Imagination (and Happiness)' in chapter 4 will also address the conceptual link between death and objectified time. Eventually, this will translate into a theory of Baudelairean fatalism as a form of existential, socio-collective determinism. See the section on 'Society and Existence from the Viewpoint of Death' in chapter 5.

that the poem can be read as a plea for all to consciously direct their efforts in precisely that direction. The title, ‘Enivrez-vous’, in its function as an imperative, further supports this claim and, indeed, highlights the urgency of the matter. Moreover, I have chosen the term ‘beauty’ intentionally, in this approach to the poem, as it links my own reflections on Baudelaire’s *le beau moderne* to the present enquiry: it stresses the nature of beauty as an *experience*, as opposed to an aesthetico-Idealist doctrine à la Ingres’ neo-Classicism. Yes, wine may also provide one form of intoxication, helpful in the establishment of *distance* (Chambers) between subjective individuality and objective reality; but so does an engagement with poetry and virtue (‘de poésie ou de vertu’);³⁴⁴ so, too, does an intimate metaphorical chat with the sea, the stars, and the fauna and flora (‘à la vague, à l’étoile, à l’oiseau’);³⁴⁵ and so does the realisation that with the rise of urban evil (Catani) in the course of material modernity, beauty can be found only in the sheltering of subjective individuality from objective reality, or, from a Kantian perspective, in the sheltering of intuition from conception. In this context, the Baudelairean *ivre* is furnished, almost, with an inverted meaning: it may act as a synonym for staying sane in an otherwise insane world.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁴ The notion of virtue is complex in Baudelaire and links directly to the French nineteenth-century discourse on *l’Art pour l’Art*. In the context of ‘Enivrez-vous’, the reference to virtue could, for example, address the notion of turning vice into virtue as a conceptual synonym for aesthetic production in material modernity. In light of Damian Catani’s ‘ethics of vice’, I have discussed this in chapter 2 and particularly in the section on ‘Second Empire Aesthetics’.

³⁴⁵ I wish to acknowledge, here, that I have consciously omitted Baudelaire’s repeated mention of ‘l’horloge’ in the poem as part of the series: ‘la vague’, ‘l’étoile’, ‘l’oiseau’. Within the theoretico-philosophical model I develop and apply, it creates an aporia for the following reason: if anything, it is the clock (or the watch) that objectifies time, rendering it oppressive in the eye of the beholder, and thus creating the burden ‘qui brise vos épaules et vous penche vers la terre’. Baudelaire himself makes this explicit in the 1860 verse poem ‘L’Horloge’, where time is deified as a clock, forcing its subjects into submission. The section on ‘Photography, Memory, Imagination (and Happiness)’ in chapter 4 will further elaborate. In the context of ‘Enivrez-vous’, it could be suggested that the mention of ‘l’horloge’ subsequent to ‘la vague’, ‘l’étoile’, and ‘l’oiseau’ serves as a textual reminder that for as long as material modernity objectifies time, for as long as objectified time reigns supreme, in the end, there is no escape from it (‘à tout ce qui fuit’). For Cheryl Krueger, who reads the poem similarly to my own analysis, the clock simply succumbs to the invitation to get intoxicated: ‘In this [the reader’s] escape from time-boundedness even the clock refuses to tell time, joining instead nature’s fugitive creations in the call to “get high”’ (my emphasis). Cheryl Krueger, *The Art of Procrastination: Baudelaire’s Poetry in Prose* (Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press, 2007), p. 34.

³⁴⁶ The terms ‘sane’ and ‘insane’ serve as suggestive analogies only and I do not believe that ‘Enivrez-vous’ directly addresses either as its underlying theme. In the well-known prose poem ‘Mademoiselle Bistouri’, however, one could argue that it is *ivresse*—the narrator’s engagement with virtue by turning vice into virtue—that grants access to a world of insanity, while, simultaneously, sheltering the narrator (more specifically, in the context of this study, his subjective individuality) from this world of insanity. For the latter poem, see *Le Spleen de Paris*, in BOC, I, 353–6.

By being either genius or inexperienced, it is thus Baudelaire's modern artist and child for whom the task of sheltering subjective individuality from objective reality is most easily accomplished. In order to bring this discussion back to the sphere of Kantian a priori or, indeed, *pure* perception beyond terminological analogies, I wish to focus on one last element of 'Enivrez-vous'. Almost unnoticeably, Baudelaire situates the demand, or even need for *ivresse* at a very specific moment in the individual's everyday: after waking. The terms 'diminuée' and 'disparue' furthermore suggest the individual's desire to sustain a state of *ivresse* ('vous vous réveillez, l'ivresse déjà diminuée ou disparue'). This suggests that the clearest manifestation of Baudelairean *ivresse* is not, in fact, the modern artist's genius, nor *imagination* more generally, but the *rêve* or *rêverie* interrupted by the moment of waking, or the moment of gaining (self-) consciousness.³⁴⁷ It is interesting to note, then, that the Baudelairean process of sheltering subjective individuality—*ivresse*, as epitomised by the mental states of *rêve* and *rêverie*—runs parallel to my own understanding of a dream being the closest possible 'practical' (as opposed to 'theoretical') representation of Kantian *pure* subjective individuality in the form of a priori perception.

At this juncture, I should like to invite the reader to undertake the intellectual exercise of creating a *rêve* or *rêverie* from scratch.³⁴⁸ As is the case with the creation of the biblical universe, let us assume that, at the beginning, there is nothing: a state of mind (somewhat) synonymous with the concept of a priori. We cannot see, we cannot hear, we cannot touch, we cannot smell, we cannot taste; objectivity is still non-existent and our senses are running dry. But, then, there was light (the human world is a visual one),³⁴⁹ and suddenly we can see our own hand moving up and down in front of our face. We cannot identify this object as a 'hand', for the experience of what a hand is has not yet been acquired, knowledge has not yet been created, and our hand is still an intuition, as opposed to a concept; but we

³⁴⁷ I am reading the term 'rêve' as a night-time dream, whereas 'rêverie' translates, simply, as daydream; hence, the inverted commas bracketing my use of 'to wake'. Both concepts will merge in the course of this chapter and a clearer distinction between the two is unnecessary for the argument I propose. Moreover, both differ from the concept of 'ivresse' only insofar as the states of *rêve* and *rêverie* should always be considered a form of *ivresse*, whereas *ivresse* is not necessarily manifested in the form of either a *rêve* or a *rêverie*. Up until the early nineteenth century, *rêverie* was much closer to raving than it was to daydreaming.

³⁴⁸ This is my own approach to the Kantian argument. The examples given in this 'intellectual exercise'—the reader will encounter hands, palm trees, and the devil himself—are mine and serve argumentative clarity only.

³⁴⁹ Scientific support for this claim can be found here, for example: Michael Posner et al., 'An Information Processing Account of its Origins and Significance', *Psychological Review*, 83.2 (April 1976), 157–71.

perceive *something* as part of the space expanding before us. Space, at this point, is the only objectivity we can perceive—that is, a priori—and the intuition (our hand) is part of that space/objectivity and vice versa. In this scenario, objectivity emerges *purely* from subjectivity. Kant writes at this point: ‘With the sole exception of space there is no subjective representation, referring to something *outer*, which could be entitled [at once] objective [and] *a priori*’ (Kant’s emphasis).³⁵⁰ He continues a little later: ‘[N]othing intuited [perceived] in space is a thing [object] in itself [...] objects in themselves are quite unknown to us, and that what we call outer objects are nothing but mere representations of our sensibility [intuitions], the form of which is space’.³⁵¹ It does not matter if the intuition we perceive is our hand, a palm tree, or the feverish incarnation of the devil himself. What matters is that we perceive an intuition—any intuition—and that means, simultaneously, that we must also perceive space. The Kantian approach to space as the individual’s only possible a priori objectivity is complex and to clarify this further, it is useful to return to the example of our hand moving up and down in front of our face. ‘Moving’ is the key term. Still not knowing what a hand is, the individual does know that the intuition (our hand) leaves a certain point in space (point A) and arrives at an entirely different point in space (point B), and that point A cannot possibly be the same as point B. The individual perceives space as a priori objectivity.

The idea of movement through space also allows for a closer inspection of time,³⁵² the second sensory stimulus that, according to Kant, is perceived a priori. For Kant, the individual’s perception of time can never be based on experience and knowledge, for even without experience and knowledge the individual is still capable of perceiving actions taking place consecutively as well as simultaneously.³⁵³ To clarify: for Kant, time is the dimension that adds ‘actuality’ (‘Wirklichkeit’) to the intuitions, which the individual may perceive in a priori space. Next to space, time is thus the very foundation of perception (‘Time is a necessary representation that underlies all intuitions.’).³⁵⁴ One could argue that to perceive time is the individual’s *purest* possible perception: while space is exclusively an *external* phenomenon—

³⁵⁰ Smith, *Immanuel Kant’s ‘Critique of Pure Reason’*, p. 72–3.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 73–4.

³⁵² Smith translates the idea of movement through space as ‘concept of alteration’ or ‘concept of motion’.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 74. Kant writes at this point: ‘Time is not an empirical concept that has been derived from any experience. For neither coexistence nor succession would ever come within our perception, if the representation of time were not presupposed as underlying them *a priori*. Only on the presupposition of time can we represent to ourselves a number of things as existing at one and the same time (simultaneously) or at different times (successively)’ (Kant’s emphasis).

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 74–75.

as the only possible a priori objectivity, emerging from subjectivity—time is perceived *internally*. It allows for the individual to make sense of that which is presented in external space. Movement is the individual’s key to comprehending that point A does not equal point B and that both are distributed in space. But movement is itself a perception of time and suddenly point A is not merely distinguished from point B, but, indeed, the individual realises that the moment our hand leaves point A cannot possibly be the same moment our hand arrives at point B.³⁵⁵ This is what Kant refers to as actions taking place consecutively. Imagine our hand’s movement from point A to point B is caught on a film reel: an apparently fluid movement is broken down into small, singular actions, subsequently chained together. Moreover, the individual is able to perceive the following: while our right hand may move from point A to point B, our left may move from point C to point D. The two are completely independent of one another and relative not only to spatial configuration (the intuition is here and thus not there), but also to the individual’s very own temporal manipulation (the object is here, but they eventually want it there). This is what Kant refers to as actions taking place simultaneously; at least two chains of singular actions running parallel to one another. Without having acquired experience—a hand is still unknown to us—the individual perceives the ontological condition physics has since labelled ‘space-time’: the complex conceptual entanglement of space and time allowing us to discard any notion of the former as static and to perceive it as a continuum. Theoretically considered as the only two sensory stimuli one may perceive a priori, in the Baudelairean universe, space and time become closely linked to the state of mind referred to as *rêve*, *rêverie*, or, indeed, *ivresse*.³⁵⁶

³⁵⁵ While Kant refers to the idea of movement only in passing, it is key to his reflections on a priori space and time. Kant, once more: ‘Here I may add that the concept of alteration, and with it the concept of motion, as alteration of place, is possible only through and in the representation of time; and that if this representation were not an *a priori* (inner) intuition, no concept, no matter what it might be, could render comprehensible the possibility of an alteration, that is, of a combination of contradictorily opposed predicates in one and the same object, for instance, the being and the not-being of one and the same thing on one and the same place. Only in time can two contradictorily opposed predicates meet in one and the same object, namely, *one after the other*’ (Kant’s emphasis). *Ibid.*, p. 76.

³⁵⁶ These are suggestive analogies only. Kantian a priori space and time *does not* denote (and only indirectly connotes) the aesthetico-inspirational capacities of Baudelairean *rêve*, *rêverie*, and *ivresse*.

Walter Benjamin and the First Poet of Modernity

I have started these early reflections by referring to space, time, *and* society as the individual's epistemological frame. If it can be agreed, here, that 'space' in conjunction with 'time' forms the a priori side of this frame, then, the notion of 'society' must, to some extent, denote the a posteriori counterpart. This is how it works. Interpreting perception as a stream of stimuli, captured by the senses and transformed into knowledge via experience—what I refer, for now, to as the individual's epistemological process—it follows that the concept of society, then, defines knowledge as the sum of its individual parts, as provided by *us*, the members of society; as long as, of course, individual knowledge has multiplied, sufficiently, via communication to be considered socio-collective knowledge, or *common knowledge*.³⁵⁷

At this stage, we need not be concerned with the specific Idealist epistemological mechanics of how knowledge is created beyond the sphere of a priori or *pure* perception (individual), to subsequently multiply into common knowledge via communication (society). For now, let us consider the concept of society as a reflection of common knowledge, or, rather, the state of society as a reflection of the state of common knowledge. In this context, society thus serves as a representation of our socio-collective a posteriori. From this, it seems reasonable to assume that one's perception of society is directly connected to a priori space and time via the individual's epistemological process. At this juncture, two questions strike me as crucial. Is the fundamental change that Goethe perceived in the fabric of human existence linked to a fundamental change in the individual's perception of a priori space and time? And if so, does the way in which the individual perceives a priori space and time, have an impact on the nature of society—its function, dynamic, structure, and so forth—next to aesthetics, as yet another mode of representation of our socio-collective a posteriori?

³⁵⁷ For a more detailed approach to individual knowledge from an Idealist epistemological point of view, see the section on 'Idealist Epistemology in "A une passante"' in chapter 4. For the multiplication of individual knowledge into *common knowledge* via communication, see chapter 5 and in particular the section on 'Exchange, Communication, the Blasé (and the Dandy)'.

Throughout this study, I shall explore these questions in greater detail, beginning with Walter Benjamin's essay, 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire' (1940),³⁵⁸ where the critic concludes the following:

The semblance ['Schein'] of a crowd with a soul and movement all its own, the luster that had dazzled the flâneur, had faded for him. To heighten the impression of the crowd's baseness, he envisioned the day on which even the fallen women, the outcasts, would readily espouse a well-ordered life, condemn libertinism, and reject everything except money.³⁵⁹ Betrayed by these last allies of his, Baudelaire battled the crowd—with the important rage of someone fighting the rain or the wind. This is the nature of the *perception* ['Erlebnis'] to which Baudelaire has given the weight of *experience* ['Erfahrung']. He named the price for which [this] *experience* of modernity could be had: the disintegration of the aura in the immediate *perception* of shock ['Chockerlebnis']. He paid dearly for consenting to this disintegration—but it is the law of his poetry. This poetry appears in the sky of the Second Empire as 'a star without atmosphere'.³⁶⁰ (my emphasis)

In this passage, one encounters the theoretical foundation of a familiar legend: Baudelaire as the first poet of modernity. Just as Goethe did in 1825, Baudelaire, too, perceived a fundamental change in the fabric of human existence—an existence, as we know, specifically linked to the socio-cultural and socio-economic conditions of material modernity in full bloom.³⁶¹ But to view 'modernity', here, as an exclusively 'material' phenomenon hardly does justice to the complexity of the task at hand: to apply the Baudelairean experience of precisely that

³⁵⁸ Walter Benjamin, 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire', trans. by Harry Zohn, in *The Writer of Modern Life*, ed. by Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 170–210.

³⁵⁹ On the socio-destructive capacity of modern, capitalist, money economy, see 'Exchange, Communication, the Blasé (and the Dandy)' in chapter 5.

³⁶⁰ In his translation of Benjamin's essay, Harry Zohn has translated the term 'Erlebnis' into 'immediate experience' and 'Erfahrung' into 'long experience'. I have changed the former to 'perception' and the latter, simply, to 'experience' in order to provide greater compatibility with Kantian terminology as well as with the argument I propose. The 'experience of modernity' originally read 'sensation of modernity'. Benjamin, 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire', p. 210.

³⁶¹ The origin or ascent of material modernity is frequently located in the Second Empire of Napoléon III with its heavy focus on economic rejuvenation and prosperity. It seems worth pointing out, however, that '[m]any aspects of urban modernity that marked Second Empire and fin-de-siècle Paris were already in place by the 1820s, including a culture based on commodification, spectacle, and speculation'. Sharon Marcus, 'Seeing through Paris, 1820–1848', in *Housing and Dwelling: Perspectives on Modern Domestic Architecture*, ed. by Barbara Miller Lane (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 120.

modernity as a cultural-critical gateway in order to eventually access and scrutinise modern society and, by extension, modern human existence from the viewpoint of Idealist epistemology. In order to realise the full potential of the citation above, one must, therefore, first understand Benjamin's concept of the dialectical image, and for that it is essential to further elaborate not merely on Baudelaire's, but also on the critic's very own view of modernity.

Andrew Benjamin writes about the modernity of his namesake: '[I]ts occurrence is thought in terms of a break or an interruption'; more specifically, an interruption occurring in the Benjaminian attempts 'to develop a relationship between modernity and its necessary interarticulation with a philosophical conception of history.'³⁶² AB explores the depths of Benjaminian modernity via the term 'caesura', contrasting its use in WB's essay on 'Goethe's *Elective Affinities*', situated at the beginning of his writing chronology, with the term's resurfacing in Convolute N of the *Arcades Project*, which was, of course, far from completed by the time of WB's death in 1940. AB uses the following passage from WB's essay to open the discussion:

In the symbol of the star, the hope that Goethe had to conceive for the lovers had once appeared to him. That sentence, which so to speak with Hölderlin contains the caesura of the work and in which, while the embracing lovers seal their fate, everything pauses, reads: "*Hope* shot across the sky above their heads like a falling star." They are unaware of it, of course... (my emphasis)

The interruptive caesura referred to, here, in the context of Benjaminian modernity, is introduced by the symbol of the star. 'The presence of the star,' AB argues, 'cannot be divorced from its presence as symbol.'³⁶³ This is for two reasons: firstly, Goethe's use of the term 'like' renders the presence of the star exclusively comparative in the eyes of the narrator and, by extension, in the eyes of the readership; secondly, for the narrator to establish the star's symbolic meaning, narrative time has to come to a halt, or, in WB's own terms, 'everything

³⁶² Andrew Benjamin, 'Benjamin's Modernity', in *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*, ed. by David S. Ferris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 97. In order to avoid confusion, in the following, Andrew Benjamin will be referred to as AB, whereas Walter Benjamin will be WB.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.98. The reader should be reminded, here, of the introductory section on Poe and Baudelaire in chapter 1, and, specifically, that Baudelaire's aesthetic methodology is most frequently associated with that of symbolism.

pauses'. And this is precisely why Goethe's sentence 'contains the caesura of the work'. The instant in which 'everything pauses', is the only instant in which the symbol may unfold its meaning in absolute terms. This is the instant furnishing a priori or *pure* perception (subjective individuality), as opposed to a posteriori experience (objective reality); the instant in which a star (objective reality) turns into a symbol (subjective individuality), and a symbol (subjective individuality) turns into *hope* (the symbolic absolute).³⁶⁴ Just as Baudelaire's modern artist and child must shelter subjective individuality from objective reality to achieve *ivresse*, Goethe's narrator must *interrupt* narrative time—slow it down to the point of momentary standstill—in order to reflect on the star's symbolic meaning. In this way, he may transcend the boundaries of narration and establish a state of a priori or *pure* perception: the only state of perception from which the symbolic absolute—for example, good or evil, *hope* or fear, love or hatred—may emerge. In this context, one may also refer to Michel Brix, who has more recently argued for a Platonist symbolism in Baudelaire, where 'vertical correspondences' à la Swedenborg seek 'to reattach earth to heaven', or, perhaps, also to hell.³⁶⁵ This is the early Benjaminian modernity 'thought in terms of a break or interruption'. It still permits the individual to be conscious of and to choose this interruption, to bring narrative time to a halt in order to reflect upon the symbolic absolute it may suggest. Second Empire material modernity will ultimately take this choice away.

When the term 'caesura' resurfaces in the *Arcades Project*, WB's focus had shifted from Hölderlin and Goethe to Baudelaire, from the German Romantics to the first poet of modernity. As chapter 2 has already shown, for WB, Paris and in particular the glittering Paris of the Second Empire was key to understanding precisely that modernity. A quick recapitulation of the train of thought already initiated in chapter 2 seems helpful. Patricia Mainardi situates the 'economic shift' of power from the aristocracy to the bourgeoisie in 1789. Damian Catani, then, addresses the 'ethical shift' from the aporia of Romanticism to urban evil, largely taking place in the 1820s and 1830s, and initially manifested in the prose of Balzac. Both Mainardi and Rancière, then, locate an 'aesthetic shift' ('aesthetic revolution', for Rancière) from neo-Classicism (for example, Ingres) to Romanticism (for example, Delacroix)

³⁶⁴ By 'symbolic absolute' I mean the absolute value or principle contained within the symbol, existing independently of anything else. The symbolic absolute is essentially metaphysical.

³⁶⁵ Michel Brix, 'Modern Beauty versus Platonist Beauty', in Patricia A. Ward (ed.), *Baudelaire and the Poetics of Modernity* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2001), pp. 1–14 (p. 12).

and eventually Modernism (for example, Guys) in the 1850s and 1860s—the two decades of Napoléon III’s imperial reign. As was cited before, ‘it is evident that after 1870 the modern [aesthetic] system was in place’ (Mainardi).³⁶⁶ Baudelaire’s prime creative phase is, of course, also situated within these two decades, the majority of his verse and prose poems being conceived, written, and published after 1852. Goethe’s *Elective Affinities* was published in 1809. For AB, one of the greatest concerns, when addressing the notion of Benjaminian modernity is ‘the move from interruption in the writings directly concerned with Romanticism to a more generalised sense of interruption’.³⁶⁷ It is in this ‘generalised sense of interruption’, where WB meets Catani, arguing for a shift away from what may as well be referred to, here, as a Romantic modernity, towards a modernity of Marxist political economy: the material modernity, which, for WB, most distinctly shaped and inspired the Baudelairean œuvre. Pinpointing the nature of this shift, AB writes: ‘What determines Benjamin’s initial sense of interruption is the necessity that the activity be internal to the work.’³⁶⁸

This is precisely what happens in the sample passage of Goethe’s *Elective Affinities*. When the ‘embracing lovers seal their fate, everything pauses’. The narrator takes a moment—chooses this interruption—in order to acquire experience and create knowledge deeper and more substantial than what is offered by the continuous percolation of narrative time: a form of knowledge thus closer to the principles of *reason* in an Idealist epistemological sense, as the narrator takes time *to think* or *to reason* in order to spark *hope* in the form of the symbolic absolute. At this point and in order to carry this discussion into the context of Second Empire material modernity, the use of caesura in Convolute N of the *Arcades Project*—entitled ‘On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress’—deserves a closer look:

To thinking belongs the movement as well as the arrest of thoughts. Where thinking comes to a standstill in a constellation saturated with tensions—there the dialectical image appears. *It is the caesura in the movement of thoughts*. Its position is naturally not an arbitrary one. It is to be found, in a word, where the tension between dialectical opposites is greatest. Hence, *the object constructed in the*

³⁶⁶ Patricia Mainardi, *Art and Politics of the Second Empire: The Universal Expositions of 1855 and 1867* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 1.

³⁶⁷ Benjamin, ‘Benjamin’s Modernity’, p. 105.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

materialist presentation of history is itself the dialectical image. The latter is identical with the historical object; it justifies its violent expulsion from the continuum of historical process.³⁶⁹ (my emphasis)

In chapter 1 as well as in my earlier references to Kant, I have already established that the individual's epistemological process in the form of *thinking* or *reasoning* is essentially enabled and initiated by the perception of a priori space and time, and, indeed, by the a priori objectivity emerging from the former and presented in the latter. *Reason* informs subjective individuality and has the power to recondition any given objective reality into something new: something *individual*. When Goethe's 'embracing lovers seal their fate', the narrator is able to recondition this objective reality into *hope* only from the viewpoint of his own subjective individuality. Here, narrative time has to stop, so the novel's continuous presentation of objective reality cannot and will not interfere in the epistemological process of precisely that: the reconditioning of objective reality into hope via *thinking* or *reasoning*. This is the early Benjaminian caesura, allowing the narrator to take a moment in order *to think* or *to reason* by choosing the interruption. Now, in the passage above, the definition of caesura implies greater passivity. Caesura, here, is referred to as an interruption in the individual's 'movement of thoughts', an interruption visualised (once again, the human world is a visual one) in the dialectical image.

In Benjamin's Baudelaire essays, direct references to the concept of the dialectical image are rare and mostly found in the unedited 'Central Park' to which I have, so far, referred only in passing. At its core, for Benjamin, the dialectical image is an 'image that flashes up'. It is the eternal recurrence of the ever-selfsame. 'Baudelaire's poetry [then] reveals the new in the ever-selfsame, and the ever-selfsame in the new.' 'Fashion is the eternal recurrence of the new.'³⁷⁰ There are two aspects to be considered, here: firstly, while for Benjamin, Baudelaire was in no way a dialectician, his conception of history was based on the recurrence of antiquity

³⁶⁹ Walter Benjamin, 'Convolute N', in *The Arcades Project*, trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 475.

³⁷⁰ Walter Benjamin, 'Central Park', trans. by Edmund Jephcott and Howard Eiland, in *The Writer of Modern Life*, pp. 134–69 (the citations above, in order: pp. 160, 150, and 155). Benjamin points out that 'Baudelaire's antiquity is Roman antiquity. In only one place does Greek antiquity extend into his world: Greece supplies him with the image of the heroine which seemed to him worthy and capable of being carried over into modern times. In one of the greatest and most famous poems of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, the women bear Greek names, Delphine and Hippolyte.' Walter Benjamin, 'The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire' (1938), trans. by Harry Zohn, in *The Writer of Modern Life*, pp. 46–133 (p. 119).

in modernity ('The correspondence between antiquity and modernity is the sole constructive concept of history in Baudelaire.');³⁷¹ secondly, the reference to fashion reminds one not merely of Baudelaire's aesthetic preoccupation with *le beau moderne*, but, specifically, of the opening section to 'Le Peintre', 'Le Beau, la mode et le bonheur', where the poet states the following:

Si un homme impartial feuilletait une à une *toutes* les modes ['fashion' in Benjamin] françaises depuis l'origine de la France jusqu'au jour présent, il n'y trouverait rien de choquant ni même de surprenant. Les transitions y seraient aussi abondamment ménagées que dans l'échelle du monde animal [évolution]. Point de lacune, donc, point de surprise. Et s'il ajoutait à la vignette qui représente chaque époque la pensée philosophique dont celle-ci était le plus occupée ou agitée, pensée dont la vignette suggère inévitablement le souvenir, il verrait quelle profonde harmonie régit tous les membres de l'histoire, et que, même dans les siècles qui nous paraissent les plus monstrueux et les plus fous, l'immortel appétit du beau a toujours trouvé sa satisfaction.³⁷² (Baudelaire's emphasis)

Reading this with a focus on Baudelaire's conception of history, one may not be surprised that for Benjamin '[i]t excluded, more than contained, a dialectical conception'.³⁷³ The indirect reference to *évolution* makes futile any attempt at isolating the interruption ('lacune'), as opposed to the outcome ('les modes'). The poet says it so clearly: 'Point de lacune, donc, point de surprise.'

Be that as it may, Baudelaire makes very clear that 'les modes' exist for each 'époque'; in a Benjaminian sense, 'fashion' thus represents the 'eternal recurrence of the new'. Baudelaire, then, invites the reader to imagine a 'vignette', concisely summarising the fashion of each epoch against its socio-cultural backdrop ('la pensée philosophique'). What Baudelaire may have in mind, here, is an epochal average, a socio-cultural common denominator, and thus a utopian vision—utopian because synoptic—of the dialectic between antiquity and modernity in the form of contemporaneity. I have already addressed Benjamin's 'Paris, the Capital of the

³⁷¹ Ibid., p. 156.

³⁷² 'Le Beau, la mode et le bonheur', in 'Le Peintre', in *BOC*, II, 683–86 (p. 685).

³⁷³ Benjamin, 'The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire', p. 156.

Nineteenth Century’ in chapter 2 and, at this juncture, it is worth reiterating a key statement: ‘[M]odernity is always citing primal history. [...] Ambiguity is the appearance of dialectic in images, the law of dialectics at a standstill. This standstill is utopia and the dialectical image, therefore, [a] dream image [or phantasmagoria].’³⁷⁴ Benjaminian modernity, as captured by the Baudelairean *vignette*, is thus essentially utopian and representative of the former’s dialectical image: a dream image or phantasmagoria. Baudelaire’s poetry is the *vignette* of the Second Empire and the material modernity it represents. Keeping this in mind and returning to Convolute N of the *Arcades Project*, we find that two ideas unite, both of which address a specific type of dialectical image.

On the one hand, the dialectical image represents ‘the object constructed in the materialist presentation of history’. This construction takes place in dialectic materialism. It is a construction of fragments, a momentary intersection or merging of fragments, and considered the final outcome of a causal chain specific to the socio-cultural and socio-economic conditions of material modernity. Industrialisation and mass-commodification induce *rapidité* to the dynamic of all social, cultural, political, and economic existence; this increasing speed of the everyday also means that change (in any form or shape) takes place with higher frequency and greater diversity; and previously established social, cultural, political, and economic structures can no longer cope with the high intensity of this change. They are no longer stable or reliable. They break apart and fragmentation takes place.³⁷⁵ WB was a Marxist disciple and for the sake of clarity it seems useful to connect some of these ideas to relevant terminology. In Marxism, history is considered a temporal container in which the ‘base’ (‘the economic conditions of production’) shapes society and its ‘superstructure’ (state, religion, art, science, ideology),³⁷⁶ producing progress along the itinerary of human existence. More specifically, the base of the past will shape the superstructure of the future’s present. This process is universal and can only

³⁷⁴ Benjamin, ‘Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century’ (1935), trans. by Howard Eiland, in *The Writer of Modern Life*, pp. 30–45 (p. 41).

³⁷⁵ In my review of Benjamin’s Baudelaire essays, in chapter 2, I already began to contextualise the broad notion of fragmentation from a cultural-historical point of view by linking it to Marshall Berman’s take on Haussmannisation. The section on ‘Exchange, Communication, the Blasé (and the Dandy)’ in chapter 5, specifically, will continue such a contextualisation with more Baudelaire-specific examples—that is in particular a close reading of the prose poem ‘Les Yeux des pauvres’ (1864).

³⁷⁶ Karl Marx, ‘Preface’, in *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977) <<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/preface.htm>> [accessed 20 May 2016].

be addressed diachronically. Fragmentation thus means that—due to industrialisation and mass-commodification—the dynamic of the base changes so rapidly and drastically that the superstructure can no longer respond. Socio-collective consciousness can no longer produce the necessary superstructure as a counterbalance to economic conditions. The generic individual, as opposed to Baudelaire’s modern artist and child, faces the dialectical image as a direct consequence of dialectic materialism; for the generic individual, the tension between past and present is never resolved.³⁷⁷

On the other hand, the dialectical image represents nothing less than a ‘caesura in the movement of thoughts’ and thus a psychological interruption somehow linked to the dialectical image, as explained above: appearing externally as a direct consequence of dialectic materialism. Paradoxically, here, the dialectical image represents its very own psychological consequences. Both approaches refer to what AB has called WB’s later ‘generalised sense of interruption’, and, at this point, one may discover the connection. When the generic individual faces, increasingly, the dialectical image as a consequence of material modernity—of its *rapidité*—then, the external, physical fragmentation, becomes an internal, psychological one. In Kantian terminology—and this is crucial—the dialectical image, as perceived externally, is projected onto the generic individual’s a priori or *pure* perception of space and time: a priori space and time become fragmented and the generic individual’s epistemological process is interrupted and, consequentially, also fragmented. In other words, the generic individual’s attempt *to think about* or *to reason with* the physical fragmentation, as presented externally, is absorbed by the accompanying internal, psychological fragmentation.³⁷⁸ It has to be stressed, once more: this relationship of cause and effect between external, physical fragmentation and internal, psychological fragmentation represents the theoretico-philosophical foundation of the Idealist epistemology I propose in this study. For now, it allows us to return to WB’s ‘Motifs’ and particularly to his conclusion, as cited above. Here, the perception of objective reality, of Second Empire material modernity, constitutes ‘the nature of *perception* [‘*Erlebnis*’] to which Baudelaire has given the weight of *experience* [‘*Erfahrung*’]’. Due to the *rapidité* of material modernity, however, external, physical fragmentation, then, leads to the ‘disintegration of the

³⁷⁷ See the subsection on ‘Benjamin, Schizophrenia, *dédoublement*’ in chapter 2.

³⁷⁸ In order to keep the theoretical and terminological complexity of the argument I present to a minimum, and in preparation for the addition of Hegelian thought, from this point onwards, I shall no longer refer to ‘thinking’ and only to ‘reasoning’ as a key term and concept in German Idealism.

[generic individual's] aura in the immediate perception of shock', which, in turn, leads to the fundamental change in the fabric of human existence already perceived by Goethe as early as 1825.

Before moving on to a closer analysis of the generic individual's fragmented a priori by enlisting the help of Henri Bergson's doctoral *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (1889), I wish to summarise, briefly, this chapter's key argument, as presented thus far. In Kantian epistemology, the individual's process of acquiring experience and creating knowledge—once again, what I have referred to as the individual's epistemological process—begins with the a priori or *pure* perception of space and time. As a consequence of the specific socio-cultural and socio-economic conditions of nineteenth-century France and particularly Haussmann's Paris,³⁷⁹ the generic individual's a priori or *pure* perception of space and time becomes interrupted and fragmented. More specifically, external, physical fragmentation leads to internal, psychological fragmentation through a relationship of cause and effect. For WB, an authority in French nineteenth-century cultural criticism and in Baudelaire studies, especially, both external and internal, physical and psychological fragmentation appear in the form of the dialectical image: an 'image that flashes up', created by the continuous refashioning of antiquity, and a mechanism for the 'violent expulsion' of the epoch—any epoch—'from the continuum of historical process'. In slightly less martial terminology, Baudelaire might have simply referred to it as a *vignette*. For WB, it is the generic individual's perpetual encounter with the dialectical image—the generic individual's 'perception of shock' and the subsequent 'disintegration of [their] aura'—that forges the very core of the Baudelairean experience of modernity, an individual as well as socio-collective experience I shall scrutinise in the upcoming chapters from the viewpoint of Idealist epistemology.

³⁷⁹ See the section on 'Second Empire Aesthetics' in chapter 2.



Figure 7: Fuseli, *The Artist Overwhelmed by the Grandeur of Antique Ruins* (1778-79)

Fragmented a priori and the Bergsonian Selves

When in 1994 the art historian Linda Nochlin was invited to give the Walter Neurath Memorial Lecture at the National Gallery in London, she entitled her talk *The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity*.³⁸⁰ As the title promises, she presents, in ‘roughly historical order’,³⁸¹ a series of mostly nineteenth-century paintings that either deal with the subject of mutilated bodies or mutilate bodies themselves by cropping them on the margins. In her argument, fragmentation as a positive rather than negative trope emerges from the post-1789 revolutionary upheaval, where

[t]he fragment, for the Revolution and its artists, rather than symbolizing nostalgia for the past, enacts the deliberate destruction of that past, or, at least, a pulverization [“subversion”, “révolution”] of what were perceived to be its repressive traditions.³⁸²

I shall not follow in her footsteps, here, by embedding the (bodily) fragment as a metaphor into a larger, French nineteenth-century, socio-political and art historical context; and her references to ‘pulverisation’ and ‘repressive traditions’ have, of course, already been addressed in the sections on ‘Second Empire Aesthetics’, ‘Baudelairean Aesthetics’, and ‘Baudelairean Poetics’ in chapter 2.³⁸³

Of great interest to my current argument, however, are Nochlin’s opening thoughts on the Swiss painter and draughtsman Johann Heinrich Füssli, or Henry Fuseli, as he was known in Britain, and in particular his *The Artist Overwhelmed by the Grandeur of Antique Ruins* (1778–79; see Figure 7). ‘Modernity’, she writes, ‘is figured as irrevocable loss, poignant regret for lost totality, a vanished wholeness.’³⁸⁴ A few lines later, she continues with a rather beautiful analysis of the drawing that I do not dare paraphrase:

³⁸⁰ Linda Nochlin, *The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity* (New York, NY: Thames and Hudson, 2001).

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³⁸³ In the context of poetic production, specifically, the conceptual links between terms such as ‘pulvérisation’, ‘subversion’, and ‘révolution’ have been discussed, briefly, in the section on ‘Baudelairean Poetics’ in chapter 2.

³⁸⁴ Nochlin, *The Body in Pieces*, p. 7.

The heroic energy of the past is evoked by the eloquent modelling of the individual toes, the joints articulated with muscular crispness in emphatic brown wash: the instep of the fragmented foot bulges forth like a body-builder's pectoral, so deeply incised is it by modelling shadow. Even the toenails, not an anatomical feature generally thought of as capable of bearing the weight of symbolic reference, crackle with emphatic linear energy and the foot as a whole dominates its base with a stance of assured self-possession. The upward pointing hand, frozen in the imperial gesture of authority and just escaping cropping by the upper margin of the picture frame, can be read in much the same way; it is as though the boundaries of the image can barely contain such monumental and expansive grandeur even in its ruin.³⁸⁵

In the passage above, Nochlin identifies quite straightforwardly the drawing's aesthetic, its mechanisms, and the message contained therein: the pre-modern—that is, non-Baudelairean—artist's despair at the sight of lost grandeur, lost wholeness, and lost aesthetic purpose. Previously, I made explicit how such loss feeds into Baudelaire's own modern aesthetic quest of extracting *le beau* from *le mal* as well as into more universal nineteenth-century aesthetic concerns leading towards what art history and theory have subsequently labelled the 'aesthetic shift' (Mainardi) or the 'aesthetic revolution' (Rancière). But the drawing is not exclusively modern by conceptually addressing fragmentation and its aesthetic repercussions within the wholeness or unity that is the drawing itself.³⁸⁶ In the context of this study, it is also modern because the symbolic fragmentation of the statue seems to be reflected in the pre-modern artist's sentimental, emotional, or, indeed, psychological state: a figure, perhaps, synonymous with what we have come to define as the generic individual—neither Baudelaire's modern artist nor child—in the context of Second Empire material modernity. The drawing hints at the internal, psychological consequences caused by external, physical fragmentation. Why is the pre-modern artist depicted in such despair, holding his left hand in front of his eyes, possibly shaking his head, perhaps even crying? The right hand gently caresses the monolithic food standing before him, creating a final, intimate sensory connection before the past will be buried for good. The pre-modern artist mourns the death of his motif and, by extension, the death of the aesthetic Idealism associated with it. What to do now? Where to go next? Those are the

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Nochlin makes this argument at a later stage with regards to paintings by Degas, Van Gogh, and Cézanne.

questions presumably occupying his mind at the very moment depicted by Fuseli. Here, the pre-modern artist faces not merely the fragmentation of a former whole ('irrevocable loss, poignant regret for lost totality, a vanished wholeness')—the fragmentation of the *Idéal* in a neo-Classical sense, as symbolised by the antique ruins—but, with the dawn of material modernity, also the fragmentation of his own existence as an artist.

Briefly, once more, let us refer back to Nochlin's analysis of the drawing. '[H]eroic energy of the past', 'muscular crispness', 'the foot as a whole dominates its base', 'imperial gesture of authority': these are only some of the values the art historian assigns to Fuseli's painterly depiction of the ruins, feeding into the Romantic idea of the artist as, in some way, a superhuman, a hero, and one of the few capable of aesthetically reaching for divine/ideal beauty. But the statue's individual pieces only hint at the glory of a former whole—at the glory of aesthetic purpose before fragmentation occurs—and suddenly, for the pre-modern artist, shattered ruins turn into a shattered mirror. This is implicit in the very composition of Fuseli's work. Nochlin once more:

Both background and foreground are constituted as a kind of grid precisely for the purpose of measuring off the vast scale of the antique fragments in relation to the pathetic smallness of the foreground figure.³⁸⁷

With the death of the motif (the once-whole statue) and, by association, of the aesthetic Idealism it represents, comes also the death of the pre-modern artist's former self: a metaphorical causality from which a new self is born, confused and disoriented (What to do now? Where to go next?), thus intriguingly feeding into my argument, as presented so far: external, physical fragmentation (the statue) causes internal, psychological fragmentation (the pre-modern artist in despair). In the context of this study, the former ('background') turns into Haussmann's Paris, while the latter ('foreground') translates into my approach to Kantian a priori space and time.

³⁸⁷ Nochlin, *The Body in Pieces*, p. 7.

Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience (1889)

Internal, psychological fragmentation in relation to Idealist and, specifically, Kantian metaphysics—the generic individual’s fragmented a priori—was a prime concern for the late nineteenth-century philosopher Henri Bergson. In many ways, Bergson was a Kantian disciple and the concept of a priori frequently occurs in his doctoral thesis entitled *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*,³⁸⁸ published in 1889, and thus a little more than a century after Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*. In the English translation of Bergson’s work, the more descriptive element *On Time and Free Will* precedes the original title; a rather helpful addition, as it summarises more clearly the philosopher’s main concerns. Moreover, it links ‘time’ to questions of (socio-collective) determinism by addressing the notion of free will: questions that also feature in the works of canonical late nineteenth-century sociologists such as Karl Mannheim, Max Weber, and Émile Durkheim, and questions that will resurface in the synthetic or a posteriori part (II) of this study.³⁸⁹

At the foundation of Bergson’s psychological take on nineteenth-century sociology lies the existence of two selves in relation to space and time. Bergson mostly agrees with the Kantian understanding of space and time as the only two sensory stimuli to be perceived a priori—that is, of the individual’s *pure* perception taking place within the metaphysical parameters provided by space and time. For Kant, space and time are both structured equally as homogenous spheres—the hand moving up and down in front of our face is shaped by space and vice versa; time allows for movement to occur between point A and point B as part of that space. For Bergson, however, there is a distinct difference between the two: space is homogenous, yes, but time is not.³⁹⁰ The origin of this Bergsonian nuance, as regards the individual’s metaphysical sphere, lies in the differentiation between internal and external perception. As was the case for Kant, for Bergson, too, space is perceived externally, whereas time is perceived internally. However, for Bergson, it is only the specific socio-cultural and socio-economic conditions of material modernity that eventually causes time to become

³⁸⁸ Henri Bergson, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (1889), ed. by Frédéric Worms (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2007).

³⁸⁹ Weber, Durkheim, and Mannheim feature in the section on ‘Society and Existence from the Viewpoint of Death’ in chapter 5.

³⁹⁰ Kant also writes: ‘Different times are but parts of one and the same time.’ Smith, *Immanuel Kant’s ‘Critique of Pure Reason’*, p. 75.

‘externalised’, ‘spatialised’, ‘objectified’, transformed into a mathematical construct à la Descartes, and thus transformed from a heterogeneous into a homogenous sphere. This is an undesirable, even disastrous effect, for time should be perceived only internally, as a heterogeneous sphere, and thus as a means to carve out and emphasise one’s subjective individuality in opposition to objective reality. This internal, heterogeneous perception of time is what Bergson refers to as *durée*.

In Kantian as well as Bergsonian metaphysics, the external nature of space means that it is essentially constructed by empty space (‘milieu vide’) and that, within this empty space, singularities—fragments—exist as antagonists. By nature, these singularities/fragments never merge.³⁹¹ They are self-sufficient and perceived by the individual only as an act (something moves from point A to point B) and intuition (that something may be a hand, a palm tree, or the feverish incarnation of the devil himself).³⁹² Bergson explains:

Que si maintenant on cherchait à caractériser cet acte, on verrait qu’il consiste essentiellement dans l’intuition ou plutôt dans la conception d’un milieu vide homogène. *Car il n’y a guère d’autre définition possible de l’espace: c’est ce qui nous permet de distinguer l’une de l’autre plusieurs sensations identiques et simultanées.*³⁹³ (my emphasis)

In Kant, time is the internal representation of space, as perceived externally. Time is as homogenous as the space it represents. As I have mentioned before, its task is to add actuality to the intuitions perceived in space. In Bergson, however, time is not simply a representation,

³⁹¹ Neither Kant nor Bergson use the term ‘singularity’. It is my attempt to specify, terminologically, the emergence of intuitions from within space as the individual’s sole a priori objectivity. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Mathematics* defines a ‘singularity’ or ‘singular point’ as: ‘A point on a curve where there is not a unique tangent which is itself differentiable. It may be an isolated point, or a point where the curve cuts itself such as a cusp.’ Perhaps even more helpful is the definition as provided by the *Oxford Dictionary of Critical Theory*, where ‘singularity’ means: ‘The critical threshold or division between two states of being, e.g. between boiling and not boiling. At such a point it is impossible to decide whether the object is in one state of being or another—thus, one would have to say it is neither boiling nor not-boiling and in this precise sense it is properly referred to as undecidable.’

³⁹² Bergson adds at this point: ‘Ainsi, des sensations inextensives resteront ce qu’elles sont, sensations inextensives, si rien ne s’y ajoute. Pour que l’espace naisse de leur coexistence, il faut un acte de l’esprit qui les embrasse toutes à la fois et les juxtapose; cet acte *sui generis* ressemble assez à ce que Kant appelait une forme *a priori* de la sensibilité.’ Bergson, ‘De la Multiplicité des états de conscience’, in *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, p. 70.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 70–71. Worms highlights this definition of ‘espace’ in his introduction.

but rather a *creation*, as much as the meanings of these terms diverge. The intuitions perceived in space are represented in time as our ‘états de conscience’, and it is in time, then, that spatial singularities/fragments suddenly begin to merge, to interpenetrate (‘interpénétrer’), and to *create* the individual’s continuous and seamless perception, which literary theory would later refer to as a narrator’s ‘stream of consciousness’. Here, for Bergson, internal time becomes disconnected from space, as perceived externally. It becomes ‘despatialised’ in the form of *durée*:

La *durée* toute *pure* est la forme que prend la succession de nos états de conscience quand notre moi se laisse vivre, quand il s’abstient d’établir une séparation entre l’état présent et les états antérieurs.³⁹⁴ (my emphasis)

And a little later in his conclusion to the *Essai*:

L’erreur de Kant a été de prendre le temps pour un milieu homogène. Il ne paraît pas avoir remarqué que la durée réelle se compose de moments intérieurs les uns aux autres, et que lorsqu’elle revêt la forme d’un homogène, c’est qu’elle s’exprime en espace. Ainsi la distinction même qu’il établit entre l’espace et le temps revient, au fond, à confondre le temps avec l’espace, et la représentation symbolique du moi avec le moi lui-même. Il jugea la conscience incapable d’apercevoir les faits psychologiques autrement que par juxtaposition, oubliant qu’un milieu où ces faits se juxtaposent, et de distinguent les uns des autres, est nécessairement espace et non plus durée.³⁹⁵

In the context of material modernity and, specifically, Benjaminian modernity, the terms ‘homogenous’ and its antagonist ‘heterogeneous’ become particularly interesting. Here, I wish to make an intellectual leap forward and connect two concepts, which, at first, may not strike the reader as relevant to one another. It can be agreed, at this point, that the concept of *durée* represents the individual’s internal, temporal representation of external, spatial

³⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 74–75. As was the case for *espace*, Worms highlights this definition of ‘durée’ in his introduction. The reader should note how Bergson connects the individual’s perception of *durée* to the concept of Kantian a priori or *pure* perception.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 174.

singularities—of the fragments presented in space. For Bergson, it is the various ways in which these singularities/fragments interpenetrate, the specific composition of the individual's *durée* that makes the individual precisely what it is: individual. More concisely speaking: it is the individual's continuous, seamless, or, perhaps, 'durable' internal perception of time that adds subjective individuality to the objective reality presented in space.

Now, one of the major Benjaminian concerns and consequences, as regards material modernity, was the grand-scale *homogenisation* of society. In all of his essays on Baudelaire and, indeed, in the entirety of his ever-unfinished and ever-unedited *Arcades Project*, Benjamin stresses that with the rise of industrialisation and mass-commodification, *we*, the members of modern society, one after the other, enter into a socio-collective state of desire for *the next best thing* ('nos cravates et nos bottes vernies' ['Le Peintre']). Whether Bourgeoisie or Proletariat, whether former royalist or revolutionary, whether *conspirateur d'occasion* or *conspirateur de profession*: all socio-economic discrepancies are unified within the rapidly spinning vicious cycle of production and consumption ('rapidité'). Those who own, consume; and those who do not own, produce to consume: in both cases, the sole purpose is consumption. After Karl Marx's *Capital* (1867), the German sociologist Georg Simmel would be one of the first to argue, meticulously, in *The Philosophy of Money* (1900), that with the rise of industrialisation and mass-commodification, the idea of money would transform from being a means to a purpose to being the purpose itself. One wants to own money for the sake of owning money, for the sake of the infinite choices it may 'purchase', not because there is a need to purchase something—anything—specific.³⁹⁶ For Benjamin, one of Simmel's students, it is this quest for money, for the potential economic access to all of modernity's material splendour that *homogenises* society. And, in this context, the notion of fragmentation—the 'disintegration of the [generic individual's] aura in the immediate perception of shock'—appears in new light.³⁹⁷

In Bergsonian terms, the homogenous nature of space becomes increasingly manifested internally, in the sphere of *durée*. Or, put another way, external, spatial homogenisation in the form of modern society (objective reality) makes it increasingly difficult

³⁹⁶ This will be argued, more explicitly, in the section on 'Exchange, Communication, the Blasé (and the Dandy)' in chapter 5.

³⁹⁷ Benjamin, 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire', p. 210.

for the generic individual to access internal, temporal heterogeneity in the form of *durée* (subjective individuality). Via the generic individual's epistemological engagement with material modernity, the homogenous nature of a priori space is projected onto the heterogeneous nature of a priori time, forcing our conception of time, quite literally, back in time: for suddenly, Bergsonian *durée* as a form of subjective individuality is transformed back into the homogenous, internal representation of external space, as was argued by Kant a century earlier. The concept of *durée*, here, becomes a mere reflection of Kantian a priori objectivity. In other words, via physical fragmentation and the Benjaminian shocks, as presented by material modernity (external space), the continuous and seamless nature of *durée* (internal time) is interrupted, the interpenetration of singularities/fragments ('états de conscience') breaks open, and psychological fragmentation occurs. This is, more specifically, what I refer to as the generic individual's fragmented a priori. In summary, this means: for Baudelaire, the generic individual is no longer able to artificially create *rêve*, *rêverie*, and *ivresse*; for Benjamin, the accumulation of fragmented 'a priori-s'—if the reader permits such a conceptual pluralisation—ultimately leads to socio-collective homogenisation in the form of modern society; for Kant and Bergson, the internal perception of time is or becomes as homogenous as the external perception of space.

At this point, it is intriguing to note that, for Bergson, external space and internal *durée* each identify with a distinct version of the individual 'self': the *moi superficiel* (space) and the *moi profond* (time, *durée*). Jerrold Seigel has furnished us with a lengthy but useful summary:

What the effort to recover the nature of consciousness and individuality as duration revealed was a deeper level of the self. Our being consists partly of an ordinary, everyday self, close to the surface where we interact with things around us, a self that bears all the characteristics of the physical, spatialized world we inhabit. But beneath this self there lies a *moi plus profond*, a *moi intérieur*, which is a "force whose states and modifications intimately interpenetrate, and undergo a deep alteration as soon as one separates them from each other, so as to divide them up in space." This deep self is the self every person truly is, in which each part of our being is determined by its relations to the whole in which they inhere, so that every feeling, every mood, every act, carries the quality that marks them as belonging to

the particular individual whose sentiments and deeds they are. The *moi superficiel*, by contrast, is that form of existence that bears the impress of physical life and external conditions; *on this level every person is more or less like the others around her*, so that the acts, moods, and feelings of anyone can be compared with those of others. The defining condition of existence, however, is that the two modes of the self are inseparable, that they form a single being. It is this situation that both makes it so difficult to distinguish the *moi profond* from its surface counterpart, and that imposes on us the demanding attempt to do so.³⁹⁸ (my emphasis of ‘on this level...’)

The Bergsonian selves are thus antagonists, whose antagonistic nature is the force that binds them within the individual. From a slightly broader perspective, one could argue, they represent the existential duality occurring in all unity. As such, they continuously bounce off each other without ever being able to truly separate *themselves* as individual entities. Seigel makes clear that, for Bergson, the individual’s effort must be to engage in a process of vigorous abstraction: abstracting the *moi profond*, the true self, from the *moi superficiel*. The latter is, perhaps, a more pretended self; in a Second Empire context, it is the self that is shaped by material modernity, the self that desires the next best thing, and thus the self that eventually ignites the process of Benjaminian socio-collective homogenisation (‘on this level every person is more or less like the others around her’). For Baudelaire’s modern artist and child, this form of internal abstraction from an external self is still an achievable task. By being either genius or inexperienced, both can still rely on *rêve*, *rêverie*, and *ivresse*: on the faculties allowing one to shelter subjective individuality (the *moi profond*) from objective reality (the *moi superficiel*). In the case of the generic individual, however, with the rise of material modernity, the *moi superficiel* increasingly takes over. It is in this survival of the fittest between one self and the other, where Kant, Bergson, Benjamin, and Baudelaire ultimately meet.

Before this chapter’s conclusion will provide a helpful summary of the ideas so far presented, a final element of Bergsonianism must be addressed. For the philosopher, the dynamic—or dialectic—between external space and internal time—between the *moi profond* and the *moi superficiel*—is essentially a matter of intensity: the intensity of the individual’s

³⁹⁸ Jerrold Seigel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe since the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 519–20.

perception of external, spatial singularities/fragments is reflected by the intensity of the individual's 'états de conscience', continuously, seamlessly, durably interpenetrating in the form of *durée*. Like the individual's dual self, intensity, too, for Bergson, exists in dual fashion. The intensity of external, spatial singularities/fragments is measured in terms of quantity for the simple reason that they never interpenetrate, they always remain 'singular', and intensity can thus only ever be measured in quantity. The intensity of external, spatial singularities/fragments, as reflected by internal *durée*, however, is qualitative. Via the interpenetration of the individual's 'états de conscience', the intensity or quantity of external, spatial singularities/fragments is reflected internally by means of quality. Intensity is also a Benjaminian concern, for the disintegration of the generic individual's aura—their fragmented a priori—occurs in the perception of shock: the concept of shock, here, denoting an intensity potentially overshooting the generic individual's capabilities for absorption. This intensity, then, threatens to leave the generic individual in traumatic disarray: in the mental state of being blasé. This is the socio-cultural causality from which Baudelaire's modern artist and child are sheltered by the faculties of *rêve*, *rêverie*, and *ivresse*. Internal, psychological fragmentation thus occurs, when the external, quantitative intensity of spatial singularities/fragments turns into shock: when external, quantitative intensity becomes too forceful and abrupt—when it becomes an *interruption*—and its internal, qualitative reflection in the form of *durée* can no longer cope.³⁹⁹ Quality, quite literally, fragments into quantity. Bergson writes in his conclusion to 'Chapitre Premier: De l'Intensité des états psychologiques':

L'idée d'intensité est donc située au point de jonction de deux courants, dont l'un nous apporte du dehors l'idée *grandeur* extensive, et dont l'autre est allé chercher dans les profondeurs de la conscience, pour l'amener à la surface, l'image d'une multiplicité interne.⁴⁰⁰ (my emphasis)

And so it happens, seemingly by accident, that the term 'grandeur' leads us back to Fuseli's *The Artist Overwhelmed by the Grandeur of Antique Ruins* (my emphasis; see Figure 7). With an Idealist epistemological twist, I have suggested that the drawing can be interpreted

³⁹⁹ On the notion of 'coping', see, specifically, the subsection on 'Time, Trauma, Violence' in chapter 2.

⁴⁰⁰ Bergson, 'De l'Intensité des états psychologiques', in *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, p. 54.

differently from Nochlin's analysis that modernity 'is figured as irrevocable loss, poignant regret for lost totality, a vanished wholeness.'⁴⁰¹ In my reading, the pre-modern artist's fragmented self ('foreground') mirrors the fragmented statue ('background'); it represents the pre-modern artist's *moi profond* (subjective individuality in the form of internal *durée*) after the *moi superficiel* (objective reality in the form of ever-distinct external, spatial singularities/fragments) has taken control. Now, alluding to the drawing's title, we may note that the overwhelming 'grandeur' of material modernity, as presented in external space, leaves the *moi profond* in ruins. The *moi* is no longer given time *to reason with* material modernity. As a consequence, *durée* breaks open, interpenetration of the 'états de conscience' can no longer occur, and internal, psychological fragmentation takes place. The *moi profond* becomes conquered by the *moi superficiel*. The generic individual's internal perception of time appears no longer in the form of *durée*, but as a direct reflection of external, spatial singularities/fragments: a homogenous heap of instants, which, in the specific context of the Idealist epistemology I propose in this study, will be transformed into the idea of a mosaic of instants in motion, and thus a kaleidoscope of incomprehension and consequential confusion, whose *rapidité* eventually renders the generic individual blasé.

'La Chambre double' (1862): 'Mais un coup terrible, lourd'

In Baudelaire, the conquest of the *moi profond* by the *moi superficiel* is addressed quite straightforwardly in the famous prose poem 'La Chambre double'.⁴⁰² The first sentence/paragraph sets the scene: 'Une chambre qui ressemble à une *rêverie*, une chambre véritablement *spirituelle*, où l'atmosphère stagnante est légèrement teintée de rose et de bleu' (280; my emphasis of '*rêverie*'). The term '*rêverie*' is, of course, key and—following the argument proposed thus far—allows access to the narrator's a priori or *pure* perception.⁴⁰³ In this state of *rêverie*, time seems almost to come to a halt ('stagnante'), or, rather, to stretch into eternity. Spatialised time is transformed into eternity, where the notion of eternity could be associated with Bergsonian *durée* in the sense that the latter is a core component of the subjective individuality, which, in the context of aesthetic production, allows the modern artist

⁴⁰¹ Nochlin, *The Body in Pieces*, p. 7.

⁴⁰² 'La Chambre double', in *Le Spleen de Paris*, in *BOC*, I, 280–82 (p. 281). All further references will be provided in-text.

⁴⁰³ Baudelaire's emphasis on '*spirituelle*' further supports my reading of *rêve* or *rêverie* as the closest 'practical' (as opposed to 'theoretical') representation of Kantian *pure* subjectivity in the poet's œuvre.

to transform objective reality into aesthetic *éternité*. Chapter 4 will further elaborate. At this point and in the context of ‘La Chambre double’, it is important to note that Baudelaire emphasises the opposition between subjective time and objectified time, when exclaiming at a later point in the poem: ‘Non! il n’est plus de minutes, il n’est plus de seconds! Le temps a disparu; c’est l’Eternité qui règne, une éternité de délices!’ (281).

The second sentence/paragraph further plays upon this opening setup, with Baudelaire highlighting the subjective nature of the narrator’s perception of *la chambre* by referring to his soul and, indeed, by leading us back to the concept of *rêve*, *rêverie*, and *ivresse*:

L’âme y prend un bain de paresse, aromatisé par le regret et le désir.—C’est quelque chose de crépusculaire, de bleuâtre et de rosâtre; un *rêve* de volupté pendant une éclipse. (280, my emphasis)

Baudelaire, still, at this point, is in hopeful contradiction of Bergsonianism: the narrator’s subjective individuality, his *moi profond*, remains so strong, so functional, so omnipresent that it is no longer objective space taking over subjective time in the form of *durée*, but vice versa, the narrator spilling subjective individuality into the realm of objective reality. The poet thus illustrates in paragraph 3: ‘[l]es meubles on l’air de *rêver*, on les dirait doués d’une vie somnambulique, comme le végétal et le minéral’ (280, my emphasis). Finally, then, aesthetic production is also brought into the mix:

Sur les murs nulle abomination artistique. Relativement au *rêve pur*, à l’impression non analysée, l’art défini, l’art positif est un blasphème. Ici, tout a la suffisante clarté et la délicieuse obscurité de l’harmonie. (280, my emphasis)

The first four paragraphs of the poem thus feature either *rêve*, *rêverie*, or *rêver*, and there are a number of interesting elements to be noted. Baudelaire uses the adjective ‘pur(e)’ in conjunction with the noun ‘rêve’, thus linking the concept of *rêve*, *rêverie*, and *ivresse* (as discussed, previously, with particular reference to the prose poem ‘Enivrez-vous’) with the Kantian epistemology of a priori or, indeed, *pure* perception, which, in turn, is analogous to the Bergsonian notion of subjective individuality in the form of *durée*. Perhaps more interestingly, Baudelaire juxtaposes the concept of ‘rêve pur’—that is, ‘l’impression non

analysée’—with the adherence to a type of aesthetic Idealism (‘l’art défini’, ‘l’art positif’), which he dismisses as aesthetic blasphemy. A core inspiration for Bergson’s entire philosophy was to shift attention away from Positivism, away from the Comtian conception that knowledge is always empirically verifiable and therefore always ‘défini’.⁴⁰⁴ The complex metaphysical dualities between space and time, objectivity and subjectivity, external and internal, as addressed throughout this chapter, are quite succinctly summarised in the Baudelairean context, as cited above. The poet basically spells it out: compared to Kantian a priori or *pure* perception (‘rêve pur’), Positivism is an abomination (‘blasphème’). In his rage against the latter, the German philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche would later agree: ‘There are no facts, only interpretations.’⁴⁰⁵

Be that as it may, in the dreamy environment of the *chambre*, the narrator’s *moi profond* is delighted by the manifold beauty to be discovered in this teeming sphere of a priori or *pure* perception, and it is precisely this beauty that is contrasted with the ‘outside’, the other side, or the realm of the *moi superficiel*:

À quel démon bienveillant dois-je d’être ainsi entouré de mystère, de silence, de paix et de parfums? Ô béatitude! ce que nous nommons généralement la vie, même dans son expansion la plus heureuse, n’a rien de commun avec cette vie suprême.
(281)

‘Vie suprême’, here, contrasts ‘ce que nous nommons généralement la vie’. In the former—home of the *moi profond*—seconds, minutes, hours have interpenetrated to create *durée*. But, suddenly, an *interruption* occurs (the narrator does *not* choose this interruption), and material modernity breaks through the gates of this heavenly place (‘chambre paradisiaque’): ‘Mais un coup terrible, lourd, a retenti à la porte, et, comme dans les rêves infernaux, il m’a semblé que je recevais un coup de pioche dans l’estomac’ (281). A knock... and everything crumbles

⁴⁰⁴ The *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* defines ‘Positivism’ as follows: ‘The philosophy of [Auguste] Comte [1798–1857], holding that the highest or only form of knowledge is the description of sensory phenomena. Comte held that there were three stages of human belief: the theological, the metaphysical, and finally the positive, so-called because it confined itself to what is positively given, avoiding all speculation. Comte’s position is a version of traditional empiricism, without the tendencies to idealism or scepticism that the position attracts [*sic*].’

⁴⁰⁵ The statement, ‘There are no facts, only interpretations’, often cited as such, does not, in fact, appear in Nietzsche’s œuvre, but expresses the common denominator of various translations of a longer passage directed against Positivism in his *Writings from the Late Notebooks*.

(‘toute cette magie a disparu au coup brutal’ [281]); a spectre appears at the scene (‘Et puis un spectre est entré’ [281]). Through the lens of the Bergsonian selves, perhaps, the spectre could be interpreted as a simulacrum of the *moi profond* still in denial that the moment of gaining consciousness has already occurred and that *ivresse* is no longer at hand (‘vous vous réveillez, l’ivresse déjà diminuée ou disparue’ [‘Enivrez-vous’]). But without success: ‘Horreur! je me souviens! je me souviens! Oui! ce taudis, ce séjour de l’éternel ennui, est bien le mien’ (281). Eternity—where seconds, minutes, and hours interpenetrate, so that the *moi profond* may be allowed to reason with its metaphysical surroundings—has turned into ‘l’éternel ennui’ at the perception of all that is objective, the world of the *moi superficiel*, as is suddenly presented in external space in the form of material modernity. Whereas before ‘[l]es meubles ont [eu] l’air de rêver’—‘une chambre véritablement *spirituelle*’—they are now without spirit (‘sots’), dusty (‘poussieux’), and tattered (‘écornés’). Moreover, what started with the audible sensation of a brutal knock has now taken over other senses as well:

Et ce parfum d’un autre monde, dont *je m’enivrais* avec une sensibilité perfectionnée, hélas! il est remplacé par une fétide odeur de tabac mêlée à je ne sais quelle nauséabonde moisissure. On respire ici maintenant le ranci de la désolation. (281; my emphasis)

The moment the bailiff’s brutal knock cracks the metaphysical barrier between subjective individuality and objective reality is also the moment at which the *moi profond* is conquered by the *moi superficiel*. In that moment, confused and in a state of blasé, the *moi profond* is reminded of a copy of the *Figaro* from 7 February 1864, where it reads ‘Enivrez-vous’ in capital letters. The *moi superficiel*, however, ‘[d]ans ce monde étroit, mais si plein de dégoût’ (281), happily gazes at ‘la fiole de laudanum; une vieille et terrible amie; comme toutes les amies, hélas! féconde en caresses et en traîtrises’.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰⁶ ‘Enivrez-vous’ was published for the first time in the *Figaro* on 7 February 1864.

*

In both of the Baudelaire poems discussed in this chapter, ‘Enivrez-vous’ and ‘La Chambre double’, the dream or, indeed, the concept thereof in the form of *rêve*, *rêverie*, and *ivresse* allows access to the individual’s metaphysical sphere; and, more importantly, to the individual’s perception of society and existence from such a metaphysical point of view. Using Kantian epistemology as my theoretico-philosophical foundation, I have outlined how space and time function as the only two sensory stimuli to be perceived a priori, before experience has been acquired and before knowledge has been created. Following this train of thought further, I have argued that a priori space and time become fragmented and that, consequentially, the epistemological process, too, becomes interrupted and fragmented by the generic individual’s continuous perception of shocks, occurring in the course of material modernity. How exactly this fragmentation has an impact on the formation of modern society and, indeed, Baudelaire’s poetic representation of modern society and modern human existence, more generally—what I have labelled the poet’s a posteriori—will be explored, more meticulously, in the chapters to come. In the current discussion, it was important to show how, for the French nineteenth-century philosopher Henri Bergson, the fragmentation of space and time essentially addresses a dynamic—or dialectic—between the two: external space increasingly dominating internal time, the *moi superficiel* slowly conquering the *moi profond*. For Baudelaire, there are two exceptions to this ‘désolation’, as he calls it in ‘La Chambre double’: the modern artist and the child.

In this context, it is interesting to note that, for Bergson, too, the artist fulfils a very similar role: sheltering subjective individuality from objective reality, *durée* from external, spatial singularities/fragments, the *moi profond* from the *moi superficiel*. Furthermore, the idea of ‘dreaming’ also plays an active part in this process:

Le poète est celui chez qui les sentiments se développent en images, et les images elles-mêmes en paroles, dociles au rythme, pour les traduire. En voyant repasser devant nos yeux ces images, nous éprouvons à notre tour le sentiment qui en était pour ainsi dire l’équivalent émotionnel; mais ces images ne se réaliseraient pas aussi fortement pour nous sans les mouvements réguliers du rythme, par lequel

notre âme, bercée et endormie, s'oublie comme en un *rêve* pour penser et pour voir le poète.⁴⁰⁷ (my emphasis)

Whether conceived of as *rêve*, *rêverie*, or *ivresse*, it is in this state of a priori or *pure* perception that time becomes some form of spiritual entity that envelops the static singularities/fragments ('une chambre véritablement *spirituelle*' ['La Chambre double']), as presented in space: it animates them, breathes life into them ('actuality' [Kant]). But, as is increasingly the case, time, too, becomes objectified. Transformed into seconds, minutes, and hours, it breaks open *durée*, as perceived by the individual within, and each tick-tock resembles a 'coup terrible' with the potential to interrupt and fragment. Just as space is shattered into fragments, with the rise of material modernity—with the rise of tick-tocks and shocks—time is shattered into instants.

Having argued that the fragmentation of a priori space and time is inherent to human existence in material modernity, and recalling that the concept of epistemology essentially refers to a theory of how knowledge is created, here, at the end of this chapter, a central question emerges. Following Kantian metaphysics, it can be agreed that the a priori or *pure* perception of space and time is situated at the very beginning of the individual's epistemological process; but how exactly then, does the fragmentation of space and time alter, dilute, even inhibit the acquisition of experience and the creation of knowledge? With the Idealist epistemology I present in this study, I hope to provide one possible answer. Acknowledging that Baudelaire's poetry and theory is continuously identified with material modernity as the modern artist's primary source of aesthetic inspiration, as discussed throughout chapter 2; and building on Benjamin's seminal and still authoritative reading of Baudelaire as the first poet of modernity, the Baudelairean œuvre will continue to serve as a most suitable case study for my investigation, illustrating the epistemological mechanics of my theoretico-philosophical model at work: specifically, in the context of the following chapter, the epistemological dialectic between either the modern artist or the generic individual, and the instant.

⁴⁰⁷ Bergson, 'De l'Intensité des états psychologiques', in *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, p. 11.

The Epistemological Dialectics of Experiencing Modernity: Between Individual and Instant

In the previous chapter, I argued that a return to Baudelaire as the first poet of modernity also means a return to the very beginning of *perceiving* such modernity: the experience acquired and the knowledge created in the individual's 'immediate perception of shock'. On the basis of Walter Benjamin's concept of the dialectical image, I applied the broad notion of fragmentation to Kantian metaphysics in the form of a priori space and time, arguing that, via the generic individual's fragmented a priori, the epistemological process of acquiring experience and creating knowledge also becomes interrupted and fragmented. Most importantly, at this point, it would be useful to recapitulate that, in the philosophies of both Immanuel Kant as well as Henri Bergson, space is perceived externally, whereas time is perceived internally, and that the fragmentation of both represents a relationship of cause and effect. One can pinpoint this causality within the context of the Second Empire and the *rapidité* so frequently associated with material modernity—from a slightly broader vantage point, frequently also referred to as modern human existence. The *rapidité* of material modernity leads to the fragmentation of external (physical) space, which causes the fragmentation of internal (psychological) time: external, physical, spatial fragmentation thus leads to internal, psychological, temporal fragmentation. In turn, this translates into the decay and eventual depletion of subjective individuality; more succinctly put, subjective individuality is no longer sheltered from objective reality. The Bergsonian *moi profond* is conquered by the *moi superficiel*. How exactly this conquest filters into Baudelaire's own aesthetic production will feature in the synthetic or a posteriori part (II) of this study and particularly in chapter 5. For now, however, I wish to continue embedding the generic individual's fragmented a priori into the Baudelairean experience of modernity by concentrating on the concept of fragmented time, specifically.

Whereas my focus on metaphysics in the form of a priori space and time (fragmented or not) is, to my knowledge, new to Baudelaire studies, the fragmentation of external, physical space in the form of Haussmann's Paris forms part of existing approaches, particularly those concerned with Baudelairean modernity. This has been spurred on not merely

by Benjamin's seminal, Marxist, socio-economic readings of the poet,⁴⁰⁸ but, indeed, also by Baudelaire's very own dedicatory emphasis on Paris and the modern city as the epitome of external, physical, spatial fragmentation. On several occasions, I have already referred to Baudelaire's *dédicace* of twenty prose poems to Arsène Houssaye, but it is worth, here, revisiting an important passage:

Quel est celui de nous qui n'a pas, dans ses jours d'ambition, rêvé le miracle d'une prose poétique, musicale sans rythme et sans rime, assez souple et assez heurtée pour s'adapter aux mouvements lyriques de l'âme, aux ondulations de la rêverie, aux soubresauts de la conscience?

C'est surtout de la fréquentation des villes énormes, c'est du croisement de leurs innombrables rapports que naît cet idéal obsédant.⁴⁰⁹

Whether or not space is addressed as an a priori phenomenon, the modern city, here, features as the individual's all-determining physical or spatial surrounding. But the Baudelaire citation above suggests a double emphasis. On the one hand, there is the modern artist in search of an aesthetic methodology that will incorporate external, physical, spatial fragmentation, 'le miracle d'une prose poétique' to which chapter 2 has already referred in the context of Baudelaire's *seconde révolution*. On the other hand, however, there is a spiritual and, perhaps, metaphysical dimension at work, here. Poetic Modernism, in the form of prose poetry, is not only considered as a suitable means for the poetic representation of modern city existence, but also of what modern city existence does to the individual's soul, *rêverie*, and conscience ('pour s'adapter aux mouvements lyriques de l'âme, aux ondulations de la *rêverie*, aux soubresauts de la conscience' [my emphasis]). In his *dédicace*, Baudelaire thus provides

⁴⁰⁸ As addressed throughout chapters 2 and 3.

⁴⁰⁹ 'Lettre à Arsène Houssaye', in *Le Spleen de Paris*, in *BOC*, I, 275–76. As already mentioned (and discussed) in the section on 'Baudelairean Poetics' in chapter 2, the poet's letter or dedication to Houssaye is now commonly used as a preface to the collection. Remembering Baudelaire's perception of Poe, as addressed in chapter 1, it is interesting to note that, whereas the Baudelaire citation above addresses 'aesthetic inspiration', in his 'Philosophy of Composition', Poe provides us with a very similar passage, albeit addressing 'aesthetic representation' in the form of 'aesthetic effect'. He writes: 'I prefer commencing with the consideration of an *effect*. Keeping originality *always* in view [...] I say to myself, in the first place, "Of the innumerable effects, or impressions, *of which the heart, the intellect, or (more generally) the soul is susceptible*, what one shall I, on the present occasion, select?"' (my emphasis). See Edgar Allan Poe, 'The Philosophy of Composition', in *The Complete Poems and Stories*, ed. by Edward H. O'Neill, 2 vols (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), II, 978–87 (p. 978).

the external, physical, spatial context in which the individual's epistemological process takes place.⁴¹⁰

Time, however, as the second a priori stimulus in Kant, is much more difficult to determine. We have already seen that one's perception of time occurs internally, adding actuality to the intuitions perceived in space (Kant), and ultimately creating *durée* via the internal interpenetration of the individual's 'états de conscience' (Bergson). Time thus offers internal, qualitative reflections of external, quantitative singularities/fragments. The notion of 'reflection' already underlines the relationship of cause and effect between external, physical, spatial and internal, psychological, temporal fragmentation. Within the double emphasis of the above passage from the *dédicace*, this is, perhaps, hinted at by Baudelaire in his use of the term 's'adapter'. The individual's internal perception of time 'adapts' to the external, physical, spatial fragmentation, as epitomised by Haussmann's Paris and the modern city.⁴¹¹ At this juncture, *durée* as a form of timely continuity is interrupted and fragmented: shattered into instants. The instant as a newly emerging and specifically modern temporal unit is a crucial, yet surprisingly neglected element of Baudelaire's most refined and coherent theory of modern aesthetics, as elaborated in 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne' (1863).⁴¹²

I already addressed this, briefly, in the introductory paragraphs to chapter 2: early on in 'Le Peintre' the reader is faced with a paradox regarding the nature and function of modernity in aesthetic production (and vice versa). At the beginning of his section on 'La Modernité', the poet famously writes:

⁴¹⁰ The addition of the 'Tableaux Parisiens' cycle to the 1861 edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, as discussed in the section on 'Baudelairean Poetics' in chapter 2, only supports this claim. It allowed the poet to focus, more specifically, on modern city existence.

⁴¹¹ Reading 'external, physical, spatial fragmentation' and 'the modern city', here, as synonymous with 'material modernity', the notion of 'adaptation' signifies the internal, psychological, temporal dimension of Benjaminian socio-collective homogenisation, as suggested towards the end of chapter 3.

⁴¹² According to Michel Lévy frères, the ever-unfinished 'L'Art philosophique', which Baudelaire worked on towards the end of his life, was intended to complete the poet's reflections on modern aesthetics. It begins with the statement: 'Qu'est-ce que *l'art pur* suivant la conception moderne? C'est créer une magie suggestive contentant à la fois l'objet et le sujet, le monde extérieure à l'artiste et l'artiste lui-même' (my emphasis). *BOC*, II, 598. See also 'Notice' to 'L'Art philosophique', in *BOC*, II, 1377–82 and in particular p. 1377.

Il [le peintre de la circonstance/vie moderne] cherche ce quelque chose qu'on nous permettra d'appeler la *modernité*; car il ne se présente pas de meilleur mot pour exprimer l'idée en question. Il s'agit, pour lui, de dégager de la mode ce qu'elle peut contenir de poétique dans l'historique, de tirer l'éternel du transitoire.⁴¹³ (Baudelaire's emphasis)

Modernity, here, is the poetic in history, the eternal in all that is transitory. Modernity means to extract the ever-lasting from the ever-fleeting. Only a few lines later, however, Baudelaire writes: 'La modernité, c'est le transitoire, le fugitif, le contingent, la moitié de l'art, dont l'autre moitié est l'éternel et l'immuable.'⁴¹⁴ Contrary to what is said before, modernity is now depicted as the transitory, the fugitive, and the contingent: the half of art, whose other half is the eternal and the immutable. Again, I already mentioned this in chapter 2: Compagnon points out the paradox contained in the passage above, and for Meltzer it legitimises the reference to Baudelairean modernity as a form of aesthetic strabismus. In the grand narrative of *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1861 [second edition]), 'Le Peintre' (1863), and *Le Spleen de Paris* (1869), it is precisely this paradox that forges the conceptual connection between theory and poetry, or between what I have distinguished as 'Baudelairean Aesthetics' (aesthetic theory and application of theory) and 'Baudelairean Poetics' (translation of theory into poetry). It forges the conceptual connection between material modernity as the modern artist's primary source of aesthetic inspiration and the establishment of prose poetry as a literary genre, capable of simultaneously incorporating 'le transitoire, le fugitive, le contingent' (theoretical modernity) along with 'l'éternel et l'immuable' (aesthetic modernity). Keeping in mind the Idealist epistemological framework as well as this duality between aesthetic theory and aesthetic/poetic practice, this chapter will now concentrate on the Baudelairean instant—that which is transitory, fugitive, and contingent—in order to address one central question. What, specifically, is the connection between the instant and the eternal? Or, rather, how is the content of the former transformed into the content of the latter?

Towards the end of chapter 3, I proposed a reading of the prose poem 'La Chambre double' (1862), providing a Baudelairean example of the antagonism between the *moi profond* and the *moi superficiel* (Bergson). The former is, of course, linked to subjective individuality

⁴¹³ 'La Modernité', in 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne', in *BOC*, II, 694–97 (p. 694).

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 695.

and the eternal it may suggest ('une éternité de délices'), the latter to objective reality and the instant that springs from it ('l'éternel ennui'). 'Mais un coup terrible, lourd'... and everything crumbles. The states of *rêve*, *rêverie*, and *ivresse* enable the narrator of 'La Chambre double' to *perceive* aesthetic modernity before theoretical modernity catches up in the form of the bailiff ('huissier'), before 'un coup terrible' fragments eternity into instants ('minute par minute, seconde par seconde'), and before the narrator's subjective individuality disintegrates in the 'immediate perception of shock' (Benjamin). This brief recapitulation provides us with a welcome opportunity to hint at the crucial distinction between what I refer to, here, as 'socio-collective' and 'elitist' engagements with the instant in Baudelaire.

In reference to Baudelaire's modern artist and child ('le génie n'est que l'enfance retrouvée à volonté' ['Le Peintre']), my approach to 'La Chambre double' assumes that the narrator represents material modernity's generic individual; for the time being, I have detached the narrator from the poet, who created him. From such a perspective, the narrator is desperately holding on to *rêve*, *rêverie*, and *ivresse*, but ultimately without success: the instant—the knock and its subsequent shock—eventually takes over; the conquest of the *moi profond* by the *moi superficiel* is complete. In the verse poem 'L'Horloge' (1860), Baudelaire would make this explicit: '[L]e Temps est un joueur avide // Qui gagne sans tricher, à tout coup!' I shall return to the poem in the subsequent section on 'Photography, Memory, Imagination (and Happiness)'. Unacquainted with the faculties of Baudelaire's modern artist and child and thus unable to shelter subjective individuality from objective reality, the knock—enhanced by the adjectives 'terrible', 'lourd', 'brutal'—causes the narrator's a priori to become fragmented, as is the case for most of society in material modernity. The generic individual becomes lost in the continuous, subconscious attempts to translate 'le transitoire, le fugitive, le contingent' and to create psychological continuity or coherence in the form of *durée*.⁴¹⁵ The engagement with the instant is *socio-collective*.

Contrary to the generic individual, however, Baudelaire in his function as a modern artist—as the first poet of modernity—has, indeed, the capacity to shelter subjective individuality from objective reality, the *moi profond* from the *moi superficiel*. This shelter provides a form of intellectual or critical *distance* to objective reality, emphasised already by

⁴¹⁵ My reference to 'subconscious' will be explained, further, in the subsection on 'Two Forms of Happiness' in this chapter.

Ross Chambers as the essential precondition for the acquisition of experience and the creation of knowledge. Baudelaire is thus able to observe the generic individual's and, by conceptual extension, material modernity's socio-collective engagement with the instant from an aesthetico-theoretical point of view. Generally speaking, this puts the modern artist in a position to extract *le beau* from *le mal* in the form of *le beau moderne*. In the specific case of Baudelaire, the prose poem 'La Chambre double' thus manifests—in content *and* poetic form ('le miracle d'une prose poétique')—Baudelaire's *le beau moderne* as poetic Modernism. It manifests the eternal, as extracted from the transitory, the poetic, as extracted from history, and as such it is the product of an ability reserved exclusively for the modern artist: an ability I shall come to define as 'mnemonic filtering' in the course of this chapter. In this case, the engagement with the instant is *elitist*.⁴¹⁶

In a well-known reading of the Baudelaire sonnet 'A une passante' (1860), Susan Blood refers to this elitist extraction of the eternal from the transitory as 'seizing the instant'.⁴¹⁷ Next to Meltzer, Blood is one of two critics to have extensively informed my own reading of the sonnet, and I shall return to it in the section on 'Idealist Epistemology in "A une passante"' towards the end of this chapter. At this point, however, I wish to concentrate a little longer on both the socio-collective as well as the elitist engagement with the instant in Baudelaire, and particularly on the notion of 'seizing the instant' as an aesthetic methodology in material modernity. Doing so will grant intellectual access to the epistemological dialectic between either the modern artist (the engagement is *elitist*) or the generic individual (the engagement is *socio-collective*), and the instant.⁴¹⁸ As Blood recognises, it is photography, which seems to offer the most useful analogy; and it is, once again, Benjamin, who has undertaken some of the theoretical groundwork.

⁴¹⁶ The notion of 'elitism', here, refers to the privileged faculty of Baudelaire's modern artist and child to shelter subjective individuality from objective reality in order *to reason with* the instant until the epistemological process is complete. See also my discussion of the *escrime* metaphor in the section on 'Baudelairean Aesthetics' in chapter 2.

⁴¹⁷ Susan Blood, 'The Sonnet as Snapshot: Seizing the Instant in Baudelaire's "A Une Passante"', *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 36.3–4 (Spring–Summer 2008), 255–68.

⁴¹⁸ What exactly I mean by 'epistemological dialectic' will become clear in the course of this chapter and in particular in the final section on 'Idealist Epistemology in "A Une Passante"'. I will continue to develop and apply the concept throughout chapter 5.

Photography, Memory, Imagination (and Happiness)

In a fragment of rough and unedited reflections entitled 'Baudelaire', Benjamin tells us the following:

An image to characterise Baudelaire's way of looking at the world. Let us compare time to a photographer—earthly time to a photographer who photographs the essence of things. But because of the nature of earthly time and its apparatus, the photographer manages only to register the negative of that essence on his photographic plates. No one can read these plates; no one can deduce from the negative, on which time records the objects, the true essence of things as they really are. Moreover, the elixir that might act as a developing agent is unknown. And there is Baudelaire: he doesn't possess the vital fluid either—the fluid in which these plates would have to be immersed so as to obtain the true picture. But he, he alone, is able to read the plates, thanks to infinite mental efforts. He alone is able to extract from the negatives of essence a presentiment of its real picture. And from this presentiment speaks the negative of essence in all his poems.⁴¹⁹

Meltzer later 'adjusts' Benjamin's analogy by stating:

The poet is himself the photographer 'who photographs the essence of things' on plates that no one—including him—can yet read. And it is Benjamin—with the brilliance of his own, retrospective vision of the poet and his city—who is the elixir, the 'developing agent', who turns the negatives recorded by Baudelaire into the theory of modernity.⁴²⁰

Meltzer is, of course, right to say that Baudelaire must have *seen double* and could not possibly have understood the aesthetico-theoretical repercussions of the 'photographs' he himself was taking in his function as a modern artist. But Benjamin does not, in fact, suggest this, alluding to a 'presentiment' based on 'negatives', but not to the 'real picture' itself. In this context,

⁴¹⁹ Walter Benjamin, 'Baudelaire', trans. by Rodney Livingstone, in *The Writer of Modern Life*, ed. by Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006).

⁴²⁰ Françoise Meltzer, *Seeing Double: Baudelaire's Modernity* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), p. 12.

Meltzer fails to see that Benjamin's emphasis lies elsewhere: a clearly defined subject–object duality between Baudelaire and Second Empire material modernity, based on his ability 'to read the [photographic] plates'. This dynamic between the poet and his physical or spatial surrounding—the epistemological dialectic occurring between subject and object—supplies the 'negative', the 'presentiment', which should, then, allow critical retrospection to add the necessary clarity.⁴²¹ Moreover, it is interesting to see that Benjamin centres his analogy on the notion of time. It is only time that is capable of filtering—*over time*—what is essential from what is not. Time seizes the 'essence of things' within itself, within the instant, which is to say, within the Benjaminian photographic plate.

From such a theoretical point of view, the modern artist is rather helpless, when it comes to determining each photograph's essence of things. For Meltzer, Baudelaire, the photographer, consciously selects the essence of his photographs—as every photographer does—and, by conceptual extension, he thus decides what constitutes the essence of his aesthetic modernity. For Benjamin, it is only time, in a manner of speaking, that is able to filter and, therefore, 'select' this essence. Once again, theoretically speaking, this means that the causal chain ultimately leading to the photograph does *not*, in fact, start with the photographer. It starts with the moment in which the photograph is taken—that is, the instant in which the modern artist (as opposed to the photographer) creates the *memory* to be transformed into an artwork at a later stage. The instant is turned eternal not by an artwork per se, but by the *mnemonic filtering*—the filtering or 'selection' of essence that takes place via memory and thus *over time*—between the modern artist's 'immediate perception of shock' in the form the instant and its subsequent transformation into an artwork.

Now, perhaps, it is time to be reminded, here, that Baudelaire was not a photographer and anything but a fervent supporter of the technology. For the poet, the cataclysmic impact of photography on aesthetic production was, mainly, in the strong temptation to outsource, firstly, the faculty of *memory*, and, consequentially, the faculty of *imagination*; for Baudelaire, both are key to overcoming the universal obsession with 'copying

⁴²¹ Benjamin is not very clear about what exactly he refers to as 'presentiment'. Given the nature of his photography metaphor and the repeated focus on the 'negative', I interpret it as something along the lines of 'first impression'.

nature' ('Copiez la nature; ne copiez que la nature.').⁴²² In my analysis of Baudelaire's *le beau moderne*, I argued that the eyes of the sphinx in the sonnet 'La Beauté'—acting as aesthetico-Idealist mirrors of human existence—would later manifest as photographic plates in the wake of Daguerre. The concept of the photographic plate can thus be seen as further 'perfecting' Ingres' aesthetic of the Empire and rigid lines, truly achieving divine/ideal beauty by, quite literally, 'copying nature'. As became already apparent in the 1846 'Salon', Baudelaire never quite adhered to the concept of such divine/ideal beauty—to the *Idéal* as a form of aesthetic Idealism. Its static nature would not allow for the infusion of *imagination* via memory: it would not allow for aesthetic *movement*, as was the case in Delacroix's aesthetic of the public and lines blurred by colour. In the context of photography and, indeed, in the context of mnemonic filtering, these conceptual connections are further addressed in 'Le Peintre' and particularly in the section on 'L'Art mnémonique', where Baudelaire explains the importance, even the necessity of memory and *imagination* as the modern artist's two key faculties:

Il s'établit alors un duel entre la volonté de tout voir, de ne rien oublier, et la faculté de la mémoire qui a pris l'habitude d'absorber vivement la couleur générale et la silhouette, l'arabesque du contour. Un artiste ayant le sentiment parfait de la forme, mais accoutumé à exercer surtout sa *mémoire* et son *imagination*, se trouve alors comme assailli par une émeute de détails, qui tous demandent justice avec la furie d'une foule amoureuse d'égalité absolue. Toute justice se trouve forcément violée; toute harmonie détruite, sacrifiée; mainte trivialité devient énorme, mainte petitesse, usurpatrice. Plus l'artiste se penche avec impartialité vers le détail, plus l'anarchie augmente.⁴²³ (my emphasis)

Memory working in conjunction with *imagination* (as opposed to photographic memory) must be the modern artist's defence against ideas of copying nature and, indeed, against the externalisation and objectification of that obsession in the form of photography.

⁴²² In chapters 2 and 3, already, I pointed the reader towards Baudelaire's section on *imagination* in the 'Salon de 1859', entitled 'La Reine des facultés', where the poet writes: 'Dans ces derniers temps nous avons entendu dire de mille manières différentes: "Copiez la nature; ne copiez que la nature. Il n'y a pas de plus grande jouissance ni de plus beau triomphe qu'une copie excellente de la nature." Et cette doctrine, ennemie de l'art, prétendait être appliquée non seulement à la peinture mais à tous les arts, mêmes au roman, même à la poésie.' See BOC, II, 619–23 (pp. 619–20).

⁴²³ 'L'Art mnémonique', in 'Le Peintre', in BOC, II, 697–700 (p. 699). In light of Ingres' eulogy by Léon Lagrange, as cited in the subsection on 'Le Beau' in chapter 2, it is interesting to note that Baudelaire also addresses the notion of anarchy, though, of course, in a rather contrary sense.

Returning to Benjamin's image characterising 'Baudelaire's way of looking at the world', via mnemonic filtering, we see that time does not merely seize the essence of things within the instant, but also enables the modern artist's *imagination* to add subjective individuality to an otherwise objectified reality in the form of photography: it assists the modern artist in sheltering subjective individuality from an objective 'émeute de details'. In Baudelaire, modern aesthetics become the intersection between subjectivity (the modern artist's *imagination*) and objectivity (objective reality), the faculty of memory providing a most necessary conceptual bridge between the two: an aesthetico-transcendental bridge (as it was referred to in the section on 'Baudelairean Aesthetics' in chapter 2), connecting the realms of *spleen* and the *Idéal*.

At this point, one must follow the train of thought already initiated in chapter 3, which argued that, within the two types of the Benjaminian dialectical image, as discussed,⁴²⁴ one may encounter a relationship of cause and effect. Firstly, the cause: the dialectical image represents external, physical, spatial fragmentation as a consequence of the *rapidité* of material modernity. Secondly, the effect: internal, psychological, temporal fragmentation occurs also as a consequence of the *rapidité* of material modernity. Both feed into the 'generalised sense of interruption' that defines Benjaminian modernity.⁴²⁵ Earlier, then, in reference to metaphysics, I followed the Bergsonian argument that only in the individual's a priori or *pure* perception of time may external, spatial singularities/fragments interpenetrate to create subjective individuality in the form of *durée*. As a consequence of material modernity, however, the homogenous nature of external space is increasingly projected onto the heterogeneous nature of internal time. Time becomes 'externalised', 'spatialised', and thus 'objectified'. It is no longer able to create continuity and coherence ('actuality' [Kant]) from the singularities/fragments, as perceived in space.⁴²⁶ Time, too, becomes fragmented, and, like space, it metamorphoses into a homogenous heap of singularities—instants—where interpenetration can no longer occur. Subjective individuality becomes *homogenised*.

⁴²⁴ See in particular the subsection on 'Walter Benjamin and the First Poet of Modernity'.

⁴²⁵ Andrew Benjamin, 'Benjamin's Modernity', in *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*, ed. by David S. Ferris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 105. See also the section on 'Walter Benjamin and the First Poet of Modernity' in chapter 3.

⁴²⁶ The term 'continuity' is an important addition to the terminology that has, so far, guided my analysis of a priori space and time, and it reminds me of the Cartesian argument that only time allows us to discard any notion of space as static and to perceive it as a continuum. See the introductory section on Kant in chapter 3.

The importance of such an approach seems clear. So far, we have looked at time only as an internal phenomenon: abstract, subjective and thus difficult to grasp. Unlike fragmented space, as epitomised by Haussmann's Paris and the modern city, time has no 'concrete' representative. It remains abstract and subjective unless, of course, it is captured by clock or a watch, allowing us, once again, to externalise, spatialise, objectify, and as such *homogenise* our perception of time (seconds, minutes, hours). The same way self-sufficient singularities/fragments construct space as antagonists to empty space ('milieu vide' [Bergson]), in this context, the instant, too, is presented in space as a self-contained bubble of external stimuli: that which is perceived between the 'tick' and the 'tock'; and that which ultimately constitutes the Benjaminian shock. More importantly, however, from this perspective, one may finally scrutinise the epistemological dialectic occurring between either the modern artist (the engagement is *elitist*) or the generic individual (the engagement is *socio-collective*), and the instant, referring back to the subject-object duality, as initially suggested by Benjamin's characterisation of 'Baudelaire's way of looking at the world', and as conceptually contained within the critic's emphasis on Baudelaire's exclusive ability to 'read the [photographic] plate'. Recalling, once more, Chambers' take on Baudelaire's *le beau moderne*, as addressed in chapter 2, it is the *distance* between subject (either the modern artist or the generic individual) and object (the instant) that acts as the essential precondition for the acquisition of experience and the creation of knowledge—and it is, therefore, only from within such a duality that one can scrutinise the instant as 'object itself'.⁴²⁷

The dialectic between subject and object is absolutely key, when approaching Idealist epistemology. A summary of the theoretico-philosophical foundation up to this point seems helpful. The transformation of an instant into a photograph occurs immediately: the photographer selects (as opposed to filters) the photograph's essence of things, the very instant the photograph is taken. In the context of modern aesthetic production, however, the modern artist's mnemonic filtering of what is essential from what is not adds the necessary distance between subject and object—necessary, that is, for epistemological dialectic to take place *over time*, and thus for time (as opposed to the photographer) to seize the essence of things within the instant, via the modern artist's mnemonic filtering. And this is precisely the crux of the matter. If one considers the modern artist to be the subject and the instant to be the object of

⁴²⁷ The concept of the object itself is key in Kantian and Hegelian epistemology and will be clearly defined later in this chapter.

this dialectic, then, from such a perspective, the modern artist is enabled to *to reason with the instant* and thus to extract from it the poetic in history: ‘de tirer l’éternel du transitoire’. I shall elaborate on this by providing a more Baudelaire-specific example in my reading of ‘A une passante’. At this juncture, however, it is important to note that for Benjamin (as well as for Baudelaire) the process of reading the (photographic) plate, of accessing (the instant’s) objective reality via mnemonic filtering requires ‘infinite mental efforts’, something only the sheltered mind of the modern artist (and for Benjamin, in the context of Second Empire material modernity, only Baudelaire) can provide. Implicitly, however, this also suggests that accessing the instant to gain subjective comprehension of (the instant’s) objective reality is not a singular action, but, indeed, a chain of actions taking place *over time*, and thus a process that may be frequently initialised, but that does not necessarily end in completion—that is, with the modern artist’s *full*, subjective comprehension of (the instant’s) objective reality.⁴²⁸

In the spirit of Idealism, this epistemological reach for full, subjective comprehension of (the instant’s) objective reality refers, more specifically, to ‘the essence of things’, as proposed by Benjamin. It is the furthest the individual can ever venture on their quest of finding what I have, previously, referred to as the symbolic absolute, or, in the context of modern aesthetic production as *le beau moderne* and, indeed, aesthetic *éternité* (‘l’éternelle variation de la symphonie’, ‘la variété sort toujours de l’infini’ [‘Salon de 1846’]). Here, it is important to understand that, while the task of the modern artist *to reason with the instant* in order to extract (the instant’s) essence of things via mnemonic filtering—in order to transform theoretical modernity into aesthetic modernity in the form of *le beau moderne* and, again, aesthetic *éternité*—surely the attempt to comprehend the instant *without* the goal of aesthetic production or representation in mind is a socio-collective effort, something everyone does or is submitted to by the nature of consciousness. This follows from the Idealist epistemological premise that not being conscious about perceiving space and time (a priori) simultaneously means that one is always (self-) conscious (a posteriori); and simply by virtue of always being

⁴²⁸ Without wanting to add yet another layer of theoretical complexity, the notion that the individual’s epistemological process takes place *over time* may just as well be projected onto internal and external (subjective and objective) time. If the ‘over time’ occurs subjectively (as is the case for the modern artist), *reason* in whatever form or shape takes place and the process is likely to be completed: full, subjective comprehension of (the instant’s) objective reality occurs. If the ‘over time’ occurs objectively (as is the case for the generic individual), the fragmentation of time into instants (as opposed to the interpenetration that creates *durée*) also fragments the epistemological process, which, then, is unlikely to be completed: full, subjective comprehension of (the instant’s) objective reality *does not* occur.

(self-) conscious, one always tries to comprehend. This also means that *only* the act of seizing the instant within an artwork via mnemonic filtering is, in fact, the preserve of the modern artist: I have previously mentioned this, for Baudelaire, aesthetic production is an elitist task. Meanwhile, simply attempting to comprehend the instant becomes part of socio-collective experience (Kaplan). In material modernity, this quest for full, subjective comprehension of objective reality, confined to the temporal limitations of the instant, becomes the individual's ultimate epistemological task.

At this point, one must return to the distinction between two approaches, when addressing the instant in Baudelaire, as previously hinted at in reference to 'La Chambre double'. Firstly, the instant as material modernity's newly emerging temporal unit challenges traditional conceptions of aesthetic production and representation. The instant alters the everyday. It fragments it and is itself a consequence of fragmentation. With content *and* poetic form, Baudelaire attempts to incorporate the instant into his aesthetic production for a more apt aesthetic representation of modern human existence ('le miracle d'une prose poétique'). This engagement with the instant is *elitist*.

Secondly, the instant's impact on the everyday is a socio-collective, yet individual experience: every single member of modern society experiences it individually. The rapid and transitory nature of the instant, however, prohibits the generic individual from ever reaching full, subjective comprehension of (the instant's) objective reality, from ever completing the epistemological process of *reasoning* in order to extract the (instant's) essence of things. For the generic individual has no desire to *memorise* the experience of modernity, and to transform it into an artwork at a later point in time. Moreover, in material modernity, the generic individual lacks the faculties of *rêve*, *rêverie*, *ivresse*, and *imagination* necessary to shelter subjective individuality from objective reality. Once the instant has passed, it becomes the generic individual's personal history. This is not a universal, linear history. It is a raw and unrefined history: a mosaic of instants in motion and thus a kaleidoscope of incomprehension and consequential confusion, whose *rapidité* eventually renders them blasé, as already hinted at towards the end of chapter 3. This engagement with the instant is *socio-collective*.

Before bringing the analytic or a priori part (I) of this study to completion, here, it seems useful to substantiate my theoretico-philosophical model, as elaborated up until this point. In order to do so, I shall analyse both of the ‘L’Horloge’ poems (prose and verse), so intriguingly entitled after the tool allowing one to externalise, spatialise, objectify, and homogenise time in the first place. These two texts will be cross-referenced against what Baudelaire himself had to say about photography in ‘Le Public moderne et la photographie’.⁴²⁹

‘L’Horloge’ (1857): The Engagement with the Instant is Elitist

In the prose poem,⁴³⁰ or ‘sonnet libertin’, as Claude Pichois calls it,⁴³¹ which begins with the statement, ‘Les Chinois voient l’heure dans l’œil des chats’ (299), the narrator shares an anecdote about a Chinese boy. One day, on the outskirts of Nanking, the boy is asked by a missionary, who had left his clock behind, what time it is. The boy, hesitating for just a moment, leaves only to return, shortly after, with a cat in his arms. He looks into the eyes of the cat and states: ‘Il ne pas encore tout à fait midi’ (299). This little anecdote occupies the first two paragraphs of the poem and may serve two specific functions. Firstly, to create a link between the desire to know what time it is—the desire to externalise, spatialise, objectify, and homogenise time—and the necessity, therefore, of owning a clock or a watch. Secondly, to create a duality between an adult, thoroughly grounded in objective reality, depending on objectified time in order to know what time it is, and, therefore, conceptually representing the generic individual in material modernity; as well as a child to whom, as we know, one may attribute a little more easily the faculties of *rêve*, *rêverie*, *ivresse*, and *imagination*. For the child, time still exists much more in the form of *durée*: a subjective experience forged by the interpenetration of multiple ‘états de conscience’. The boy, here, functions as the very incarnation of the Bergsonian *moi profond*. Moreover, the reader should note that the adult’s access to time as a subjective experience is granted through the medium of eyes: the eyes of the cat, specifically, in this scenario. In an Idealist epistemological context, the notion that eyes may function as a gateway to infuse objective reality with subjective individuality will become more explicitly relevant in my close readings of ‘La Fausse Monnaie’ (1864) and ‘Les Yeux des pauvres’ (1864) in chapter 5.

⁴²⁹ This is one of the introductory sections in Baudelaire’s ‘Salon de 1859’. See *BOC*, II, 614–19.

⁴³⁰ ‘L’Horloge’, in *Le Spleen de Paris*, in *BOC*, I, 299–300. All further references will be provided in-text.

⁴³¹ ‘Notice’ to ‘L’Horloge’, in *BOC*, I, 1319–21 (p. 1320).

The following passage, the poem's pivotal paragraph, then, represents the narrator's *reasoning with* and the modern artist's mnemonic filtering of the anecdote—it represents time seizing the essence of things within the instant—allowing for *imagination* to infuse (the instant's) objective reality with subjective individuality:

Pour moi, si je me penche vers la belle Féline,⁴³² la si bien nommée, qui est à la fois l'honneur de son sexe, l'orgueil de mon cœur et le parfum de mon esprit, que ce soit la nuit, que ce soit le jour, dans la pleine lumière ou dans l'ombre opaque, au fond de ses yeux adorables je vois toujours l'heure distinctement, toujours la même, une heure vaste, solennelle, grande comme l'espace, sans divisions de minutes ni de secondes,—une heure immobile qui n'est pas marquée sur les horloges, et cependant légère comme un soupir, rapide comme un coup d'œil.
(299–300)

Baudelaire confirms the Bergsonian approach, and, indeed, my commentary on the nature and function of the former's modern artist and child in material modernity, as suggested in chapter 3 ('le génie n'est que l'*enfance retrouvée* à volonté' [Le Peintre]). In the passage above, the narrator—in his function as the modern artist, who, by narrating the poem, transforms the experience of modernity into *le beau moderne* and thus aesthetic *éternité*—aligns his own faculties as the modern artist-narrator with those of the child. As is the case for the child, he does not need a clock or a watch to perceive time either; he, too, is independent of objectified time because, for those capable of sheltering subjective individuality from objective reality, the perception of time still occurs internally: it remains abstract and subjective.

Referring to 'La Chambre double', previously, I pointed out a slight nuance in the approach to space and time, when comparing or applying Bergson to Baudelaire. Here, the overwhelming comfort, the sheer strength of the narrator's subjective individuality—as experienced by the *moi profond* prior to the 'coup terrible'—spills over into the realm of

⁴³² As Raymond N. MacKenzie states in his translation of *Le Spleen de Paris*: 'Scholars are unsure who Féline was, but this was evidently a nickname for a real woman Baudelaire knew, for there is a surviving copy of *The Flowers of Evil* inscribed by him to "my dear Féline...". But contemporary readers would not have known that, and the text itself is ambiguous enough to allow Féline to be the name of a cat. In the 1857 version, the line read, "As for me, when I pick up my good cat, my dear cat...". MacKenzie, 'Introduction', in Charles Baudelaire, *Paris Spleen and La Fanfarlo*, ed. and trans. by MacKenzie (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 2008). See also 'Notice' to 'L'Horloge', in *BOC*, I, 1320.

objective reality, the realm of the *moi superficiel*. This is why the furniture can be attributed the ability to dream ('rêver') and some form of subjective existence ('vie somnambulique') within the parameters provided by 'la chambre paradisiaque'. In 'L'Horloge', then, one encounters a similar nuance between Bergson and Baudelaire. As was the case in 'La Chambre double', here, again, space is presented as mirroring the subjective experience of time and vice versa ('grande *comme* l'espace' [my emphasis]). Just like the subjective experience of space, time, too, becomes boundless, no longer fragmented into seconds, minutes, and hours. As it did for the boy at the beginning of the poem (and, indeed, for the narrator of 'La Chambre double'), objectified time succumbs to the modern artist-narrator's subjective individuality. Temporal singularities/instants interpenetrate in the form of *durée*, or, as Baudelaire states at the end of the subsequent paragraph: they stretch into '[é]ternité' (300).

What one encounters, here, is in certain ways almost a descriptive account of the first approach to the instant in Baudelaire, as outlined above. The generic individual—where the *moi profond* has already been conquered by the *moi superficiel*, where *durée* has already been fragmented into instants—can relate to time only via a clock or a watch, accepting the consequence that the externalisation and objectification of time in the form of seconds, minutes, and hours, also always means predetermining the impact of time on one's existence. For what else does it mean to structure and plan one's tasks ahead, *not* according to parameters of quality, but, as is so often the case (and increasingly so), according to parameters of quantity. How much time does one have? How many temporal units can one spend on the execution of a task, on the engagement with a sensation, or on the appreciation of an emotion? In other words, how much time does one have in which to acquire experience and create knowledge? One should be reminded, here, that Bergson 'measured' *durée* in terms of quality, but space in terms of quantity, highlighting the crucial distinction between perceiving time and perceiving objectified time.⁴³³ Just like the child in the anecdote, however, the modern artist-narrator, too, is sheltered from the homogenising impact of objectified time on one's existence by the faculties of *rêve*, *rêverie*, *ivresse*, and *imagination*. For the modern artist-narrator, the subjective experience of time is not accompanied by the urge to externalise, spatialise, objectify, and homogenise: to capture it in temporal units and to fragment *durée* in response to externally imposed spatial singularities/fragments. Just like the child, the modern artist-narrator

⁴³³ See Henri Bergson, 'De la Multiplicité des états de conscience', in *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (1889), ed. by Frédéric Worms (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2007), pp. 56–104.

reasons with time and captures it in subjective *experience*, which is, then, transformed into an artwork via mnemonic filtering. Time, in this context, seems to resemble wet clay that can be moulded to perfection; and that may mean ‘légère comme un soupir’, ‘rapide comme un coup d’œil’, or, as we have already seen, ‘grande comme l’espace’ in the form of ‘[é]ternité’. Remaining independent of objectified time is a crucial component in the establishment of *distance* between the modern artist (the subject) and the instant (the object). It is the essential precondition for the modern artist *to reason with* the instant, and for mnemonic filtering to take place—*over time*—in order to extract from it the essence of things. Again, the engagement with the instant in this way is *elitist*.

‘L’Horloge’ (1860): The Engagement with the Instant is Socio-Collective

Countering its prose sibling, the verse poem ‘L’Horloge’,⁴³⁴ then, provides an excellent account of the second approach to the Baudelairean instant, as outlined above, where the modern artist’s mnemonic filtering has already taken place. Here, the essence of things has already been filtered as material modernity’s socio-collective engagement with the instant, and this is aesthetically represented by the poem itself as a manifestation of Baudelaire’s *le beau moderne*:

Horloge! Dieu sinistre, effrayant, impassible,
Dont le doigt nous menace et nous dit: ‘*Souviens-toi!*’
Les vibrantes Douleurs dans ton cœur plein d’effroi
Se planteront bientôt comme dans une cible;

Le Plaisir vaporeux fuira vers l’horizon
Ainsi qu’une sylphide au fond de la coulisse;
Chaque instant te dévore un morceau du délice
A chaque homme accordé pour toute sa saison.

⁴³⁴ ‘L’Horloge’, in *Les Fleurs du Mal*, in BOC, I, 81. All further reference will be provided in-text.

Trois mille six cents fois par heure, la Seconde
Chuchote: *Souviens-toi!*—Rapide, avec sa voix
D’insecte, Maintenant dit: Je suis Autrefois,
Et j’ai pompé ta vie avec ma trompe immonde!

Remember! Souviens-toi! prodigue! *Esto memor!*
(Mon gosier de métal parle toutes les langues.)
Les minutes, mortel folâtre, sont des gangues
Qu’il ne faut pas lâcher sans en extraire l’or!

Souviens-toi que le Temps est un joueur avide
Qui gagne sans tricher, à tout coup! c’est la loi.
Le jour décroît; la nuit augmente; *Souviens-toi!*
Le gouffre a toujours soif; la clepsydre se vide.⁴³⁵

Tantôt sonnera l’heure où le divin Hasard,
Où l’auguste Vertu, ton épouse encore vierge,
Où le Repentir même (oh! la dernière auberge!),
Où tout te dira Meurs, vieux lâche! il est trop tard!’

The poem’s strongest peculiarity is its function as a monologue, or even lesson on the nature of time, indicated by the opening citation marks preceding the first ‘souviens-toi’ in stanza 1, which, then, do not close until ‘il est [presque] trop tard’, at the very end of the final stanza. Moreover, it is interesting to note that the monologue or lesson is given by a self-reflective deification of time itself in the form of a clock, as precisely what it is: an allegory denoting time, or, rather, the passing thereof; and connoting the generic individual’s exclusive engagement with objectified time (the conquest of the *moi profond* by the *moi superficiel*). For the generic individual, the clock or the watch represents the inevitable externalisation and objectification of what is, at its core, nothing more than subjective individuality in the form of *durée*. As we know from my approach to Baudelaire’s artist and child in chapter 3 (‘le génie n’est que l’enfance retrouvée à volonté’ [‘Le Peintre’]) as well as from my reading of the prose

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poem ‘L’Horloge’, both—the modern artist and the child—stand above and remain *distanced* from such a dependence on objectified time: a faculty ultimately allowing them *to reason with time*—and in the case of aesthetic production, specifically, to mnemonically filter *over time*—in order to extract from it the essence of things: ‘de tirer l’éternel du transitoire’. Infusing (the instant’s) objective reality with subjective individuality thus means transforming the instant into aesthetic *éternité*.

Interpreted from such a perspective, it becomes clear why the poem is an excellent account of the second approach to the instant in Baudelaire. The allegory of the clock reminds, threatens, and points the finger at *us*: each and every individual, the members of modern society. And what it has to say is anything but pleasant: to put it in the words of Marcel Proust, we are ‘in search of lost time’, of our history, and without success. Slowly, we understand the painful truth (‘les vibrantes Douleurs’) that with the disappearance of our socio-collective past—the time we lost—socio-collective memory disappears as well, just like an actress in the wings (‘Ainsi qu’une sylphide au fond de la coulisse’), leaving the generic individual in a state of isolation, without orientation, and connected with and to ‘the other’ only by monetary relationships and the anonymity of the crowd.⁴³⁶ The instant now dominates modern human existence, producing nothing but the generic individual’s raw and unrefined personal history: the kaleidoscope of incomprehension and consequential confusion, as previously explained. It shifts the focus from the past onto the future, where only death awaits; a shift naturally accompanied by the the fear of losing even more time (‘Chaque instant te dévore un morceau du délice // A chaque homme accordé pour toute sa saison’). In the poem, the allegory of the clock not only initiates and symbolises this shift, but it is a constant reminder of it (‘souviens-toi’). It strips the generic individual of the faculties of *rêve*, *rêverie*, *ivresse*, and *imagination* until they submit to the dictate of objectified time. From this moment onwards, the passing of instants denotes the passing of a lifetime. For Baudelaire, this is the logic behind objectified time. Depicted, in the verse poem, is the all-determining impact of objectified time on modern human existence. The engagement with the instant is in this way *socio-collective*.

⁴³⁶ The creeping replacement of interpersonal relationships by monetary relationships as a result of the generic individual’s fragmented *a priori*, will be addressed in the section on ‘Exchange, Communication, the Blasé (and the Dandy)’ in chapter 5.

Finally, then, it seems worth returning to the subject–object duality between either the modern artist or the generic individual (the subject), and the instant (the object), as initially introduced by Benjamin’s characterisation of ‘Baudelaire’s way of looking at the world’. Moreover, we should recall that, via the a priori or *pure* perception of space and time, man is submitted to the continuous attempt of subjectively comprehending objective reality. In stanza 4 of ‘L’Horloge’, Baudelaire speaks of the obligation to not let the moment pass ‘sans en extraire l’or’, something which, in the context of the poem, can only translate to ‘making the most of it’ by turning away from the clock, its dictate, and the idea that an hour is nothing more than the accumulation of 3600 seconds. It is a plea to the generic individual to consider their engagement with time, to force open or at least loosen the shackles that come with any dependence. But time, once objectified, does not let go, and continues to capture the generic individual within its omnipresence. Too sweet is the temptation to pretend to control what is uncontrollable. Too closely knit are the connections between objectified time and material modernity. Time is an avid player, who always wins, without cheating (‘Qui gagne sans tricher’). For Baudelaire, this is not an occasion, not an incident, and not a situation destined to change. It is the law (‘c’est la loi’). From a Benjaminian perspective, then, this intrusion of the objective into the subjective realm is the initial stage of the generic individual’s search for lost time: when the need arises for *correspondances* and those ‘days of recollection’, so that the actualisation of *durée* may eventually take place, as discussed in chapter 2.⁴³⁷ With time objectified, shattered into instants, the generic individual can no longer ‘extract the gold’, the (instant’s) essence of things, distinguishing what is important from what is not. In material modernity, the *rapidité* of objectified time, the skill of Baudelaire’s ‘joueur avide’, is so great, so insurmountable, that the generic individual stands no chance. Isolated and confused, they will eventually turn blasé.⁴³⁸ Only at the end, when, quite literally, time has run out, may the generic individual realise that only subjective individuality—here, in the form of virtue and remorse—can promise salvation. But Baudelaire knows: by then, ‘il est trop tard’.

At this point, bringing us back to my opening remarks on photography, I wish to round off this discussion with a brief reflection on what Baudelaire himself wrote about photography in his ‘Salon de 1859’. Based on the Benjaminian characterisation of

⁴³⁷ See in particular the section on ‘Baudelairean Aesthetics’.

⁴³⁸ The concept of the blasé will be addressed in the section on ‘Exchange, Communication, the Blasé (and the Dandy)’ in chapter 5.

‘Baudelaire’s way of looking at the world’, I have, so far, argued that time fragmented into instants results in the generic individual’s inability to subjectively comprehend (the instant’s) objective reality. The instant simply does not allow for the faculties of *rêve*, *rêverie*, *ivresse* and *imagination* to establish *distance* and to sustain the epistemological dialectic between subject and object: the generic individual’s epistemological process—their ability *to reason*—becomes interrupted and fragmented. In both of the ‘L’Horloge’ poems, the instant as a concept, including its theoretical repercussions, becomes apparent between the lines, but the true extent of its impact in and on the Baudelairean œuvre remains open to interpretation. Not so, however, in his fundamental concerns about the emergence of photography, as expressed in ‘Le Public moderne et la photographie’. Here, Baudelaire draws a distinct line between photography and aesthetic production in its broadest sense, fervently arguing that the former cannot, under any circumstances, be considered part of the latter, despite what the public may seem to think. This rejection of photography goes beyond the earlier suggestion that it is merely not adequate for aesthetic representation: it simply cannot aesthetically represent.⁴³⁹ Two paragraphs make this explicit and must be cited in full, not least because Baudelaire’s own language bears witness to the urgency of the matter:

Je parlais tout à l’heure des artistes qui cherchent à étonner le public. Le désir d’étonner et d’être étonné est très légitime. *It is a happiness to wonder*, « c’est un bonheur d’être étonné »; mais aussi, *it is a happiness to dream*, ‘c’est un bonheur de rêver’. Toute la question, si vous exigez que je vous confère le titre d’artiste ou d’amateur des beaux-arts, est donc de savoir par quels procédés vous voulez créer ou sentir l’étonnement. Parce que le Beau est *toujours* étonnant, il serait absurde de supposer que ce qui est étonnant est *toujours* beau. Or notre public, qui est singulièrement impuissant à sentir le bonheur de la rêverie ou de l’admiration (signe des petites âmes), veut être étonné par des moyens étrangers à l’art, et ses artistes obéissants se conforment à son goût; ils veulent le frapper, le surprendre, le stupéfier par des stratagèmes indignes, parce qu’ils le savent incapable de s’extasier devant la tactique naturelle de l’art véritable.

⁴³⁹ I would like to make explicitly clear, here, that this statement (and what follows) is my interpretation of Baudelaire’s approach to and view on photography. It does not reflect, in the slightest, my personal opinion on photography as a visual art.

Dans ces jours déplorables, une industrie nouvelle se produisit, qui ne contribua pas peu à confirmer la sottise dans sa foi et à ruiner ce qui pouvait rester de divin dans l'esprit français. Cette foule idolâtre postulait un idéal digne d'elle et approprié à sa nature, cela est bien entendu. En matière de peinture et de statuaire, le *Credo* actuel des gens du monde, surtout en France (et je ne crois pas que qui que ce soit ose affirmer le contraire), est celui-ci: 'Je crois à la nature et je ne crois qu'à la nature [...]. Je crois que l'art est et ne peut être que la reproduction exacte de la nature [...]. Ainsi l'industrie qui nous donnerait un résultat identique à la nature serait l'art absolu.' Un Dieu vengeur a excusé les vœux de cette multitude. Daguerre fut son messie.⁴⁴⁰ (Baudelaire's emphasis)

In only a few lines, Baudelaire presents us with the aesthetico-cultural causality so far discussed in this chapter. Paragraph 1 sets the scene: 'notre public, qui est singulièrement impuissant à sentir le bonheur de la rêverie [...], veut être étonné par des moyens étrangers à l'art'. Paragraph 2, then, presents us with the cataclysmic outcome: 'l'art est et ne peut être que la reproduction exacte de la nature [...]. Ainsi l'industrie qui nous donnerait un résultat identique à la nature serait l'art absolu'. Photography ('industrie nouvelle', 'l'art absolu') serves as the aesthetico-methodological manifestation of the generic individual's inability *to reason with* time and to reach full, subjective comprehension of (the instant's) objective reality. Photography symbolises the instant in the world of aesthetic production. It strips its own content of all subjectivity, replacing it with the objective 'émeute de details' ('Le Peintre'), as provided by nature. It provides 'un résultat identique à la nature', once again, by 'copying nature' ('Copiez la nature; ne copiez que la nature.' ['Salon de 1859']). Unlike the modern artist, the photographer does not need to create a memory in order to infuse objective reality with subjective individuality in the form of *imagination*. In a photograph the (instant's) essence of things is no longer filtered mnemonically: (the instant's) objective reality is all the essence the photographer desires and, perhaps, deserves ('c'est la loi' ['L'Horloge']).

There is a distinct difference in Baudelaire's take on modern aesthetic production and his reflections on photography. Throughout this chapter, I have argued that one encounters, in fact, two engagements with the instant in Baudelaire: one is elitist, the other is socio-

⁴⁴⁰ 'Le Public moderne et la photographie', in 'Salon de 1859', in *BOC*, II, 616–17.

collective. Whereas, in 1863, the former is moulded into the all-embracing theory of modern aesthetics proposed in 'Le Peintre', the latter remains a matter of reading between the lines and of extracting Baudelaire's socio-cultural concerns by addressing his poetry from the viewpoint of the speaker or narrator. In the two cited paragraphs on photography, however, Baudelaire makes it clear: we ('le public', 'la foule') are in continuous need to be astonished ('étonné'), and there is no doubt about it. What remains doubtful, however, is by what exactly one wishes to be astonished. Is it beauty? Yes, '[p]arce que le Beau est *toujours* étonnant'. But is it exclusively beauty? No, '[parce qu']il serait absurde de supposer que ce qui est étonnant est *toujours* beau'. Here is one possible translation: aesthetic production astonishes precisely because it produces *le beau moderne* and aesthetic *éternité*; it is (the instant's) objective reality infused with subjective individuality via mnemonic filtering. Photography, however, simply astonishes: it is (the instant's) objective reality and nothing more. Both aesthetic production as well as photography create the fundamental human emotion of happiness ('*It is a happiness to wonder*, "c'est un bonheur d'être étonné"; mais aussi, *it is a happiness to dream*, "c'est un bonheur de rêver"); both serve the individual's desire to achieve happiness. Aesthetic production and photography are, consequentially, mirrored by two types of happiness: the first ('un bonheur d'être étonné') is grounded in objective reality. It represents the *étonnement* caused by material modernity's sparkling splendours; the second ('un bonheur de rêver') is grounded in the subjective individuality of *rêve*, *rêverie*, *ivresse*, and *imagination*. Two forms of happiness thus existing in opposition to one another: the first is directly linked to the *moi superficiel*, the second to the *moi profond*; by now, one can assume as much. But 'happiness' does not exclusively relate to the individual's emotional state. As a concept, it is applied to the state of nations and their respective societies. In order to understand the important connection between photography, memory, *imagination*, and, last but not least, happiness, one must take an intellectual detour.

Two Forms of Happiness

Conceptions of and approaches to happiness—for example, what it is, what it means, if it is important, or if it is merely a human fancy—vary greatly within academic disciplines, and an exhaustive overview lies outside the confines not merely of this chapter, but of this study entirely. Nonetheless, the simple idea that the individual becomes either happy or unhappy depending on various predetermined metaphysical, psychological, social, cultural, political,

ethical, and economic conditions will, from this point onwards, become increasingly important in the argument I present. The following will thus begin with a reflection on some contemporary ideas of ‘happiness’, or, rather, ‘well-being’ such as the ‘Beyond GDP’ initiative of the European Commission,⁴⁴¹ arguing that happiness does not merely exist at two levels—the individual and the socio-collective—but that there are, in fact, two forms of happiness: objective and subjective happiness.

Traditionally, the well-being of nations and their respective societies is measured in terms of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP)—that is, in purely economic terms. Researchers, however, are increasingly aware that the individual’s and, by extension, a nation’s well-being is not necessarily or, indeed, exclusively correlative with economic well-being. For decades now, scholarship has tried to uncouple economic concerns, backgrounds, trajectories, and so forth from what psychology refers to as ‘subjective well-being’.⁴⁴² Giving the 2003 Lionel Robbins memorial lecture series,⁴⁴³ Professor Richard Layard from the London School of Economics has provided a most concise overview. Basing his lectures on a (very) brief historical as well as intellectual overview, Layard argues strongly for a deconstruction of the links between GDP and happiness:

in fact the GDP is a hopeless measure of welfare. For since the [Second World] War that measure has shot up by leaps and bounds, while the happiness of the population has stagnated. To understand how the economy actually affects our well-being, we have to use psychology as well as economics.⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴¹ See *Beyond GDP: Measuring Progress, True Wealth, and the Well-Being of Nations* <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/beyond_gdp/index_en.html> [accessed 18 February 2015].

⁴⁴² For an authoritative overview, see Ed Diener, ‘Subjective Well-Being: The Science of Happiness and a Proposal for a National Index’, *American Psychologist*, 1.55 (2000), 34–43. As the title suggests, Diener also proposes his concept of a national happiness index. On that very note, see also Jo Confino, ‘Michael Porter Unveils New Health and Happiness Index’, *Guardian Sustainable Business*, 11 April 2013 <<http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/michael-porter-health-happiness-index>> [accessed 18 February 2015].

⁴⁴³ Lionel Robbins (1898–1984) was a British economist, head of the Economics Section at the London School of Economics, and Fellow of the British Academy.

⁴⁴⁴ Richard Layard, ‘Happiness: Has Social Science a Clue?’, *Lionel Robbins Memorial Lecture Series*, 03–05 March 2003, London School of Economics <<http://cep.lse.ac.uk/events/lectures/layard/RL030303.pdf>> [accessed 18 March 2016], p. 3.

Happiness is to be understood as an ‘important [universal] in human nature, *without which it would be impossible for us to understand each other*’ (my emphasis).⁴⁴⁵ From a neuropsychological point of view, this means that happiness does, indeed, ‘exist’. It can be measured ‘from instant to instant’ with the help of functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). It is considered a ‘single variable’ within psychology and can thus be compared between individuals as well as between nations.⁴⁴⁶ Layard interprets this single variable as ‘an evaluative faculty in all of us which tells us how happy we are and then directs our actions towards improving our happiness’.⁴⁴⁷ At this point, defining more clearly what I have tentatively referred to as objective and subjective happiness will allow us to merge these early reflections with the two forms of Baudelairean happiness, as addressed in the context of photography.

Firstly, the neuropsychological approach has revealed that the individual’s efforts to increase happiness are largely ‘subconscious’.⁴⁴⁸ This subconscious pursuit may be projected, firstly, onto the link between psychology and economy, as emphasised by Layard, and, secondly, onto our conception of material modernity; as I shall demonstrate, it then feeds, directly, into the Bergsonian discourse on the *moi superficiel* conquering the *moi profond*. If happiness is defined purely in economic terms—as it has been, for example, through the economic focus on a nation’s GDP—then, the conquest of the *moi profond* by the *moi superficiel* is played out within the individual’s efforts to *increase* happiness. In the context of material modernity, industrialisation, and mass-commodification, perhaps, it would be just to refer to this type of happiness as a form of instant gratification or material reward. This, of course, is *not* in line with the Bergsonian argument itself, where objective reality’s infringement upon subjective individuality would necessarily lead to the individual’s fragmented a priori, and thus to a *decrease* in happiness. But this is precisely the crux of the matter. If the individual’s efforts to increase happiness are largely subconscious, as argued by Layard, then, the individual has no conscious sense of whether the happiness sought and experienced is economic (objective, the happiness of the *moi superficiel*) or psychological

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid. The issue of communication in material modernity, specifically, in light of ‘empathy’ as ‘[t]he ability to understand and share the feelings of another’ (*OED*), will be addressed in chapter 5 and in particular in the section on ‘Exchange, Communication, the Blasé (and the Dandy)’.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 8 and 11.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 12.

⁴⁴⁸ Layard uses the term ‘unconscious’, which I have changed to ‘subconscious’, in order to assure terminological coherence within the argument I present.

(subjective, the happiness of the *moi profond*). In other words, there is no conscious discrepancy between what is traditionally referred to as ‘economic well-being’ and, once again, what psychology has labelled ‘subjective well-being’. If the individual’s subjective happiness can be replaced by the acquisition or, indeed, ‘purchase’ of objective happiness, then, the Bergsonian *moi profond* is conquered—conquered *subconsciously* because the fragmentation of the individual’s a priori or *pure* perception of space and time also occurs *subconsciously*. In Marxist terms, what ensues is commodity fetishism in the form of the individual chasing the next best thing: one Second Empire commodity after the other. In Benjaminian terms, the commodity is turned phantasmagoria in order to connote the fleeting nature of objective happiness: happiness strictly in the form of economic well-being. In Baudelairean terms, happiness occurs as a result of being astonished by (the instant’s) objective reality (‘étonné’), as opposed to subjective individuality (‘rêver’). This first form of happiness could thus be identified as ‘objective happiness’. It represents the individual’s submission to objective reality (‘c’est la loi’ [‘L’Horloge’]) and stands in an isomorphic relationship with objective wealth, such as a nation’s GDP. In the context of the argument I propose, objective happiness represents the *material* in modernity, and the individual is happy as long as their material desires are satisfied.

Secondly, the antagonist to ‘objective happiness’ is, of course, ‘subjective happiness’, which psychology has come to define as ‘subjective well-being’. In the context of this study, it is the type of happiness linked to the individual’s *moi profond*, or, indeed, to Baudelaire’s modern artist and child, whose subjective individuality is sheltered from objective reality by the faculties of *rêve*, *rêverie*, *ivresse*, and *imagination*. But this is not the point I want to make. Far more interesting, at this juncture, is the opposition between what we have now labelled ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ happiness; and, here, one has to look at why exactly the individual would, in fact, perceive the conquest of the *moi profond* by the *moi superficiel* as an *increase*, as opposed to *decrease* in happiness. Why exactly has happiness traditionally been linked to a nation’s GDP? Why is one so fascinated by material modernity?

Once again, every academic discipline scrutinising happiness in some form or shape will have its own array of potential answers to these questions. While I do not presume to offer conclusive reflections, following one train of thought may help carry this discussion of happiness through into the context of material modernity, and Baudelaire as the first poet of

that modernity. Perhaps, in the displacement of subjective happiness by objective happiness, the individual is being manipulated by what commentators have, retrospectively, described with the term ‘spectacle’. With his notion of *Spectacular Politics*, for example, Matthew Truesdell addresses Napoléon III’s attempts at psychological mass-manipulation in order to secure political legitimacy;⁴⁴⁹ and, almost a century after the fall of the Second Empire, the situationist Guy Debord describes in his well-known philosophical essay, *La Société du spectacle*, modern society’s dependence on the material spectacle to the point of full, psychological and physiological immersion.⁴⁵⁰ The spectacle is thus similar to what Guillaume Apollinaire would describe as ‘le masque d’un tyran’; it is ‘noble’ on the surface, promising an increase in life quality (objective happiness) in return for the individual’s transformation into a commodity fetishist, while, simultaneously, concealing the ‘tragique’ conquest of the *moi profond* by the *moi superficiel*.⁴⁵¹ One could continue these reflections endlessly, tracing similar ideas back to Hellenism and biblical times:

Then the LORD said, ‘The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know.’⁴⁵²

In the passages that follow, Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed by fire and brimstone, annihilating their entire populations. The message is unmistakably clear: those who sin, will inevitably be crushed by the most devilish of all elements. This is the predetermined course of humanity’s blasphemous curiosity. I am touching, here, upon the notion of fatalism as a form of existential, socio-collective determinism to which our journey into Baudelaire’s a posteriori will eventually lead.⁴⁵³ For now, it seems important to note that, like late nineteenth-century Western Europe, the Hellenistic Empire also experienced a lengthy period of great economic prosperity, and it could thus carefully be suggested, here, that the moral lesson intrinsic to the narrative of Sodom and Gomorrah responds to the social changes inherent in

⁴⁴⁹ Matthew Truesdell, *Spectacular Politics: Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte and the Fête Impériale, 1849–1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁴⁵⁰ Guy Debord, *La Société du spectacle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992).

⁴⁵¹ Guillaume Apollinaire writes in his verse poem ‘Cours de chasse’: ‘Notre histoire est noble et tragique // Comme le masque d’un tyran’.

⁴⁵² *The Bible*, Genesis 18. 20–1. New International Version.

⁴⁵³ See the section on ‘Society and Existence from the Viewpoint of Death’ in chapter 5.

such economic prosperity: the individual's submission to the material spectacle and a profound belief in the increase of happiness via material wealth.⁴⁵⁴ But why do I make these far-reaching assumptions?

I have suggested that the generic individual's fragmented a priori is ultimately grounded in the rise of objectivity, taking whatever form or shape—external space, the *moi superficiel*, the instant, the photograph, the commodity, the phantasmagoria, the spectacle, material modernity—and, consequentially, it is also grounded in the increase of objective happiness. As our reflections on a nation's well-being have shown, the outcome, the effect of the fragmented a priori—of internal, psychological, temporal fragmentation—remains no longer confined to the sphere of individual existence; the fragmented a priori multiplies into fragmented 'a priori-s'. Here, internal, psychological, temporal fragmentation becomes manifested in those social phenomena that economists have traditionally linked to a nation's GDP. From the viewpoint of happiness, then, I am returning to what was already addressed as material modernity's socio-collective engagement with the instant. Indeed, just like the allegory of the clock in the verse poem 'L'Horloge' as well as in the two paragraphs on photography, as cited above, Baudelaire makes explicit that, once again, the finger is pointed at *us*: the members of modern society. It is *us*, the public, that is 'singulièrement impuissant à sentir le bonheur de la rêverie'. It is unnecessary to elaborate, at length, the relevance of the term 'rêverie' in this context: in short, it signifies subjective individuality. Suffice it to say, then, that the adjective 'singulièrement' emphasises that modern society is now addressed as the sum of its individual parts, a claim further supported, when Baudelaire states: 'Cette foule idolâtre postulait un idéal digne d'elle et approprié à sa nature.'

Baudelaire thus perceived modern society as increasingly intrigued by the ease and accessibility of objective happiness, and, just as 'the brilliance of [Benjamin's] retrospective vision' made clear,⁴⁵⁵ almost a century later, that the Marxist commodity exists merely in the form of a phantasmagoria, the poet, too, could sense that such happiness would be as fleeting

⁴⁵⁴ This serves as a suggestive analogy only. As the historian Arthur Darby Knock once admitted: 'To determine with accuracy the influence on early Christianity of its Hellenistic background is impossible. Our material does not enable us to define in detail all the stages through which Christianity developed, and we do not know the Hellenistic background nearly as well as we could wish.' Knock, 'Early Gentile Christianity and its Hellenistic Background', in *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*, ed. by Zeph Stewart, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), I, 50.

⁴⁵⁵ Meltzer, *Seeing Double: Baudelaire's Modernity*, p. 12.

and superficial as the commodity fetishism from which it ultimately sprang. Essentially, then, on a *profound*, as opposed to *superficial* level (Bergson), for Baudelaire, with the decrease of the generic individual's subjective happiness, society, too, became *unhappy*. The poet perceived and aesthetically *adapted* ('s'adapter') to this fundamental change in the fabric of human existence. Whether he perceived it as an essentially metaphysical or *subconscious* phenomenon, with roots in what we have come to define as the generic individual's fragmented a priori, remains speculation. At the time, however, Victor Cousin had already introduced Kant's philosophy to the Parisian intelligentsia.⁴⁵⁶ The following Idealist epistemological approach to the poet's famous sonnet 'A une passante' as well as chapter 5 will show in greater detail how exactly the creeping decay and depletion of subjective individuality filters into Baudelaire's poetic representation of modern human existence. For now, however, as is so often the case, a subtle remark provides a first impression. In the prose poem 'Mademoiselle Bistouri', Baudelaire writes: 'Quelles bizarreries ne trouve-t-on pas dans une grande ville, quand on sait se promener et regarder? La vie fourmille de monstres innocents.'⁴⁵⁷ If one interprets the term 'monster' and its dehumanising properties, here, in the broadest possible sense as a consequence of the generic individual's fragmented a priori—of the decay and depletion of subjective individuality—then, one must also wonder: innocent, but why? The answer seems clear: when the epistemological process is interrupted and fragmented, one simply does not know any better.

Idealist Epistemology in 'A une passante'

Before engaging with Baudelaire's 'A Une Passante' directly, I would like to briefly return to the same section of 'Le Peintre' that already introduced to us the similarities between Baudelaire's modern artist and child, as regards subjective individuality in the form of *rêve*, *rêverie*, and *ivresse*.⁴⁵⁸ Baudelaire, here, unflinchingly, places the modern artist at the centre of the crowd:

⁴⁵⁶ In 1842, Cousin published his *Leçons de philosophie sur Kant*.

⁴⁵⁷ 'Mademoiselle Bistouri', in *Le Spleen de Paris*, in *BOC*, I, 353–56 (p. 355).

⁴⁵⁸ 'L'Artiste, homme du monde, homme des foules et enfant', in 'Le Peintre', in *BOC*, II, 691–2.

La foule est son domaine, comme l'air est celui de l'oiseau, comme l'eau celui du poisson. Sa passion et sa profession, c'est d'*épouser la foule*. Pour le parfait flâneur, pour l'observateur passionné, c'est une immense jouissance que d'élire domicile dans le nombre, dans l'ondoyant, dans le mouvement, dans le fugitif et l'infini. Être hors de chez soi, et pourtant se sentir partout chez soi; voir le monde, être au centre du monde et rester caché au monde, tels sont quelques-uns des moindres plaisirs de ces esprits indépendants, passionnés, impartiaux, que la langue ne peut que maladroitement définir.⁴⁵⁹ (Baudelaire's emphasis)

And only a little later:

On peut aussi le comparer, lui, à un miroir aussi immense que cette foule; à un kaléidoscope doué de conscience, qui, à chacun de ses mouvements, représente la vie multiple et la grâce mouvante de tous les éléments de la vie. C'est un *moi* insatiable du *non-moi*, qui, à chaque instant, le rend et l'exprime en images plus vivantes que la vie elle-même, toujours instable et fugitive.⁴⁶⁰ (Baudelaire's emphasis)

Down to the idea of a kaleidoscope in motion (though, it appears, here, in a slightly different sense), much of what has been argued, so far, is reflected in these few lines. The modern artist is surrounded—chooses to be surrounded—by the crowd and its habitat, the modern city ('[l]a foule est son domaine'). The crowd, just like the modern city, is a homogenous heap of external, spatial singularities/fragments ('le nombre'), generic individuals with whom the modern artist enters into a close, intimate dynamic—or, once again, dialectic ('épouser la foule'). The modern artist is almost overwhelmed ('l'ondoyant') by the crowd's fleeting, yet endless movement ('le mouvement', 'le fugitif', 'l'infini'). But, as we know, the modern artist is also protected by the faculties of *rêve*, *rêverie*, *ivresse*, and *imagination*; faculties that shelter their subjective individuality; faculties enabling them to become part of the crowd, while continuing *to reason with* material modernity and modern human existence. The modern artist is thus capable of establishing and sustaining *distance* as the essential precondition for the acquisition of experience and the creation of knowledge. They participate

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 692.

as the *moi superficiel* without ever losing sight of the *moi profound*; observing material modernity's *socio-collective* engagement with the instant without ever being observed in return, or, rather, without ever being 'absorbed' ('Être hors de chez soi, et pourtant se sentir partout chez soi.'). The faculties of *rêve*, *rêverie*, *ivresse*, and *imagination* are thus privileged, *elitist* faculties, transforming material modernity into the modern artist's primary source of aesthetic inspiration. Embracing the experience of modernity and the fragmentation it connotes (both physical and psychological), it is only the modern artist, who is able to eventually transform this experience into an artwork via mnemonic filtering: to transform the instant into aesthetic *éternité* ('C'est un *moi* insatiable du *non-moi*, qui, à chaque instant, le rend et l'exprime en images plus vivantes que la vie elle-même, toujours instable et fugitive.').

The above citation, however, is not exclusively interesting because of its concise summary of the present discussion. Just like Benjamin does in his characterisation of 'Baudelaire's way of looking at the world', Baudelaire, here, too, places the modern artist ('*moi*') and the instant ('*non-moi*') in a clearly defined subject-object duality, allowing not merely for a closer analysis of both, but, indeed, of the epistemological dialectic that occurs between the two. At this point, then, for a number of reasons, it is helpful to introduce the philosophy of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel.

Firstly, Hegel is a crucial addition to the Kantian distinction between a priori and a posteriori, as addressed so far. Next to Kant and within the philosophical discipline of German Idealism, the importance of Hegelian thought overshadows the influence of others such as Fichte and Schelling.⁴⁶¹ Moreover, as Wolfgang Bonsiepen repeatedly stresses in his introduction to the German original of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807),⁴⁶² the

⁴⁶¹ In order to ascertain the validity of such a statement, one only has to glance at Espen Hammer's introduction to the edited volume *German Idealism: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Hammer (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 1–15. His discussion, almost exclusively, revolves around Kant and Hegel with virtually no mention of Fichte and Schelling. It should be noted, however, that this is not always the case. As regards the conceptual progression or development intrinsic to German Idealism, already hinted at in chapter 1, Allen W. Wood writes: 'The truly revolutionary figure here was Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814), who devised a new "synthetic method" of transcendental inquiry that overcame what he and his contemporaries viewed as the false and artificial "dualism"—between sense and understanding, reason and empirical desire, theory and practice—that Kant had set up and had even attempted to mediate in his third critique, *Critique of the Power of Judgement* (1790).' Wood, 'Introduction', in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century (1790–1870)*, ed. by Wood and Songsuk Susan Hahn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 1.

⁴⁶² As is the case for Benjamin, Kant, and Simmel, initially, I have used the scholarly German edition: Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. by Hans-Friedrich Wessels and Heinrich Clairmont

philosopher's magnum opus also follows, much more precisely, in the footsteps of Fichte's *Foundations of the Science of Knowledge* (1794) and Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), as opposed to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781). It thus serves as a logical and complementary addition to the Idealist epistemology I propose, here, in reference to the Baudelairean experience of modernity: Kant was the first and Hegel the last of the four key protagonists in German Idealism.⁴⁶³

Secondly, Hegel is absolutely key, when addressing the specific mechanisms intrinsic to Idealist epistemology. In reference to the subject–object duality between Baudelaire and his photographic plates—once again, as initially introduced by Benjamin's characterisation of 'Baudelaire's way of looking at the world'—so far, in this chapter, I have frequently referred to the epistemological dialectic occurring between both subject and object. While the broad notion of dialectic is as old as classical philosophy, in Western philosophy, it was Hegel, who most famously redefined it, giving it a new prominence that would last well into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Finally, a particularity of Hegel is the concept of the individual's split (self-) consciousness.⁴⁶⁴ Via the Bergsonian selves, it will eventually grant Idealist epistemological access to our concerns regarding objective and subjective as well as individual and socio-collective happiness.

In an attempt to avoid philosophical overload, the following analysis will be divided into two parts. Firstly, I shall introduce Hegelian dialectic from a 'minimalist' point of view that will, nonetheless, exceed the often cited and somewhat reductive thesis, anti-thesis,

(Hamburg: Meiner, 2011). For the purpose of citation, however, I have used the scholarly English translation by A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). It must be noted, here, that the term 'Geist' in the original title tends to be translated as either 'spirit' or 'mind'. For the 1977 edition, Miller translates it into the former, whereas a few years earlier in 1971 (Oxford: Clarendon Press), he translates it into the latter. As Bonsiepen points out, the distinction or confusion originally stems from Hegel's very own shift of focus from the 'experience of consciousness' onto his conception of an historically existing 'world spirit'. See Wolfgang Bonsiepen, 'Einleitung', in Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, pp. xlv–v. Terry Pinkard provides a relatively comprehensive overview in 'Hegel's Phenomenology and Logic: An Overview', in *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*, ed. by Karl Ameriks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 161–79.

⁴⁶³ I already mentioned this in chapter 1, but I should like to remind the reader, here, that I have primarily opted for 'German Idealism' because of its foundation in metaphysics.

⁴⁶⁴ As Bonsiepen points out, it is the particular focus on self-consciousness that connects Hegel with his predecessors Fichte and Schelling. See 'Einleitung', in Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, pp. xxix–xxx.

synthesis trichotomy.⁴⁶⁵ At this juncture, I shall also make Hegelian dialectic more relevant in the context of fragmented time, specifically, by addressing the instant as object itself. Secondly, I shall introduce Blood's aforementioned reading of 'A Une Passante' entitled 'The Sonnet as Snapshot: Seizing the Instant in Baudelaire's "A Une Passante"',⁴⁶⁶ where the critic argues that the sonnet presents us with a prime example of Baudelaire's poetic 'here and now'. Essentially, Blood's take on the sonnet will allow for the merging of Hegelian dialectic with our reflections on the generic individual's fragmented a priori, not merely concluding the analytic or a priori part (I) of my argument, but also facilitating a logical and, hopefully, seamless transition to the synthetic or a posteriori part (II) and its focus on Baudelaire's poetic representation of modern human existence.

Hegelian Dialectic and the Instant as Object Itself

The main difficulty, when approaching dialectic in Hegel is its intrinsic omnipresence throughout the entirety of Hegelian philosophy. Everything in Hegel revolves around the concept of dialectic: all of reality follows it. This is for good reason. Hegel states at the beginning of his introduction to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*:⁴⁶⁷

It is a natural assumption that in philosophy, before we start to deal with its proper subject-matter, viz. the actual cognition of what truly is, one must first of all come to an understanding about cognition, which is regarded either as the instrument to get hold of the Absolute, or as the medium through which one discovers it.⁴⁶⁸

Moreover, Findlay points out in his foreword that the *Phenomenology*

is a work seen by Hegel as a necessary forepiece to his philosophical system [...], but it is meant to be a forepiece that can be dropped and discarded once the student,

⁴⁶⁵ Not once does Hegel use these terms in conjunction. Nonetheless, I shall apply the trichotomy at a later stage in my analysis as it does facilitate intellectual access to the philosopher's conception of dialectic.

⁴⁶⁶ Susan Blood, 'The Sonnet as Snapshot: Seizing the Instant in Baudelaire's "A Une Passante"', *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 36.3-4 (Spring-Summer 2008), 255-69.

⁴⁶⁷ Hegel's 'Introduction' should not be confused with his well-known and oft-cited 'Preface' ('Vorrede').

⁴⁶⁸ Hegel, 'Introduction', in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 46-57 (p. 46).

through deep immersion in its contents, has advanced through confusions and misunderstanding to the properly philosophical point of view.⁴⁶⁹

Following on from Kant, whose primary objective it was to unite the diachronically preceding epistemologies of Rationalism and Empiricism on the ‘battlefield’ (‘Kampfplatz’) of metaphysics,⁴⁷⁰ Hegel’s attempt is to develop a philosophical system that incorporates metaphysics, the arts and humanities as well as the natural sciences.⁴⁷¹ The critical consensus seems to be that he did not achieve this goal, partially because he died in 1831, shortly after beginning a thorough revision of his magnum opus. Whether or not Hegel was as successful as intended, however, is irrelevant, here. Instead, what seems of great importance, is that the concepts of ‘phenomenology’ and ‘dialectic’ constitute the core of Hegel’s (attempted) philosophical holism. While both concepts function and co-exist in perfect independence of one another, within Hegelian thought, they are complementary on a fundamental level—that is, neither is synonymous with the other, while, simultaneously, the latter becomes the ultimate driving force of the former. So let us have a brief look at what both concepts denote in their own right.

Bonsiepen explains in his introduction that in the history of ideas, there is uncertainty, as regards the origin and meaning of the term ‘phenomenology’. Throughout the centuries, however, the common denominator seems to be that a ‘phenomenon’ represents a specificity from which one may deduct a universality. A specific phenomenon occurring in nature allows for reflections on nature more universally. In order to give this a slightly more Baudelairean twist, we may observe that humanity’s primordial phenomenon is original sin. From this specific phenomenon, then, Catholicism deducts the universal state of human existence.⁴⁷² Now, as the title suggests, Hegelian phenomenology is concerned with the human spirit or mind—that is, what Hegel discusses are the phenomena of the spirit/mind—and this is where Hegelian dialectic comes into play. Hegel identifies a total of eight phenomena: ‘sense-certainty’, ‘perception’, ‘comprehension’, ‘self-consciousness’, ‘reason’, ‘spirit’,

⁴⁶⁹ J. N. Findlay, ‘Foreword’, in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. v–xxx (p. v).

⁴⁷⁰ I already mentioned this in chapter 1.

⁴⁷¹ See Bonsiepen, ‘Entstehungsgeschichte der “Phänomenologie des Geistes”’, in ‘Einleitung’, in Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, pp. xvii–xxix (p. xvii).

⁴⁷² See Bonsiepen, ‘Zum Begriff “Phänomenologie”’, in ‘Einleitung’, in Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, pp. viii–xvi.

‘religion’, and ‘absolute knowing’.⁴⁷³ Nonetheless, Hegel does not entirely consider these phenomena as self-sufficient in their own right. Each represents a universality (‘Allgemeinheit’) of the human spirit/mind, and yet each is simultaneously a specificity from which ‘another’ or, rather, ‘the next’ universality may be deduced. With regards to Kant’s *Critique*, for example, we have seen that ‘sense-certainty’ (‘sensibility’ or ‘perception’ [Kant]) is a universality in that it is, from an Idealist epistemological perspective, universally true, as regards the individual’s a priori. For Hegel, however, it is also a specificity (‘Bestimmtheit’) in that it leads us to ‘the next’ phenomenon of the spirit/mind: that which he terms ‘perception’.⁴⁷⁴ Just like ‘sense-certainty’, then, ‘perception’ is a universality in that it is universally true, but also a specificity in that it leads, once again, to ‘the next’ phenomenon of ‘comprehension’, and so forth. This is Hegelian dialectic: the Hegelian interpretation of what we have, so far, referred to as the individual’s epistemological process. To put it in Finlay’s words:

The logical ‘movement’ which the *Phenomenology*, like the rest of the system, exhibits, is throughout the logic of the ‘side’ or ‘aspect’ or ‘moment’, of that which, while it can be legitimately distinguished in some unity, and must in fact be so distinguished, nevertheless represents something basically incapable of self-sufficiency and independence, properties which can only be attributed to the whole into which sides, aspects, or moments enter, and a reference to which is accordingly ‘built into’ each side.⁴⁷⁵

Hegelian ‘phenomenology’ thus presents the reader with eight universalities (phenomena of the spirit/mind), which, chained together by Hegelian dialectic, present yet another universality: namely, Idealist epistemology, or the acquisition of experience and the creation of knowledge. Hegel clarifies in the context of the argument I present: ‘this dialectical movement which consciousness exercises on itself [...] is precisely what is called *experience*’ (Hegel’s emphasis).⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷³ As was the case for Kant in chapter 3, I have used ‘comprehension’ as a synonym for Miller’s translation of ‘Verstand’ as ‘understanding’ in order to provide terminological coherence within the argument I propose.

⁴⁷⁴ Miller also translates ‘Bestimmtheit’ as ‘determinateness’.

⁴⁷⁵ Findlay, ‘Foreword’, in Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. v–xxx (p. ix).

⁴⁷⁶ Hegel, ‘Introduction’, in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 46–57 (p. 55). The ‘holistic’ nature of Hegelian dialectic is frequently addressed by commentators. Hans-Georg Gadamer, for example, writes in the foreword to his

At this point, then, it seems logical to return to the Baudelairean *experience* of modernity and to ask the important question of how exactly one may apply Hegelian dialectic to the relationship between either the modern artist or the generic individual, and the instant: what I have previously referred to as a subject–object duality, or what Benjamin has introduced to us as ‘Baudelaire’s way of looking at the world’—that is, the poet’s exclusive ability to ‘read the [photographic] plate’ based on ‘infinite mental efforts’. As already mentioned above, in the context of ‘sense-certainty’ (Hegel’s first phenomenon), like Kant, Hegel also believed that knowledge can exist a priori. Whereas for Kant, however, the only sensory stimuli that exist a priori are space and time,⁴⁷⁷ for Hegel, a third element is added to the equation: the ‘object in itself’ (‘Ding an sich’).⁴⁷⁸ For Kant, conceptually speaking, the object in itself can never truly exist, because it is always dependent on the individual’s a priori or *pure* perception of space and time.⁴⁷⁹ For Hegel, however, this only means that, in fact, the object is doubled. Firstly, it exists as object in itself, independent of the subject; and, secondly, it exists as ‘object for an other [*sic*]’ (‘Ding für ein anderes’). Here, in a Kantian sense, the object enters into a dialectic with a subject and obtains additional ‘properties’ (‘Eigenschaften’ [Kant, Hegel]). Now, as we know, ‘sense-certainty’ (‘sinnliche Gewißheit’) is Hegel’s first phenomenon of the spirit/mind,

Hegel’s Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies, trans. by P. Christopher Smith (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976): ‘Philosophy must incorporate within itself that anticipation of the whole which makes our desire to know go round, that anticipation of the whole which lies embedded in language as the totality of our access to the world. And it is thought philosophy must give an account of that anticipated whole’ (p. 3). Michael Rosen approaches his criticism of Hegelian dialectic from the position that, first of all, one must establish a system of ‘interpreting philosophy’, or, rather, ‘interpreting the history of philosophy’, as opposed to isolated aspects. See *Hegel’s Dialectic and its Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 1–22 (in particular pp. 20–2).

⁴⁷⁷ When Hegel addresses a priori space and time, he argues that the individual’s a priori or *pure* perception only ever takes place in the ‘here’ (‘Hier’) and ‘now’ (‘Itzt’ or ‘Jetzt’). This provides a helpful conceptual connection between Benjamin’s analytical focus on the ‘immediate perception of shock’—causing the generic individual’s fragmented a priori—and Blood’s take on ‘A Une Passante’ as a prime example of Baudelaire’s poetic ‘here and now’. See Hegel, ‘Sense-Certainty: Or the “This” and “Meaning” [Meinen]’, in ‘Consciousness’, in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 58–66.

⁴⁷⁸ The addition of the object in itself marks the completion of the shift from Kant’s ‘subjective Idealism’ to Hegel’s ‘absolute Idealism’ already hinted at in chapter 1. In Hegel, the object can be absolute, when it is the object in itself; in Kant, however, it cannot. Robert B. Pippin explains: ‘In both Schelling and Hegel, and in the more poetical expressions of the “Frühromantik”, the early romantic idealists, the “ideal” seems to refer to what they designate as “the Absolute”, the “unconditioned” manifested in the conditioned world of nature and spirit, such that the latter are intelligible only as such dependent manifestations’. See ‘The Kantian Aftermath: Reaction and Revolution in German Philosophy’, in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century (1790–1870)*, pp. 19–45 (p. 33). See also Paul Guyer, ‘Absolute Idealism and the Rejection of Kantian Dualism’, in *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*, ed. by Karl Ameriks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 37–56.

⁴⁷⁹ For Kant, the object itself can only exist as a ‘phenomenon’—that is, in the way the sensory world is manifested in the individual’s spirit/mind. This stands in direct opposition to the ‘noumenon’—that is, an ‘idea’ with no direct referent in the sensory world.

followed by ‘perception’ (‘Wahrnehmung’) as the second phenomenon. Moreover, we have already teased out that both are universalities in their own right, while simultaneously representing specificities within the dialectical sequence leading towards ‘absolute knowing’ (‘absolutes Wissen’; Hegel’s eighth phenomenon).

At this point, one must return to the Hegelian distinction between universality and specificity, or, rather, the dialectic progression from the universal to the specific. Because space, time, and the object in itself exist a priori, they are considered ‘universal’ (true for all individuals), as opposed to ‘specific’ (the individual’s subjective comprehension of objective reality). Language, for example, operates mostly within universality, as opposed to specificity. By saying ‘table’, even if one means a specific table, the term will always also refer back to its universal meaning.⁴⁸⁰ Because, by nature, the individual is consciously active,⁴⁸¹ they are never quite satisfied with sense-certainty—that is, it is never enough to know *that* something is, one wants to know *what* something is. The function of perception is thus to attribute universal properties to the object in itself: we know there is a wooden board with four legs, but we perceive a table, and thus attribute to the wooden board with four legs the universal characteristics of any table. Now, this all means that, at the beginning of the epistemological process, the individual’s sense-certainty allows for the object to exist ‘in itself’ (again, Hegel’s first phenomenon). But because the subject’s perception attributes universal characteristics to the object, it becomes ‘for an other’ (Hegel’s second phenomenon). However, for Hegel, all added universal characteristics are ‘negations’ (‘Negation’ or ‘Aufhebung’) of the object’s state of being in itself. As a result, what is initially the object in itself (a wooden board with four legs [thesis]) is negated to become the object for an other (a table [anti-thesis]). At this point, *one has shifted from the a priori to the a posteriori of Idealist epistemology*. Once the universal meaning of a table has been established, the individual’s ‘comprehension’ (‘Verstand’; Hegel’s third phenomenon) can provide order to the mayhem of universal and specific properties, allowing for *the* table (as opposed to *the* wooden board) to be ‘synthesised’ as ‘object for itself’ (‘Ding für sich’). The specific table that the individual has in mind is the synthesis between

⁴⁸⁰ The ‘table’ as an explanatory example is mine. The universality of language is addressed by Hegel in the section on sense-certainty. See Hegel, ‘Sense-Certainty: Or the “This” and “Meaning” [Meinen]’, in ‘Consciousness’, in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 58–66.

⁴⁸¹ The reader should be reminded, here, that not being conscious about perceiving space and time (a priori) simultaneously means that one is always (self-) conscious (a posteriori).

thesis (wooden board with four legs) and anti-thesis (*a table, any table*).⁴⁸² Comprehension transforms the object into a ‘notion’ (‘Begriff’). In Kantian terminology, sensibility turns comprehension and perception turns conception.⁴⁸³

Now, the same is true if one looks at the instant as object itself.⁴⁸⁴ At the beginning of the individual’s epistemological process, the instant is the object in itself (a timeframe void of meaning [thesis]). Via the individual’s perception, the timeframe void of meaning is, then, negated to become the object for an other (a timeframe filled with different meanings [anti-thesis]). But, as we know, once the universal meaning of *an* instant has been established, comprehension allows for *the* instant to become an object for itself (a timeframe filled with one single meaning [synthesis]). In the context of this discussion, what one encounters, here, is the Benjaminian photographic plate or, indeed, the (instant’s) essence of things. Just as our wooden board with four legs is ‘synthesised’ to become that one single table including all those properties that make it unique (e.g. cracks in the wood, one leg shorter than the others, etc.), our timeframe void of meaning also becomes that one instant in which, for the individual, a single meaning is synthesised and full, subjective comprehension of (the instant’s) objective reality occurs... *or not*. There is a clear difficulty in comparing the table and the instant as examples of an object for itself: the instant is transitory, fugitive, and contingent, whereas the table is not. Before the individual reaches full, subjective comprehension—before the epistemological dialectic is complete, before a single meaning has been synthesised, and thus before the (instant’s) essence of things has been extracted—the instant has long passed, to be replaced by the next, and so forth. Consequentially, when scrutinising the instant (and not the table) as object for itself, it is only Baudelaire’s modern artist and child (as opposed to the generic individual), who is able to synthesise full, subjective comprehension via the faculties of *rêve, rêverie, ivresse, and imagination*: faculties that enable mnemonic filtering to take place *over time*. From an Idealist epistemological perspective, carried into the context of Baudelaire, this is the nature of aesthetic production in material modernity.

⁴⁸² In the German original, ‘object’ translates as either ‘Ding’ or ‘Gegenstand’. The former is predominantly used in conjunction with ‘in itself’, ‘for an other’, and ‘for itself’.

⁴⁸³ See the introductory section on Kant in chapter 3.

⁴⁸⁴ To consider the instant as object itself is my own modification of Hegelian dialectic.

‘Un éclair... puis la nuit !—Fugitive beauté’

In 2008, Susan Blood published an article entitled ‘The Sonnet as Snapshot: Seizing the Instant in Baudelaire’s “A Une Passante”’, applying an analytical framework based on photographic technology in order to determine the following: what are the textual mechanisms allowing Baudelaire to ‘seize the instant’, to extract the eternal from the transitory, and thus to synthesise the essence of things from the ‘here and now’? She writes: ‘With “A Une Passante”, the aesthetics of the “here and now” that Baudelaire elaborated in “Le Peintre de la vie moderne” are translated into the literary medium.’⁴⁸⁵ Blood opens her article with an account that should by now sound somewhat familiar:

The birth of modernity has been recounted in a variety of ways, but a common version of the story runs along the following lines: at some point in the mid-nineteenth century, something happened to change the texture [fabric] of human *experience*. Whatever the reasons for this change, it manifested itself as a clearly felt aesthetic imperative.⁴⁸⁶ (my emphasis)

The ‘aesthetic imperative’, Blood refers to, here, represents, of course, the ‘aesthetic shift’ (Mainardi) or the ‘aesthetic revolution’ (Rancière), as previously addressed: the shift away from impressions of aesthetic Idealism à la Ingres’ neo-Classicism or the aesthetic of the Empire and rigid lines, and towards ‘registering the sensory’ and capturing the ‘here and now’ à la Delacroix’s Romanticism or the aesthetic of the public and lines blurred by colour.⁴⁸⁷ Blood’s argument reinforces this understanding. Despite being written as a sonnet, ‘the most classical of French literary forms’,⁴⁸⁸ as Blood points out, ‘A Une Passante’ is commonly regarded as a ‘sketch’ or ‘snapshot’ of modernity, of the fleeting and anonymous encounter of two passers-by.⁴⁸⁹ In terms of modern aesthetic production, for her, the sonnet’s preoccupation

⁴⁸⁵ Susan, ‘The Sonnet as Snapshot’, p. 255.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁷ Blood cites from Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1985), p. 152. For my discussion of Ingres and Delacroix, see the section on ‘Second Empire Aesthetics’ in chapter 2.

⁴⁸⁸ Blood, ‘The Sonnet as Snapshot’, p. 255.

⁴⁸⁹ Blood cites Claude Pichois: ‘Ce quatorzain est créé selon le système (comme dirait Baudelaire), selon l’esthétique de l’ébauche, de l’instantané, que le poète élabore au contact des aquarelles de Constantin Guys.’ See ‘Notice’ to ‘A Une Passante’, in *BOC*, I, 1022–23 (p.1022). Moreover, Blood points out that [t]he French sonnet

with ‘registering the sensory’—the modern artist’s perception of the instant, subsequently to be transformed into aesthetic *éternité* via mnemonic filtering—essentially points towards the development of film, which will ‘call into question the existence of literature’.⁴⁹⁰ Blood refers to this as ‘photomimetic’ and writes: ‘Baudelaire’s poem thus looks backward and forward—in mimicking the “technological crisis” in painting [photography], it previews the later crisis in literature [film].’⁴⁹¹

Blood therefore suggests Baudelaire’s foreshadowing of film, of capturing light on film, and she proposes ‘photomimicry’ as a concept, referring mainly to the poet’s use of the sonnet’s double volta in the first line of the tercets. For the purposes of my own enquiry, this more than just hints at the sonnet’s apparent aesthetic goal of capturing the individual’s attempt at reaching full, subjective comprehension of (the instant’s) objective reality: to capture the instant on film, or to view the ‘law of dialectics at a standstill’, as Benjamin would have put it. Despite the sonnet’s far-reaching fame, Blood realises, such tentative remarks ‘can best be assessed by examining the poem in its entirety’,⁴⁹² and in order to tighten the Idealist epistemological screw, I shall follow her example:⁴⁹³

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.
Moi, je buvais, crispé comme un extravagant,
Dans son œil, ciel livide où germe l’ouragan,
La douceur qui fascine et le plaisir qui tue.

is also associated with an antique aesthetics of the “here and now”—the *carpe diem* tradition going back to the Horatian ode’ (p. 255; Blood’s emphasis).

⁴⁹⁰ Blood, ‘The Sonnet as Snapshot’, p. 256.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

⁴⁹² Ibid.

⁴⁹³ ‘A Une Passante’, in *Les Fleurs du Mal*, in *BOC*, I, 92–3.

Un éclair... puis la nuit!—Fugitive beauté
Dont le regard m’a fait soudainement renaître,
Ne te verrai-je plus que dans l’éternité?

Ailleurs, bien loin d’ici! trop tard! jamais peut-être!
Car j’ignore où tu fuis, tu ne sais où je vais,
Ô toi que j’eusse aimée, ô toi qui le savais!

At this point, then, one must have a closer look at the aforementioned double volta in the opening line of the tercets: ‘Un éclair... puis la nuit!—Fugitive beauté’. In Blood’s analysis, the quatrains represent (the instant’s) objective reality, as captured by a camera (‘Un éclair...’), while the tercets represent the camera’s dark chamber (‘puis la nuit!’), where (the instant’s) objective reality is, then, reproduced in the form of a photograph (‘—Fugitive beauté’). As part of this reproduction, the speaker, for Blood, is also ‘reborn’ (‘renaître’) as a lyric voice ‘that speaks directly and familiarly to the woman [the *passante*]’, establishing intimate telecommunication, or ‘real communication over distance’, which, for the critic, represents the essence of things in Baudelaire’s poetic ‘here and now’. I find Blood’s approach via photographic technology helpful and inspiring, but from this early stage of her analysis onwards, I remain rather sceptical. Firstly, in using photography to address Baudelaire, would the reproduction of (the instant’s) objective reality in the tercets not mean that the tercets would be transformed into a ‘copy’ of the quatrains? (‘Copiez la nature, ne copiez que la nature.’ [‘Salon de 1859’]). Moreover, if ‘telecommunication’ is, indeed, to be interpreted as ‘real communication over distance’, as Blood maintains, should it not allow for a bidirectional flow of information? This seems an impossibility in the case of ‘A Une Passante’,⁴⁹⁴ once we consider, for example, the speaker’s introverted, yet important question of ‘Ne te verrai-je plus que dans l’Éternité?’. Surely, if there was the possibility of real communication, the *passante* would have been in a position to reply, even if solely for the purpose of rejection. At this point, then, I wish to provide an Idealist epistemological alternative.

⁴⁹⁴ From an Idealist epistemological perspective, a more detailed consideration of the idea that ‘communication’ essentially signifies a ‘flow of information’ is provided in the section on ‘Exchange, Communication, the Blasé (and the Dandy)’ in chapter 5.

Following Blood's approach, in my own reading of the sonnet, the cut-off point between what is presented externally (space) and what is perceived internally (time, *durée*) is, again, manifested by the sonnet's double volta. Here, the syntactic procedure works as follows: the primary section of the volta ('Un éclair... puis la nuit!') rips the speaker from (the instant's) objective reality, plunging him into *darkness*; the secondary section ('—Fugitive beauté'), then, initiates the epistemological dialectic (mnemonic filtering, specifically, in the case of modern aesthetic production) between the speaker and (the instant's) objective reality, so the former may reach full, subjective comprehension of the latter.⁴⁹⁵ At this juncture, one must return to Hegel. From the perspective of the speaker, at the beginning of the epistemological dialectic, there is the instant (object in itself [thesis]), existing as a consequence of the *rapidité* of material modernity, or, indeed, of fragmented a priori space and time. Here, the instant is still a 'timeframe void of meaning', which, then, via perception, quickly fills with various potential meanings (object for an other [anti-thesis]).⁴⁹⁶ *In this very moment, the speaker proceeds from a priori to a posteriori.* As we know, the next step in Hegelian dialectic is the deduction of specificity (object for itself [synthesis]) from the perspective of the speaker. This is where Blood would argue for telecommunication to represent the essence of things in Baudelaire's poetic 'here and now'.

In the context of this study, if one were to associate the speaker with the generic individual, this synthesis could no longer be achieved, experience could no longer be acquired and knowledge could no longer be created. Within the sonnet, this may be hinted by the 'confusing' juxtaposition of grammatical tenses in the sonnet's tercets.⁴⁹⁷ Whereas the quatrains feature the imperfect, past historic, and present tenses, in the tercets, suddenly, the reader encounters the perfect, imperfect, present, future, and pluperfect subjunctive,

⁴⁹⁵ I am reminded, here, of Paul de Man's literary critical methodology, as applied in the essay collection *Blindness and Insight*, where literary truth (the essence of things) is represented by the metaphor of lightning. In this context, the essence of things in the form of conceptual lightning only exists in the 'instantaneity' of its own manifestation, *blinding* the spectator (reader), and serving only by providing *insights* into the *darkness* that surrounds its 'perfect presence'. See Wlad Godzich, 'Introduction', in Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. xv–xxx (in particular p. xx).

⁴⁹⁶ The reader should be reminded, here, that the instant of 'A Une Passante' is—in some form or shape—perceived individually by every passer-by present in the scene, including, of course, the *passante* herself.

⁴⁹⁷ Maria Scott suggests in her analysis of the sonnet: 'Indeed, the apparent confusion of grammatical tenses subsequent to the exchanged glance is suggestive of the disorientation produced by a shock [...]'. Maria C. Scott, 'Reading the Look and Looking at Reading in Baudelaire', *The Modern Language Review*, 104.2 (April 2009), 375–388 (p. 379). On the juxtaposition of grammatical tenses in the tercets, see also, Meltzer, 'Seeing (A une passante)', in *Seeing Double*, pp. 75–137 and in particular pp. 85–90.

functioning, perhaps, as a syntactic representation of Bergsonian *durée*, when it is fragmented into instants: a mosaic of instants in motion and thus a kaleidoscope of incomprehension and consequential *confusion*. To say it in the context of Poe's 'The Raven', in the tercets, the generic individual would 'open wide the door; // Darkness there and nothing more'. However, if one were to associate the speaker with the modern artist, then, full, subjective comprehension of (the instant's) objective reality occurs, and a fleeting encounter between two passers-by is transformed into a manifestation of *le beau moderne*: namely, one of the most frequently read poems of *Les Fleurs du Mal*. For this not to remain rampant speculation, one must consider an intentional wordplay. Here, 'fugitive beauté' carries a double meaning. Firstly, it refers to the *passante* as a beautiful woman (the engagement with the instant is socio-collective). Secondly, however, it refers to *le beau moderne* and aesthetic *éternité* as that which must be mnemonically filtered, extracted, and thus synthesised from (the instant's) objective reality: 'le transitoire, le *fugitif*, le contingent' (my emphasis), as presented in the quatrains (the engagement with the instant is elitist). Both the socio-collective and the elitist engagement with the instant are present simultaneously, as the instant is experienced both by the generic individual (including the *passante*) and by the modern artist, who is both within and *distanced* from the crowd. This means that Hegelian synthesis in the sense of full, subjective comprehension of (the instant's) objective reality is an impossibility within the poem, but, at the same time, is achieved by the poem itself as a result of the modern artist's mnemonic filtering, of his epistemological engagement with the instant and its 'fugitive beauté'. In this context, then, 'renaître', as already referred to by Blood, could, perhaps, signify the rebirth of the generic individual as the modern artist in order to transform the fleeting encounter between two passers-by into *le beau moderne*, and the instant into aesthetic *éternité* ('Ne te verrai-je plus que dans *l'éternité*?' [my emphasis]): in the modern tumult of 'la rue assourdissante', it seems, this is the 'only' ('que') place, where speaker and *passante* may meet again.

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In order to conclude this chapter and to transition into Baudelaire's a posteriori, one should briefly return to our reflections on happiness (individual versus socio-collective; objective versus subjective)—specifically, in the context of Baudelaire's 'La Photographie et le public moderne'—as well as to the Hegelian phenomena of the spirit/mind. As for the latter, so far, we have addressed 'sense-certainty', 'perception', and 'comprehension'. All three, it has

become clear, are crucial components in the epistemological dialectic between subject and object—that is, in the context of this study, between either the modern artist or the generic individual, and the instant. Moreover, in the individual’s epistemological reach for ‘absolute knowing’ (Hegel’s eighth phenomenon), it is comprehension, too, that enables the individual to become conscious of their knowledge, and thus to become conscious of the self. Self-consciousness, for Hegel, is the realisation that one is part of space, while space, simultaneously, exists as objectivity or, indeed, as the object itself:⁴⁹⁸

Since this notion of infinity [space] is an object for consciousness, the latter is consciousness of a difference that is no less *immediately* cancelled; consciousness is for its own self, it is a distinguishing of that which contains no difference, or *self-consciousness*.⁴⁹⁹ (Hegel’s emphasis)

This ‘self-consciousness’ (‘Selbstbewußtsein’), as we know, is Hegel’s fourth phenomenon of the spirit/mind. Like the object itself, however, in Hegel, self-consciousness is also doubled:

The notion of self-consciousness is only completed in [...] three moments: (a) the pure undifferentiated ‘I’ is its first immediate object. (b) But this immediacy is itself an absolute mediation, it *is* only as a supersession of the independent object, in other words, it is Desire. The satisfaction of Desire is, it is true, the reflection of self-consciousness into itself, or the certainty that has become truth. (c) but the truth of this certainty is really a double reflection, the duplication of self-consciousness. Consciousness has for its object one which, of its own self, posits its otherness or difference as a nothingness, and in so doing is independent.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁸ At the beginning of the section on ‘Idealist Epistemology in “A Une Passante”’, I introduced Hegel’s intention to create a philosophical holism, incorporating metaphysics, the arts and humanities as well as the natural sciences. It is thus interesting to note, here, that the individual’s self-consciousness, or, rather, the individual becoming conscious of the self, follows on directly from the recognition of a ‘force’ in nature. There are ‘phenomena’ in nature that can only be explained by the existence of such a force (specifically, the philosopher refers to the example of electricity). Hegel’s ‘force’ would now be called ‘physics’ or the laws thereof.

⁴⁹⁹ Hegel, ‘Force and the Understanding: Appearance and the Supersensible World’, in ‘Consciousness’, in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 79–103 (p. 102).

⁵⁰⁰ Hegel, ‘The Truth of Self-Certainty’, in ‘Self-Consciousness’, in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 104–38 (p. 110).

At this point, in the Hegelian universe, one is left with two epistemological facts. Firstly, consciousness becomes independent by becoming conscious of the self; becoming conscious of the self means becoming consciously independent of space. As such, consciousness becomes conscious of its own existence as an independent object itself in space. Secondly, the moment consciousness (the subject) enters into a dialectic with itself (the object)—the moment consciousness becomes conscious about its own existence as object itself—is what Hegel calls an ‘absolute mediation’; what I referred to earlier as the concept of the individual’s split (self-) consciousness in Hegel.⁵⁰¹ At this same moment, ‘subjective consciousness’ (object in itself [thesis]) realises that its counterpart, ‘objective consciousness’ (object for an other [anti-thesis]), represents the negation of its own state of being in itself; meanwhile, objective consciousness realises that the negation of its subjective counterpart also represents its own negation by establishing unity between the two (object for itself [synthesis]). Both, however, have the ‘desire’ to remain in their current states of being (‘[t]he satisfaction of Desire is [...] the reflection of self-consciousness into itself’). Respectively, Hegel refers to them as ‘lord’ (‘Herr’) and ‘bondsman’ (‘Knecht’): both are depending on one another to an existential degree. Unknowingly so, one may add, as it is the lord’s desire is to stroll its own subjectivity, while it is the bondsman’s to explore the objectivity from which it ultimately sprang. Unlike any other dialectic between subject and object, for the time being, dialectic, here, as a form of ‘absolute mediation’, becomes stuck in its own antagonism between subjectivity and objectivity. This conflict leads us back to Bergson, Baudelaire, photography, and the fundamental human emotion of *happiness* by addressing the latter’s very absence:

Unhappy Consciousness is the consciousness of self as a dual-natured, merely contradictory being.

This *unhappy, inwardly disrupted* consciousness, since its essentially contradictory nature is for it a *single* consciousness, must for ever have present in the one consciousness the other also; and thus it is driven out of each in turn in the very moment when it imagines it has successfully attained to a peaceful unity.⁵⁰² (Hegel’s emphasis)

⁵⁰¹ This should not be confused with my approach to communication as an epistemological dialectic between subject and subject, as discussed in chapter 5

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 126.

In the context of Bergson's *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (1889), the resemblance between the Hegelian lord and the *moi profond* as well as the Hegelian bondsman and the *moi superficiel* is uncanny, to say the least: the former exists in subjectivity, the latter in objectivity, and both continuously defend their position against the other. However, while in Bergson the individual becomes unhappy because of the conquest of the *moi profond* by the *moi superficiel*—because of one *moi* being superseded by the other—in Hegel the individual becomes unhappy by recognising 'the consciousness of self as a dual-natured, merely contradictory being' and by the apparent inability to 'successfully [attain] to a peaceful unity' between lord and bondsman. At this point, I wish to make a suggestion, which will ultimately lead to Baudelaire's a posteriori concerns, as addressed in the following chapter. In Hegel, consciousness and, by suggestive extension, the individual themselves *do not* remain unhappy. I have already mentioned this in a footnote towards the end of the introductory section on Kant in chapter 3. Eventually, it is 'reason' ('Vernunft'), Hegel's fifth phenomenon of the spirit/mind, which is capable of building the epistemological bridge between lord and bondsman in order to attain to that peaceful unity:

Reason is the certainty of consciousness that it is all reality; thus does idealism express its Notion [*sic*].⁵⁰³

From a Hegelian perspective, it is thus the ability *to reason* that allows not merely for unity between lord and bondsman, but, by conceptual extension, also between the *moi profond* and the *moi superficiel*, as opposed to the former being conquered by the latter. In this context, it is *reason*, too, that allows for the individual to become *happy* (subjective happiness), as opposed to *unhappy* (objective happiness): two forms of happiness, which, as we know, Baudelaire links to the individual's desire to be astonished by either (the instant's) objective reality ('étonné', the *moi superficiel*, the bondsman) or subjective individuality ('rêver', the *moi profond*, the lord).

I began this study arguing that in response to the *rapidité* of material modernity, Kantian a priori space and time become fragmented, which, in turn, also interrupts and fragments the generic individual's epistemological process—it interrupts and fragments their

⁵⁰³ Hegel, 'The Certainty and Truth of Reason', in 'Reason', in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 139–210 (p. 140).

ability *to reason* in order to acquire experience and create knowledge. As such, in the Baudelairean universe, the Idealist epistemological definition of *reason* is directly linked to the modern artist's and child's faculties of *rêve*, *rêverie*, *ivresse*, and *imagination*: those faculties, which allow experience to be translated not merely into knowledge, but also to be transformed into aesthetic *éternité*; it is *reason* that allows for the transformation of the Baudelairean experience of modernity into *le beau moderne*. In a Hegelian sense, *reason* thus constitutes a most crucial component in the individual's epistemological reach for happiness (subjective happiness), before the *moi profond* is conquered by the *moi superficiel*, before subconscious unhappiness (objective happiness) reigns supreme in the form of the spectacle (Debord), commodity fetishism (Marx), or material modernity more universally (Benjamin). From an Idealist epistemological perspective, then, three further questions strike me as immediately relevant: firstly, what role does the acquisition of experience and the creation of knowledge—or, indeed, the lack thereof—play in the Baudelairean belief that the concept of objective happiness is, in fact, a form of subconscious unhappiness (as his take on photography has led me to argue); secondly, how does the interruption and fragmentation of the generic individual's epistemological process—their inability *to reason* and the resulting subconscious unhappiness in the form of objective happiness—manifest on a socio-collective scale; and, thirdly, exactly how does this socio-collective phenomenon, then, filter into Baudelaire's very own poetic representation of modern human existence? A closer look at the poet's *a posteriori* will provide one suitable explanation.

Part II: Chapter Five

The a posteriori of Experiencing Modernity: Representing Modern Human Existence

I ended my reflections on the epistemological dialectic between either the modern artist or the generic individual, and the instant, by linking Hegel's take on the notion of happiness, or, rather, on the notion of a happy consciousness, to the Bergsonian selves, and, specifically, to the conquest of the *moi profond* by the *moi superficiel*. In the process, I made explicit that the generic individual's increasing inability *to reason*—to subjectively comprehend (the instant's) objective reality—stands in an isomorphic relationship with the decrease of subjective individuality. *Superficially* speaking, the generic individual becomes increasingly *happy* in material modernity; but *fundamentally* speaking, they become increasingly *unhappy*. External, physical, spatial fragmentation in the form of objective reality, here, acts like an Apollinairean mask, luring the generic individual towards the material spectacle, while, simultaneously, concealing internal, psychological, temporal fragmentation as a consequence of their epistemological engagement with the *rapidité* of material modernity. This process of externalisation and objectification occurs *subconsciously* as the generic individual's a priori becomes fragmented.

Multiplying the generic individual by the crowd, the same phenomenon occurs on a socio-collective scale. Via collective objectification, modern society, too, becomes fundamentally unhappy. This is the condition of modern human existence, the poetic representation of which I have labelled Baudelaire's a posteriori. In the following pages—in the synthetic or a posteriori part (II) of this study—I shall thus analyse the socio-collective dimension of Baudelaire's œuvre from the viewpoint of Idealist epistemology, as presented in the preceding analytic or a priori part (I). Taking the generic individual's fragmented a priori as my analytical premise, so far, I have discussed the epistemological dialectic between either the modern artist or the generic individual, and the instant, in terms of a subject–object duality. That dialectic is increasingly challenged, as the subject simply no longer has time to comprehend the object. Time, too, has been objectified; and as *durée* it is fragmented into instants. Blood's reading of Baudelaire's 'A une passante', however, gives rise to yet another, slightly different enquiry. If the generic individual's fragmented a priori also causes the interruption and fragmentation of the epistemological dialectic between subject and object—and thus alters, dilutes, and even inhibits the acquisition of experience and the creation of

knowledge—then, what happens to the epistemological dialectic between subject and subject in ‘A une passante’? What happens in a society, where the *communication* between subject and subject is also interrupted and fragmented? What happens if we no longer comprehend our peers?⁵⁰⁴

Goethe suggested one possible outcome, when lamenting that society perseveres in mediocrity. Here, I shall provide a more detailed analysis from the viewpoint of Idealist epistemology, beginning with the transition from a subject–object to a subject–subject duality by enlisting the help of the well-known Marxist theorist Henri Lefebvre. In his introduction to a collection of preludes, conceived between 1959 and 1961, entitled *Introduction à la Modernité*, Lefebvre explains:

Par *Modernité* nous entendons [...] une réflexion commençante, une *ébauche* plus ou moins poussée de critique et d’auto-critique, une tentative de connaissance. Nous l’atteignons dans une suite de textes et de documents, qui portent l’empreinte de leur époque et cependant dépassent l’incitation de la mode et l’excitation de la nouveauté. La Modernité diffère du Modernisme comme un concept en voie de formulation dans la société diffère des phénomènes sociaux, comme une réflexion diffère des faits.⁵⁰⁵ (my emphasis of ‘ébauche’)

This much is certain: ‘Par *Modernité*, nous entendons une réflexion commençante, une ébauche plus ou moins poussée de critique et d’auto-critique’. But how exactly should one approach the notions of ‘critique’ and ‘auto-critique’? Projected onto Hegelian dialectic and, indeed, onto the Idealist epistemology developed and presented thus far, a definition of the former seems rather straightforward.⁵⁰⁶ In order to synthesise the (instant’s) essence of things and thus to move from knowledge *that* something is to knowledge of *what* something is, the subject must

⁵⁰⁴ In line with the argument presented thus far, when referring to ‘communication’ I mean ‘real’ communication in the sense of *profond*, as opposed to *superficiel*.

⁵⁰⁵ Henri Lefebvre, *Introduction à la Modernité* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1962), pp. 9–10. The term ‘ébauche’ is emphasised, of course, to remind the reader of the section on ‘Baudelairean Aesthetics’ in chapter 2. Addressing Baudelaire’s *le beau moderne*, I discussed the notion of *déchéance*, which, for Sonya Stephens, essentially translates into the idea of an ‘ébauche parfaite’, or, as she labels it, an ‘esquisse d’incomplétude’. See ‘Esquisse d’incomplétude: Baudelaire, Guys and Modern Beauty’, *Neophilologus*, 89 (2005), 527–38.

⁵⁰⁶ Projecting the Lefebvrian notions of ‘critique’ and ‘auto-critique’ onto Hegelian dialectic is my own modification of the latter’s epistemology. To my knowledge, Hegel does not, specifically, address either subject–subject dualities or communication in his *Phenomenology of the Spirit* (1807).

‘critique’ the object. In a Hegelian sense, to critique thus means to negate, firstly, the object’s state of being in itself and, subsequently, the object’s state of being for an other. To critique means *to reason* until experience has been acquired and knowledge has been created. In the epistemological dialectic between subject and object, the flow of information is bidirectional (the object presents ‘objective’ information on its state of being, while the subject attributes specific properties, turning the object by itself into the object for itself); but the responsibility of translating perception into experience and knowledge lies solely with the subject. In the case of Lefebvre’s latter term, ‘auto-critique’, things are slightly different. Here, via communication, *two* subjects enter the epistemological dialectic—that is, two subjects begin *to reason* with each other. The flow of information remains bidirectional, but this time the acquisition of experience and the creation of knowledge, too, occurs in dual fashion: either of the two subjects creates their very own *subject* ‘for itself’—each creates its very own ‘synthesis’—in the form of ‘the other’. In this context, ‘auto-critique’ means for the self to be critiqued, to become the object of criticism, with the subject allowing themselves to be critiqued by another subject. This may also include the subject’s reflections on itself; in other words, the subject’s communication with itself.⁵⁰⁷ At this point, two more thoughts are worth further consideration.

Firstly, one must ask what type of experience is acquired, what type of knowledge is created, when the epistemological dialectic shifts from a subject–object to a subject–subject duality. The answer is slightly more complicated than one would initially anticipate. The problem is that the information circulating within the epistemological dialectic between subject and subject is, quite simply, not objective, unless, of course, ‘the other’ is viewed from predominantly objective points of view such as height, weight, gender, hair colour, and so forth (unless, that is, the other is objectified). Unlike a subject synthesising *the table* (cracks in the wood, one leg shorter than the others) from the opposition between thesis and antithesis (a wooden board with four legs versus *a table*), in a subject–subject duality, the antagonistic bonds between thesis and antithesis do not hold. This is because from the perspective of one subject, the other subject is never truly ‘by itself’, because, by definition, it is only marginally objective (height, weight, gender, and so forth); but neither is it truly ‘for others’, because there are no universal properties belonging to it (unlike *a table*, *a subject* has no universal denotation

⁵⁰⁷ This should not be confused with the aforementioned concept of the individual’s split (self-) consciousness in Hegel.

and function, which is why an individual is precisely that: individual). Again, from the perspective of one subject, in a subject–subject duality, the other subject is always thesis and antithesis in one. As a result of this dialectic instability—of mostly subjective information circulating within the epistemological dialectic between subject and subject—the experience acquired and the knowledge created—the essence of things eventually synthesised—exists, perhaps, far more in the form of a sentiment or an emotion, as opposed to full, subjective comprehension of (the instant’s) objective reality. Here, ‘empathy’ is the key term and concept. The *OED* defines it as follows: ‘The ability to understand [comprehend] and share the feelings of another.’ Empathy means to comprehend ‘the other’, to identify with their sentiments and emotions, and to realise the responsibility that arises from predominantly subjective information circulating within the epistemological dialectic between subject and subject; one may even translate it into a form of morality (individual) or ethics (socio-collective). It stands for the ability *to reason with* the object, when the object is a subject. In order for empathy to be established, it is thus necessary for subjective individuality to feed subjective information into this epistemological dialectic. Throughout this study, I have been demonstrating how subjective individuality becomes increasingly externalised, spatialised, objectified, and thus eventually depleted as a consequence of the generic individual’s epistemological engagement with the *rapidité* of material modernity; as a consequence of their fragmented a priori and the resulting conquest of the *moi profond* by the *moi superficiel*. The remaining question is thus rather obvious: what happens to empathy if subjective individuality is no longer at large?

Secondly, one must acknowledge the fact that in Hegel as well as in Lefebvre all of reality (Hegel), or all of modernity (Lefebvre) follows dialectics; it is what drives (‘pousser’) modern human existence. The experience acquired and the knowledge created in the epistemological dialectic between subject and object (‘critique’) as well as subject and subject (‘auto-critique’) feeds into this progression. Very much in accordance with the Baudelairean tenet that each and every epoch in history has its very own modernity⁵⁰⁸—the poetic in history, the eternal in all that is transitory—Lefebvre, then, moves on to distinguish between *Modernité* and *Modernisme*.⁵⁰⁹ He argues that the former (*Modernité*) is only ever a tentative understanding (‘une tentative de connaissance’, ‘un concept en voie de formulation’, ‘une

⁵⁰⁸ See also footnotes 51 and 225.

⁵⁰⁹ I shall continue to capitalise both terms, when referring to Lefebvre.

réflexion’) of objective reality. Meanwhile, the latter (*Modernisme*) is a more graspable, tactile, socio-collectively accepted comprehension of that same objective reality (‘phénomènes sociaux’, ‘faits’).⁵¹⁰ *Modernisme* thus represents an epoch’s cultural output, its cultural artefacts, created on the basis of a tentative comprehension of objective reality: the world of the *moi superficiel*, which Lefebvre calls *Modernité*. In the context of Idealist epistemology, then, *Modernité* signifies the individual’s epistemological dialectic of acquiring experience and creating knowledge, whereas *Modernisme* addresses the synthesis of that dialectic: the essence of things if and when it is transformed into cultural artefacts. The strong links commonly drawn between Baudelaire’s theory and poetry (including the present study) make this claim all the more relevant: the poet’s *Modernisme* (the eternal, the poetic, ‘aesthetic modernity’) becomes intellectually accessible through an engagement with his *Modernité* (the transitory, the historic, ‘theoretical modernity’).⁵¹¹ Having considered the latter, specifically, in the context of Idealist epistemology, at this point, I now wish to shift focus onto the former—that is, Baudelaire’s poetic representation of the generic individual’s fragmented a priori on a socio-collective scale: what I have previously referred to as Baudelaire’s a posteriori.

Following my reflections on the Lefebvre paragraph, as cited above, I shall take as my analytical premise that the *rapidité* of material modernity interrupts and fragments the epistemological dialectic not only between subject and object, but also between subject and subject—that is, their *communication*. In the case of the latter, specifically, this is because subjective individuality is largely lost in the process of Benjaminian socio-collective homogenisation, in the conquest of the *moi profond* by the *moi superficiel*: the generic individual is simply no longer capable of providing the subjective information necessary for empathy to be established and for communication to take place.⁵¹² In summary, then, the preceding analytic or a priori part (I) of this study addresses Baudelaire’s *Modernité*, as Lefebvre would argue, an understanding of which, then, provides intellectual access to the poet’s *Modernisme*, as will be demonstrated, here, in the synthetic or a posteriori part (II). The following interpretive approach is structured according to three themes, conceptually (and

⁵¹⁰ In the context of the argument I propose, I should like to distance myself from the term ‘faits’. As we know by now, it is a rather complicated undertaking to speak of ‘facts’ from the viewpoint of Idealist epistemology.

⁵¹¹ The conceptual links between ‘theoretical modernity’ and ‘aesthetic modernity’ have been discussed throughout this study, but particularly in chapter 4.

⁵¹² Just like my modification of Hegelian dialectic so that it may apply to subject–subject dualities (as opposed to subject–object dualities), the establishment of empathy within subject–subject dualities is also my own approach.

concisely) framing my Idealist epistemological reading of Baudelaire's poetic representation of modern human existence. This chapter's final section on 'Society and Existence from the Viewpoint of Death' will, then, offer a first conclusion to the epistemological concerns that have guided my analysis up to this point, arguing that the notions of death and fatalism as forms of existential, socio-collective determinism are intrinsic to the Baudelairean oeuvre. In comparison, chapter 6 will offer a much broader concluding contextualisation of both *Les Fleurs du Mal* as well as *Le Spleen de Paris*.

Exchange, Communication, the Blasé (and the Dandy)

*Money has the very positive quality that is designated by
the negative concept of being characterless.*⁵¹³

In the midst of the fin-de-siècle economic boom that took place not merely in France, but also in Germany, the sociologist Georg Simmel published his first major study entitled *The Philosophy of Money* (1886). Unlike Karl Marx's *Capital* (1867), Simmel makes clear that his *Philosophy* is not a study of political economy. Rather, Simmel addresses money from the perspective of 'value' ('Wert') and particularly those various conditions—metaphysical, psychological, social, cultural, political, ethical, economic—that attribute value to money. This is how it works: Simmel was an avid follower of Kantian metaphysics and similarly to the Idealist epistemology, as developed and presented thus far, the sociologist begins by embedding the concept of value in the individual's metaphysical surrounding: what we have come to define as the (generic) individual's (fragmented) a priori. Here, value is completely detached from its material manifestation in whatever form or shape, and is created only in the duality between subject and object. Value should thus not be considered as one of the object's properties. Instead, it is created in response to how much the subject desires to 'own' the object in a capitalist sense, or 'comprehend' the object in an epistemological sense. In this context, value is grounded in 'subjective individuality' and represents 'subjective evaluation': how

⁵¹³ As is the case for Benjamin, Kant, and Hegel, initially, I have used the scholarly German edition: Georg Simmel, *Philosophie des Geldes* (1886), ed. by David P. Frisby and Klaus Christian Köhnke (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989). For the purpose of citation, however, I have used the scholarly English translation entitled *The Philosophy of Money* (1886), ed. by David P. Frisby, trans. by Tom Bottomore and David P. Frisby (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 216. The citation provided, here, was slightly altered. The original reads as follows: 'Money has the very positive quality that is designated by the negative concept of lack of character'.

much does the subject 'value' the object? Simmel explains: 'Objects are not difficult to acquire because they are valuable, but we call those objects valuable that resist our desire to possess them.'⁵¹⁴ Value, in this context, is almost exclusively subjective—almost *pure*, as Kant would argue—and it is only in the action of exchange that value becomes externalised and objectified. In other words, the externalisation and objectification of value ensures the economic eligibility of exchange. Nevertheless, exchange—that is, material exchange, the exchange of objects—does not occur between subject and object. Just like communication and its inherent self-criticism à la Lefebvre ('auto-critique'), it occurs between subject and subject:⁵¹⁵ each subject exchanges an object (thesis) for another object (antithesis) in order to gain satisfaction (synthesis). After all, what is communication if not the exchange of information? I shall return to this in a moment. At this point, it is important to note that in mercantile capitalism and particularly in the industrialised version of Second Empire material modernity, the externalisation and objectification of value in the dialectic of exchange occurs in the form of money. The value-dynamic not merely between subject and object (what is the value of the object for one subject [e.g. the buyer]), but also between subject and subject (what is the value of the object for the other subject [e.g. the seller]) is manifested in the form of money. In a Hegelian sense, money does not exist either as object in itself or as object for itself. It exists exclusively as object for an other—it is 'characterless', as Simmel states—and thus it is always universal without ever being specific. Money symbolises exchange.

It is this characterless nature of money and its socio-cultural as well as socio-economic consequences that stand at the centre of Simmel's enquiry. Exchange, for the sociologist, means all of the economy. Conversely, that means all of the economy is symbolised by money. Moreover, the economy benefits from this universal eligibility of money. To refer, once more, to the situationist insights of Guy Debord: 'L'économie transforme le monde, mais le transforme seulement en monde de l'économie'.⁵¹⁶ In this context, Simmel, too, realised that with the rise of material modernity the *character* of society is essentially based on the nature of exchange, which, in the case of monetary exchange, only means that, just like money, society, too, becomes *characterless*:

⁵¹⁴ Ibid., p. 67.

⁵¹⁵ As was the case with Hegel and Lefebvre, projecting the former's dialectic onto Simmelian thought is also my own approach.

⁵¹⁶ Guy Debord, *La Société du spectacle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), p. 38.

It should be recognized that most relationships between people can be interpreted as forms of exchange. Exchange is the *purest* and most developed kind of interaction, which shapes human life when it seeks to acquire substance and content.⁵¹⁷ (my emphasis)

Indeed, in his *Philosophy*, Simmel places the individual at the centre of an increasing number of relationships that are based, purely, on monetary exchange. Here, the sociologist makes a case for money as the ultimate tool for power, arguing that with the emergence of modern, capitalist, money economy, money had essentially been transformed: from being a means to a purpose, to now simply being a purpose, and thus representing value in its absolute form. Here, the relative use-value of an object, grounded in the individual's subjective evaluation of that object, becomes externalised and objectified in the form of 'monetary value'. Consequentially, quality is replaced by quantity (in a slightly altered way, one is reminded of the Bergsonian selves), which, in turn, becomes the only quality of money. For Simmel, the individual is thus alienated at the centre of this newly emerging social dynamic—or, indeed, dialectic—surrounded by a high quantity of low-quality relationships, which are no longer subjectively evaluated, but judged, purely, by their objective or, indeed, monetary value. In the same way the clock or the watch ('L'Horloge') allows us to measure abstract time, money allows us to measure the abstract content of human existence: the externalisation and objectification of subjective evaluation in the form of monetary value on a socio-collective scale. In the Baudelairean universe, then, this specifically modern socio-economic phenomenon—one of the 'phénomènes sociaux' that Lefebvre refers to with his concept of *Modernité*—is brought to the fore most clearly in the prose poem 'La Fausse Monnaie'.⁵¹⁸

'La Fausse Monnaie' (1864): Exchange

In the poem, the narrator and a friend are in the process of leaving a tobacco store, when the former wonders about the latter's meticulous sorting of change ("Singulière et minutieuse répartition!" me dis-je en moi-même' [323]). At this point, the reader's attention has already been directed towards the 'pièce d'argent de deux francs qu'il [l'ami] avait particulièrement

⁵¹⁷ Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, p. 82.

⁵¹⁸ 'La Fausse Monnaie', in *Le Spleen de Paris*, in *BOC*, I, 323–24. All further references will be provided in-text.

examinée' (323). The poem continues telling the story of how, shortly after this initial setup, the two friends encounter a beggar, who, holding out 'sa casquette en tremblant' (323), pleads silently for the strangers' monetary support ('Je ne connais rien de plus inquiétant que l'éloquence muette de ces yeux suppliants' [323]). Money is offered to and simultaneously received by the beggar. In exchange for this, gratitude is offered to and simultaneously received by the narrator and his friend. The entire topography of this exchange is so 'natural', so inherent to material modernity, that it takes place without an explicit mention. The initial setup, then, covers more or less the first half of the poem and is itself split into three paragraphs: firstly, the introduction of the friend; secondly, the introduction of the beggar; thirdly, the introduction of the narrator.

At this point, it is important to note that, like the quatrains of 'A une passante', the first half of 'La Fausse Monnaie' also represents (the instant's) objective reality. Moreover, it serves to introduce two subject–subject dualities, as discussed with reference to Lefebvre: the first between friend and beggar; the second between friend and narrator. Once again, recalling the tercets of 'A une passante', both dualities are, then, subsequently *reasoned with*, mnemonically filtered, and infused with the narrator's subjective individuality in the second half of the poem until the (instant's) essence of things is eventually synthesised. This time, however, this synthesis does not quite take the form of (tele-) communication, but, rather, the impossibility thereof. Paragraph 1 in full:

Comme nous nous éloignons du bureau du tabac, mon ami fit un soigneux tirage de sa monnaie; dans la poche gauche de son gilet il glissa de petites pièces d'or; dans la droite, de petites pièces d'argent; dans la poche gauche de sa culotte, une masse de gros sols, et enfin, dans la droite, une pièce d'argent de deux francs qu'il avait particulièrement examinée. (323)

The first few words of this first sentence ('[c]omme nous nous éloignons du bureau de tabac, mon ami fit un soigneux tirage de sa monnaie') may serve two specific functions: firstly, to initiate the poem as relating the causality of a presumably random tobacco purchase (itself composed of numerous instants such as choosing from various tobaccos, asking for the tobacco, paying for the tobacco, etc.); secondly, and somewhat more importantly for the poem's plot, to introduce the narrator's friend as a person capable of the 'singulière et minutieuse répartition'

of which the narrator informs us in a brief and introverted statement between paragraphs 1 and 2 ('me dis-je en moi-même'). I am using the term 'capable', here, with much intent, for it is, indeed, the somewhat conspicuous sorting of change that introduces the friend's and, by conceptual extension, the generic individual's position in modern society. More specifically, it introduces the dialectic of interpersonal relationships that drives ('pousser' [Lefebvre]) modern human existence.

Paragraph 1 thus places the friend at the centre of various relationships. He is introduced as 'a friend' and thus enters a subject–subject duality with the narrator, but, more importantly, he is also positioned at the centre of various, almost intimate subject–object dualities: the relationships he has with the various 'categories' of his own money (gold, silver, copper). Projecting Simmelian thought onto this scenario means that the friend is placed at the centre of a high quantity of low-quality relationships, alienated from any form of purpose other than the purpose of money—that is, its universal eligibility, as explained above. The enumeration of coins follows its own inherent hierarchy of monetary value, beginning with a singular gold coin ('pièce d'or'), moving on to several smaller, silver coins ('petites pièces d'argent'), then to a heap of five cent copper coins ('masse de gros sols'), and, finally, a peculiar silver coin 'qu'il [l'ami] avait particulièrement examinée'; as the reader finds out shortly after, this final coin is counterfeit.⁵¹⁹ Leaving the counterfeit coin aside for the moment, moreover, the scenario hints at the social hierarchy inherent to mercantile capitalism as a form of political economy, based, almost exclusively, on monetary exchange. In my reading of the poem, what one encounters in paragraph 1 is thus a qualitative as well as quantitative representation of the three dominant social strata emerging from within material modernity: the exquisite sphere of the political and religious elite (gold), the aspiring and already powerful bourgeoisie (silver), and the mass of factory workers forming the proletariat (copper).⁵²⁰ Following this analogy further, then, it could carefully be suggested that the counterfeit coin, last in line, introduces us to those individuals still remaining outside of such categorisation—that is, outside of the close-knit network of monetary relationships that *characterises* modern

⁵¹⁹ Jacques Derrida has undertaken an extensive close reading of 'La Fausse Monnaie', where he explores the various twist and turns of what is, what could be, and how it is all connected, including the questions of whether or not the friend is truly a friend and the counterfeit coin is truly a counterfeit coin. Essentially, with his reading, Derrida addresses the aporia of giving a gift, based on Marcel Mauss' well-known philosophical *Essai sur le don*. See Jacques Derrida, *Given Time. I, Counterfeit Money*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

⁵²⁰ This is my own interpretation.

society. They are individuals, who do not represent any form of monetary value, neither qualitative nor quantitative, and thus individuals situated outside the reciprocal dependence of individual and money, as introduced by the friend's meticulous sorting of change. These individuals are Baudelaire's modern heroes, 'heroes of the everyday', as Edward Kaplan would likely argue, and figures already hinting at the theory of Baudelairean fatalism I shall propose in the subsequent section.

In line with our discussion of Walter Benjamin's dialectical image as a consequence of dialectic materialism, and in order to further define Baudelaire's conception of heroism, we may look back as far as antiquity, where the figure of the hero was strongly associated with the idea of fatalism. Kings, warriors, wise men, and athletes: they all knew about their exceptional gifts and, indeed, as the ancient Greek poet Pindar made explicit: it was only the virtuous use of these gifts that potentially led to heroic status.⁵²¹ The actions of demi-gods were even more determined by fate. Equipped with superior powers, they all knew their fates were dictated by their exceptional gifts. They knew of their responsibility towards society and, of course, of the specific challenges imposed upon them by their divine mothers and fathers. As glorious as their existence may seem, in the end, they were mere Olympian puppets, and it is the ultimate recognition and acceptance of that condition that allowed them to perform the great deeds of which ancient mythology is composed. Such is also the case for Baudelaire's modern heroes, figures situated outside of society and, in the context of material modernity, thus outside the socio-collective, homogenising hunt for the next best thing. As in antiquity, essentially, the heroic gift is the ability to contemplate existence, to recognise its conditions, and to accept the challenges it imposes. In the case of material modernity, however, these challenges are not nearly as glamorous as the Herculean labours. Material modernity's heroes are prostitutes, rag pickers, street artist, and so forth, challenged, in one way or another, by the misery that modern city existence imposes upon them. Baudelaire's modern heroes are, in a sense, no heroes at all: they are simulacra of heroes, reversing the task of messianic hope by embodying its very absence.⁵²² Finally, it should be noted, here, that Baudelaire's modern artist

⁵²¹ See Pindar, *The Odes of Pindar*, trans. by Cecil M. Bowra (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), *Pyth.* 9. 65, p. 154. I owe this reference to Christopher Jones' insightful account of heroism in antiquity. See Christopher P. Jones, *New Heroes in Antiquity: Achilles to Antinoos* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 9.

⁵²² This brief definition of Baudelaire's modern heroes has previously been suggested elsewhere. See my very early 'Sodom and Gomorrah Revisited: Modern Cities, Modern Heroes, Baudelaire's *Le Spleen de Paris*', in *Autour de l'Extrême littéraire*, ed. by Alistair Hemmens and Russell Williams (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), pp. 33–45 (in particular pp. 40–42).

and child (and the dandy, as we shall see later in this chapter) also belong to the category of the modern hero, though from a slightly different perspective. In their specific case, as was argued throughout this study, they possess the heroic ability to remain *distanced* (Chambers) from modern society, while also fundamentally participating in it. Via the faculties of *rêve*, *rêverie*, *ivresse*, and *imagination*, it is their ability to defend subjective individuality—and thus the capacity for subjective evaluation—against the omnipresence of material modernity’s objective reality and its homogenising socio-economic focus on monetary value, that enables them—Baudelaire’s modern artist and child—to partake in the ‘bain de multitude’, the ‘sainte prostitution de l’âme’ precisely as they observe it from afar.⁵²³

In ‘La Fausse Monnaie’, then, Baudelaire’s modern hero may be symbolically invoked by the unique counterfeit coin, but appears more directly in the form of the beggar, who is, as already stated, introduced in paragraph 2:

Nous fîmes la rencontre d’un pauvre qui nous tendit sa casquette en tremblant.—
Je ne connais rien de plus inquiétant que l’éloquence muette de ces yeux suppliants, qui contiennent à la fois, pour l’homme sensible qui sait y lire, tant d’humilité, tant de reproches. Il y trouve quelque chose approchant cette profondeur de sentiment compliqué, dans les yeux larmoyants des *chiens* qu’on fouette.⁵²⁴ (323; my emphasis)

The beggar, here, is still depending on money in the sense that he could not go and buy (offer to himself) tobacco, for example, by proposing to trade a self-made wooden doll house. The chances of success in such a situation would be minimal and the beggar would first need to sell his product—exchanging it for money—in order to, then, harvest the benefits of money’s universal eligibility. But there is one crucial difference, a difference not least hinted at by the antagonism between paragraphs 1 and 2 of the poem. In paragraph 1, as argued above, the friend is fully immersed in his monetary relationships; but in paragraph 2, the beggar’s dependence on money is signalled, only, by his trembling hand holding out the cap, trying,

⁵²³ ‘Les Foules’, in *Le Spleen de Paris*, in *BOC*, I, 291–92 (p. 291).

⁵²⁴ The mention of ‘chiens’ should be noted. As my reading of the prose poem ‘Les Bons Chiens’ will show, Baudelaire uses a sequence of canine allegories to refer to the various modern heroes, who populate his (prose) poetry. See the corresponding section in chapter 6.

almost literally, to bridge the gap between those who have money, and those who do not. It is a pleading for material support, certainly, but only at first sight, for it is also an appeal to recall subjective individuality and its inherent capacity for subjective evaluation as that which formerly—prior to the *rapidité* of material modernity, prior to the fragmentation of the generic individual's a priori—shaped the epistemological dialectic between subject and subject; what we have otherwise come to define as *communication*.

Syntactically speaking, Baudelaire makes this explicit by adding a dash after the first sentence of the second paragraph, splitting the isolated and objective action of begging from the narrator's subjective reflection upon—his *reasoning with*—the scenario: 'Nous fîmes la rencontre d'un pauvre qui nous tendit sa casquette en tremblant.—Je ne connais rien de plus inquiétant que l'éloquence muette de ces yeux suppliants'. Here, what appears to be a beggar aiming, quite straightforwardly, to secure sustenance, becomes a violent battle between humility ('humilité') and reproach ('reproches'), once seen from the perspective of those who know how to read the situation ('l'homme sensible qui sait y lire') such as from the perspective of Baudelaire's modern artist and child. The former ('humilité') expresses submission to modern, capitalist, money economy (and its inherent social hierarchy—the counterfeit coin being situated outside the hierarchy of all non-counterfeit coins, no matter their value); the latter ('reproches') revolts against this submission, condemning the plea for money by reproaching its very necessity, which, in turn, is a consequence of modern society's omnipresent and homogenising relationship with money. And this is, indeed, the crux of the setup. Upon first glance, the beggar, just like the counterfeit coin before, is, simply, added to the close-knit network of monetary relationships, which, according to Simmel, defines modern, capitalist, money economy. Here, the beggar fulfils his function as one of two subjects in the form of a plea, for gratitude is the only commodity available to him that can be offered in exchange for money. Upon second glance, however, he is, first and foremost, not depending on the money that is offered to him, but on a reversal of priorities by those addressed. Within the timeframe of a single instant, the beggar is provided with the opportunity to feed objective and subjective information—surface impressions of physical and psychological condition (objective); reinforcement of the plea through the medium of eyes (subjective, 'yeux suppliants')—into the epistemological dialectic between himself and the two passers-by. A risky undertaking, as it determines, entirely, whether empathy is established, communication

can take place, and, for just an instant, the two passers-by lower their economic guard, initiating a brief return to subjective evaluation, as opposed to monetary value.

The contrast between paragraphs 1 and 2 could thus not be greater. It is the contrast between the generic individual and its antithesis, the modern hero. It is also the contrast between supply and demand, focusing on the commodity per se—that is, money—and thus conceptually summarising the nature of exchange in material modernity. Finally, it is also the contrast between two extreme modes of relationship, at least symbolically.

In a Simmelian fashion, the first mode of relationship emphasises the generic individual at the very centre of their own economic universe ('mon ami fit un soigneux tirage de sa monnaie'). Here, the *moi profond* has been conquered by the *moi superficiel*, and subjective individuality no longer feeds subjective information into the epistemological dialectic between subject and subject. Empathy can thus no longer be established, communication can no longer take place, and relationships are no longer interpersonal: subjective evaluation becomes externalised and objectified as monetary value, and, consequentially, modern society becomes *characterless*. It is only the consumer—for example, the friend in his conceptual function as the generic individual—who knows what they desire and why they desire it. The desire itself can already be a multitude of smaller or chronologically interlaced desires. It can also change, within an instant, from the desire for tobacco into the desire for an automobile. The producer does not know and does not have to know. Nor does the consumer know what original intentions spurred the development and production of a specific commodity. High profit margins? Consumer satisfaction? The advertising of related commodities? Or even political motivation? Again, it is likely that the consumer does not know the details and never will. It is also likely that producer and consumer will never stand in any relationship to one another, other than the one designated by the flow of their money. Potential intermediate figures such as salesmen are in no way different in this respect and only exist to facilitate the transaction. Once again, subjective evaluation is externalised and objectified in the form of monetary value, empathy can no longer be established, and communication can no longer take place.

The second mode of relationship, then, is personified by the beggar. He is an individual at the brink of existence: he is one of Baudelaire's modern heroes. His economic condition renders him useless in the clockwork that drives modern human existence ('pousser' [Lefebvre]). He is not a cog, but a splinter at best. He has nothing to offer in exchange for money other than gratitude; and since empathy was largely lost with the socio-collective decay and depletion of subjective individuality—with the conquest of the *moi profond* by the *moi superficiel* (Bergson), with the individual's increasing inability to attain peaceful unity between lord and bondsman (Hegel)—gratitude is, simply, not the commodity en vogue anymore. The beggar thus needs to rely on the rudiments of a more sentimental and emotional past, where subjective individuality is still at large, where the epistemological dialectic between subject and object as well as subject and subject has not yet been interrupted, and where the generic individual's a priori has not yet been fragmented. When spotted on the street, all he has is an instant in which to exchange information in order to establish empathy as a form of interpersonal relationship that will ultimately keep him alive.

At this point, it seems useful to briefly recapitulate what has been argued so far: paragraph 1 introduces the friend, his relationship to money, and, by conceptual extension, his relationship to modern society; paragraph 2, then, introduces the beggar, his non-relationship to money, and thus his non-relationship to modern society. The beggar, like most of Baudelaire's modern heroes, is situated outside the close-knit network of monetary relationships, which, according to Simmel, constitutes modern, capitalist, money economy and thus modern society. He depends on money and its universal eligibility in order to survive, and yet he subverts the externalisation and objectification of subjective evaluation in the form of monetary value by the very act of begging: paradoxically, for the beggar, depending on money means depending on subjective evaluation, as opposed to monetary value. Like Baudelaire's modern artist and child, he has the capacity to subsist within the close-knit network of monetary relationships, while remaining *distanced*—while sheltering subjective individuality—from the monetary externalisation and objectification with which that network subsumes all else. Both paragraphs serve as (the instant's) objective reality of which a tentative understanding ('une tentative de connaissance') in the form of *Modernité* is, then, presented as a Baudelairean *Modernisme* in the form of the prose poem, 'La Fausse Monnaie'. Paragraph 3, then, introduces the narrator, informs the reader of the counterfeit coin, and concludes the first half of the poem. It furnishes the final element of (the instant's) objective reality:

[I]’offrande de mon ami fut beaucoup plus considérable que la mienne, et je lui dis: ‘Vous avez raison: après le plaisir d’être *étonné*, il n’en est pas de plus grand que celui de causer une surprise.—C’était la pièce fausse’, me répondit-il tranquillement, comme pour se justifier de sa prodigalité.⁵²⁵ (323–24; my emphasis)

I suggest, here, that the narrator equates the amount of money given to the beggar with the strength or intensity of an interpersonal relationship that does, in fact, not exist: the ‘surprising’ amount of money given to the beggar by the friend ([I]’offrande [...] fut beaucoup plus considérable’) represents the latter’s ‘surprising’ empathy for the former (‘Vous avez raison, après le plaisir d’être étonné il n’en est pas de plus grand que celui de causer une surprise’). It is as if, for just one instant, objectified time comes to a halt in order to allow the beggar’s trembling hand to pierce the bubble of his very own economic non-existence—of alienation, isolation, and exclusion—and to partake in the close-knit network of monetary relationships that defines modern society. Until, of course, Baudelaire’s dash appears, putting an end to—that is, *interrupting*—the narrator’s *rêve*, *rêverie*, *ivresse*, and *imagination* by suddenly introducing speech. ‘C’était la pièce fausse’, the friend answers, calmly; and, abruptly, the brief interpersonal relationship between friend and beggar is nothing more than the shadow of a more subjective past.

At this point, the reader makes the transition to the second half of ‘La Fausse Monnaie’, which is, once again, separated into three paragraphs. Just like the tercets of ‘A une passante’, with the exception of a very brief, middle paragraph, the second part, then, represents the narrator’s *reasoning with*—and, in the context of aesthetic production, the mnemonic filtering of—(the instant’s) objective reality, as presented in the first part of the poem. This is what happens: upon hearing that the friend has passed on only a counterfeit coin, the narrator is startled, to say the least. Paragraph 3, then, serves to establish the first half of the poem as the object for an other, allowing the narrator to enter into a subject–object duality with the instant:

⁵²⁵ I have emphasised the term ‘étonné’ as a contextual reminder of my discussion of photography and, more importantly, the two forms of happiness, which led to this close reading of ‘La Fausse Monnaie’. The beggar is astonished because of the unusually large donation (objective happiness), but he is also astonished because the unusually large donation is based on empathy (subjective happiness).

Mais dans mon misérable cerveau, toujours occupé à chercher midi à quatorze heures (de quelle fatigante faculté la nature m'a fait cadeau!), entra soudainement cette idée qu'une pareille conduite, de la part de mon ami, n'était excusable que par le désir de créer un événement dans la vie de ce pauvre diable, peut-être même de connaître les conséquences diverses, funestes ou autres, que peut engendrer une pièce fausse dans la main d'un mendiant. Ne pouvait-elle pas se multiplier en pièces vraies? ne pouvait-elle pas aussi le conduire en prison? Un cabaretier, un boulanger, par exemple, allait peut-être le faire arrêter comme faux-monnayeur ou comme propagateur de fausse monnaie. Tout aussi bien la pièce fausse serait peut-être, pour un pauvre petit spéculateur, le germe d'une richesse de quelques jours. Et ainsi ma fantaisie allait son train, prêtant des ailes à l'esprit de mon ami et tirant toutes les déductions possibles de toutes les hypothèses possibles. (324)

What one witnesses, here, is the narrator's 'comprehension' (Hegel's third phenomenon) in the process of 'transforming the object into a notion' in order to acquire experience and create knowledge: in order to synthesise the (instant's) essence of things.⁵²⁶

What did just happen? Why did my friend pass on a counterfeit coin? Unlike the (tele-) communication Blood perceives to be the synthesis of the speaker's epistemological engagement with the instant in 'A une passante', however, the situation, here, is less clear: the narrator, seemingly, clings onto the idea that empathy as a product of subjective evaluation serves, still, as the moral ground, on which the exchange had just been executed, and on which a brief, yet interpersonal (as opposed to monetary) relationship had been established with the beggar. The notion that *my friend could not have possibly done this with evil intent*, however, is increasingly challenged by a growing awareness that all possible positive consequences are outweighed by potentially harmful if not disastrous ones. Baudelaire's first sentence, occupying more or less the first half of the paragraph, as cited above, makes this shift of perspective explicit: 'Mais dans mon misérable cerveau [...] entra soudainement cette idée qu'une pareille conduite, de la part de mon ami, n'était excusable que par le désir de créer un événement dans la vie de ce pauvre diable'. The narrator, then, begins to wonder, and eventually realises that an unforeseen number of consequences may soon impact upon the

⁵²⁶ See the subsection on 'Hegelian Dialectic and the Instant as Object Itself' in chapter 5.

beggar's existence. Moreover, the friend must surely have realised it too: 'peut-être même de connaître les conséquences diverses, funestes ou autres, que peut engendrer une pièce fausse dans la main d'un mendiant.' The narrator's epistemological engagement with the instant continues, mentally juggling the various possible 'essence-s of things' of the instant as object for an other ('Et ainsi ma fantaisie [*rêve, rêverie, ivresse, and imagination*] allait son train, prêtant des ailes à l'esprit de mon ami et tirant *toutes les déductions possibles de toutes les hypothèses possibles*' [my emphasis]).

The poem's fifth paragraph, then, abruptly forces the, until now, still unexpected conclusion:

Mais celui-ci [l'ami] *rompit brusquement* ma *rêverie* en reprenant mes propres paroles: 'Oui, vous avez raison; il n'est pas de plaisir plus doux que de surprendre un homme en lui donnant plus qu'il n'espère.' (324, my emphasis)

The subject–object duality between the narrator and the instant is forcefully interrupted and fragmented ('rompre', 'brusquement'), and in its place a subject–subject duality between the narrator and the friend is established. I have argued before that the predominantly subjective information, circulating within the epistemological dialectic between subject and subject, allows for empathy to be established and for communication to take place. In light of Simmelian thought, the prose poem, 'La Fausse Monnaie', then, illustrates what happens to both—empathy as well as communication—when subjective individuality in the form of subjective evaluation becomes externalised and objectified in the form of monetary value: in short, the former can no longer be established and the latter can no longer take place. In the poem, the fact that this process of externalisation and objectification occurs *subconsciously*, as was argued on the basis of Richard Layard's contextualising approach to individual as well as socio-collective happiness in chapter 4,⁵²⁷ is highlighted by the friend's verbal agreement with the narrator's earlier statement that there is no greater pleasure than causing a surprise ('vous avez raison'). For the friend, in his conceptual function as the generic individual, empathy is established and communication is taking place. The narrator, however, in his conceptual function as the modern artist, now knows better. Via his epistemological engagement, firstly,

⁵²⁷ See in particular the subsection on 'Two Forms of Happiness'.

in the form of a subject–object duality between himself and the instant, and, secondly, in the form of a subject–subject duality between himself and the friend, he realises that empathy has not been established and that communication with his friend has, in fact, not taken place. Moreover, he realises that communication between the friend and the beggar has not taken place either for the very same reason. Finally, then, he realises that this cannot possibly be an isolated incident as it is ultimately based on the friend’s and, once again, by conceptual extension, on the generic individual’s inability *to reason*, and thus to shelter subjective individuality as well as subjective evaluation from the objective reality of material modernity and its exclusive socio-economic focus on monetary value. In other words, via his ability *to reason* and to filter mnemonically, the narrator synthesises the (instant’s) essence of things in the form of the somewhat damning conclusion to ‘La Fausse Monnaie’.

Recalling Simmelian thought, here, helps to clarify the argument: just like the peculiar silver coin—in modern, capitalist, money economy—empathy, communication, and, in consequence, interpersonal relationships become ‘fausses’. The concluding paragraph in full reads as follows:

Je le regardai dans le blanc des yeux, et je fus épouvanté de voir que ses yeux brillèrent d’une incontestable candeur. Je vis alors clairement qu’il avait voulu faire à la fois la charité et une bonne affaire; gagner quarante sols et le cœur de Dieu; emporter le paradis économiquement; enfin attraper gratis un brevet d’homme charitable. Je lui aurais presque pardonné le désir de la criminelle jouissance dont je le supposais tout à l’heure capable; j’aurais trouvé curieux, singulier, qu’il s’amusât à compromettre les pauvres; mais je ne lui pardonnerai jamais l’ineptie de son calcul. On n’est jamais excusable d’être méchant, mais il y a quelque mérite à savoir qu’on l’est; et le plus irréparable des vices est de faire le mal par bêtise.
(324)

At this juncture, the objective information previously circulating within the epistemological dialectic between the narrator and the friend (‘Oui, vous avez raison; il n’est pas de plaisir plus doux que de surprendre un homme en lui donnant plus qu’il n’espère’) is replaced by subjective information, as provided by the narrator’s subjective individuality in the form of subjective evaluation. Via his epistemological engagement with the instant, the narrator realises that the

form of happiness achieved by the friend ('il n'est pas de plaisir plus doux') can only ever be objective, so long as the charitable act from which it ultimately stems, is *not* based on the establishment of empathy as a precondition for communication to take place (subjective happiness), but on the seductive idea that being charitable is, in fact, a 'commodity' that may be 'purchased'—in this particular case, even without the actual exchange of money. First and foremost, then, the friend is *happy* about having struck a good deal (objective happiness): 'Je vis alors clairement qu'il avait voulu faire à la fois la charité et une bonne affaire; gagner quarante sols et le cœur de Dieu; emporter le paradis économiquement; enfin attraper gratis un brevet d'homme charitable.' In other words, as regards the friend, the *moi profond* has already been conquered by the *moi superficiel*, and the Hegelian bondsman is further away than ever from *reasoning* with his lord in order to turn *unhappy* consciousness into *happy* consciousness. Objectively speaking, this leads to the friend's and, indeed, the generic individual's happiness; subjectively speaking, however, it only leads to Benjaminian socio-collective homogenisation.

The notion of happiness, then, particularly in the context of the Hegelian dialectic between lord and bondsman, is a crucial component in what follows next: the (instant's) essence of things, as synthesised by the narrator in the form of a judgement call, specifically highlighting the nuance that exists between subjective and objective happiness. Once again, in the Hegelian universe, unhappiness occurs as a consequence of the constant struggle between lord and bondsman; neither wants their state of being in itself to be negated by potential unity. *Unhappy* consciousness does not realise that attaining peaceful unity would turn it into *happy* consciousness—that is, until 'reason' (Hegel's fifth phenomenon) makes it explicit. Unfortunately, as we know, in response to the *rapidité* of material modernity, the generic individual's ability *to reason* also becomes interrupted and fragmented. In my reading of 'La Fausse Monnaie', such is the case for the narrator's friend, where the struggle between lord and bondsman has, indeed, ceased, but in a rather cataclysmic sense, and certainly not because *reason* has mediated unity. On the contrary, unity has still not been found. Instead, however, the bondsman has taken control, the *moi profond* has been conquered by the *moi superficiel*. In this context, the friend and, of course, the generic individual is, indeed, happy; for struggle between the two no longer occurs. From our distinction between subjective and objective happiness, however, we know that this form of happiness is only *superficial*. It is the form of happiness linked, exclusively, to objective reality, as presented in space, the form of happiness derived from the material spectacle, or, to put it in Baudelaire's own words, from the 'paradis

économique'. It is the form of happiness that leaves subjective individuality behind for further decay and eventual depletion. 'La Fausse Monnaie' illustrates the effects of this process: whether between friend and beggar, or friend and narrator, the generic individual's lack of subjective individuality leads, in the context of subject–subject dualities, to a lack of empathy for 'the other'. In other words, in response to the generic individual's fragmented a priori, empathy can no longer be established and communication can no longer take place. Idealist epistemology provides one possible theoretico-philosophical foundation, on which to construct a suitable explanation as to why that is the case: because all of human existence is essentially based on the acquisition of experience and the creation of knowledge; and, in material modernity, that process is increasingly under attack.

The link between the lack of empathy, the resulting interruption and fragmentation of communication to the point of non-communication, and the increase of objective happiness at the expense of subjective happiness, then, is addressed in the poem's final statement. Baudelaire, here, makes explicit that there are, in fact, two forms of doing evil ('méchant'): intentional and unintentional. Neither is ever excusable ('[o]n n'est jamais excusable'), but at least the former may proceed from a reason one has for doing evil: a reason 'the other' may, then, agree, disagree, argue, or *reason with* on the basis of empathy and communication. In the case of the latter, however, empathy cannot be established and communication cannot take place. One may argue that this type of evil is *unreasonable* for it is no longer grounded in the acquisition of experience and the creation of knowledge. Evil, in this context, becomes a modern god: and the generic individual is its messiah.⁵²⁸

⁵²⁸ The similarity between my final statement, here, and Baudelaire's final statement in the two paragraphs on photography, as cited in chapter 4, is intentional: 'Un Dieu vengeur a excusé les vœux de cette multitude. Daguerre fut son messie.' I wish to highlight, here, the isomorphic rise of photography and the generic individual in material modernity. See 'Le Public moderne et la photographie', in 'Salon de 1859', in *BOC*, II, 614–19 (p. 617).

‘Les Yeux des pauvres’ (1864): Communication

Tant il est difficile de s’entendre [...] la pensée est incommunicable [...] ⁵²⁹

Whereas the direct projection of modern, capitalist, money economy onto interpersonal relationships is rare in the Baudelairean œuvre—‘La Fausse Monnaie’ possibly being the most explicit example—the notion of depleted subjective individuality as well as subjective evaluation, the resulting lack of empathy, and its interruptive and fragmentary effects on communication are somewhat more prevalent. In this context, one can look to the prose poem ‘Les Yeux des pauvres’, where the narrator spends an evening with his interlocutor in (yet, outside [‘devant’]) a luxury café on one of the newly established Parisian boulevards, ‘the most spectacular urban innovation of the nineteenth century, and the decisive breakthrough in the modernization of the traditional city’.⁵³⁰ Suddenly, a family of the poor appears in front of the couple. Through the medium of eyes, it seems, they are trying to establish empathy for communication to take place: a scenario, then, similar to ‘La Fausse Monnaie’, once again, eventually leading the narrator to realise that in the midst of material modernity—quite literally, in this specific case—the former can no longer be established and the latter can no longer take place (‘la pensée est incommunicable’). In order to clarify, one must address the poem step-by-step.

‘Les Yeux des Pauvres’ is split into three distinct parts of which the first serves to set the scene, the second to describe the scene, and the third to analyse the scene. Contrary to ‘A une passante’ and ‘La Fausse Monnaie’, however, ‘Les Yeux des pauvres’ *does not* present to the reader, firstly, (the instant’s) objective reality and, secondly, the narrator’s subsequent *reasoning with* and mnemonic filtering of (the instant’s) objective reality; in ‘Les Yeux des pauvres’, the instant is no longer addressed as object for an other. Rather, it presents to the reader an already made synthesis. The setup of the scene consists of only a brief paragraph:

⁵²⁹ ‘Les Yeux des pauvres’, in *Le Spleen de Paris*, BOC, I, 317–19 (p. 319). All further references will be provided in-text.

⁵³⁰ Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air* (London and New York, NY: Verso, 2010), p. 150.

Ah! vous voulez savoir pourquoi je vous *hais* aujourd’hui. Il vous sera sans doute moins facile de le comprendre qu’à moi de vous l’expliquer; car vous êtes, je crois, le plus bel exemple d’impermeabilité féminine qui se puisse rencontrer. (317; my emphasis)

The very first sentence of the poem introduces us to the emotion of hatred. A most curious stance as the narrator’s interlocutor (‘vous voulez savoir’) appears to be his lover. The reader finds this out shortly after. The poem thus begins with an array of implicit, yet rather straightforward questions: Why hatred? What could possibly have happened to cause such a strong antagonistic emotion between the narrator and his lover? This confusion is mirrored by the narrator’s certainty—that is, the reader cannot help but be confused precisely because the narrator is so very certain of his emotion (‘je vous hais’). The reader cannot know what the narrator knows, for the reader is presented only with the (instant’s) essence of things in the form of hatred (‘aujourd’hui’), not with its epistemological trajectory: the narrator’s *reasoning with* and mnemonic filtering of the instant as object for others. In other words, the thesis and antithesis eventually leading to the emotion of hatred—the synthesis—thus remain hidden, hinted at only by the ambiguous ‘le plus bel exemple d’impermeabilité féminine’. What follows next is the description of the scene.

Baudelaire positions the two lovers ‘devant un café neuf qui formait le coin d’un boulevard neuf, encore tout plein de gravois et montrant déjà glorieusement ses splendeurs inachevées’ (318). Moreover, the poet’s description of the café itself reminds one of the Benjaminian vision of the arcades already referred to in chapter 2 (‘glass-roofed, marble-panelled’, ‘world[s] in miniature’, ‘centre[s] of commerce in luxury items’):⁵³¹

Le café étincelait. Le gaz lui-même [‘la grande barbarie éclairée du gaz’, in ‘Edgar Poe, sa vie et ses œuvres’] y déployait toute l’ardeur d’un début, et éclairait de toutes ses forces les murs aveuglants de blancheur, les nappes éblouissantes des miroirs, les ors des baguettes et des corniches, les pages aux joues rebondies traînés par les chiens en laisse, les dames riant au faucon perché sur leur tête des fruits, des

⁵³¹ Walter Benjamin, ‘Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century’, trans. by Howard Eiland, in *The Writer of Modern Life*, ed. by Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 30 and 31.

pâtés et du gibier, les Hébés et les Ganymèdes présentant à bras tendu la petite amphore à bavaroises ou l'obélisque bicolore des glaces panachées; toute l'histoire et toute la mythologie mises au service de la *goïnfrerie*. (318, my emphasis)

I have mentioned this before: in 'Les Yeux des pauvres', the couple's rendezvous is not merely symbolically, but also quite literally set in the midst of material modernity. The description of the café—its length and its details—serves that very purpose: everything blinks, glistens, sparkles, and shines ('étinceler'). Gaslight—as yet another technological addition to modern city existence,⁵³² as yet another brainchild of material modernity—frames this momentous occasion at the beginning of a new era ('Le gaz lui-même y déployait toute l'ardeur d'un début'). This is the modern everyday: dogs are being walked by servants whose facial features are just as well-nourished as those of their masters ('joues rebondies'). Laughter echoes from all sides between the radiant walls and their rich ornaments ('les murs aveuglants de blancheur', 'les ors des baguettes et des corniches', 'les dames riant'). Moreover, the café seems situated at the very centre of the Benjaminian dialectical image: everywhere the eye glances, decorative gods and goddesses are mingling in the ecstasy of a feast, evoking the idea that rich culinary pleasures are a direct consequence of the submission to ancient divinity. The message implied thus reads as follows: just as your own servants serve you with their 'joues rebondies', so you, too, must serve your masters—in this context, the Second Empire regime under Napoleon III, the Church, perhaps even the Institute⁵³³—and happiness (objective) will endure.⁵³⁴ What Baudelaire makes of this is summarised in one single term: 'goïnfrerie', a cardinal sin, in this particular case, representing modern society's *unreasonable* faith in a materialist teleology.

In this very context, then, the distinguished Marx scholar Marshall Berman, too, positions the lovers in the midst of material modernity: contrary to Baudelaire, however, he does so not merely within the confines of poem and café, but, more explicitly, within the larger geographical surroundings of Haussmann's Paris. Berman summarises his view succinctly:

⁵³² The introduction of gas lamps in cafés and on the streets suddenly provided interesting, though, often, perhaps, frightening insights into Parisian nightly existence. Baudelaire addresses this in both the verse and prose poems entitled 'Le Crépuscule du soir' published in 1851 and 1855, respectively.

⁵³³ For cultural-historical contextualisation, see chapter 2 and, in particular the section on 'Second Empire Aesthetics'.

⁵³⁴ This is yet another subtle pointer towards the type of socio-economic fatalism that will be introduced in the following section on 'Society and Existence from the Viewpoint of Death'.

In the late 1850s and through the 1860s, while Baudelaire was working on *Paris Spleen*, Georges Eugène Haussmann, the Prefect of Paris and its environs, armed with the imperial mandate of Napoleon III, was blasting a vast network of boulevards through the heart of the old medieval city. Napoleon and Haussmann envisioned the new roads as arteries in an urban circulatory system. These images, commonplace today, were revolutionary in the context of nineteenth-century urban life. The new boulevards would enable traffic to flow through the centre of the city, and to move straight ahead from end to end—a quixotic and virtually unimaginable enterprise till then. In addition, they would clear slums and open up ‘breathing spaces’ in the midst of layers of *darkness* and choked congestion. They would stimulate a tremendous expansion of local business at every level, and thus help to defray the immense municipal demolition, compensation and constructions costs. They would pacify the masses by employing tens of thousands of them—at times as much as a quarter of the city’s labour force—on long-term public works, which in turn would generate thousands more jobs in the private sector. Finally, they would create long and broad corridors in which troops and artillery could move effectively against future barricades and popular insurrections.⁵³⁵ (my emphasis)

It is this ‘blasting a vast network of boulevards through the heart of the old medieval city’ that eventually enables the poor to swarm out of doors and, if not participate in, at least observe from a *distance* the city’s increasingly lustrous appearance and life-style, as symbolised by the café in ‘Les Yeux des pauvres’ (‘étinceler’). Of course, this was not only true for the lower social strata. The rich, too, could now explore and take a closer look at their famous city, racing their carriages on Macadam paved arteries around the ‘urban circulatory system’.⁵³⁶ To cite Berman once more:

The new construction wrecked hundreds of buildings, displaced uncounted thousands of people, destroyed whole neighbourhoods that had lived for centuries. But it opened up the whole of the city, for the first time in its history, to all its inhabitants. Now, at last, it was possible to move not only within neighbourhoods,

⁵³⁵ Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, p. 150.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

but through them. Now, after centuries of life as a cluster of isolated cells, Paris was becoming a unified physical and human space.⁵³⁷

Berman thus provides us with a concise summary of precisely the sort of external, physical, spatial fragmentation Baudelaire already hints at in his *dédicace* to Houssaye, referred to throughout this study, and used as my conceptual opening to chapter 4. To remind ourselves: Baudelaire, here, calls for an aesthetic ('le miracle d'une prose poétique') that will incorporate not merely external, physical, spatial fragmentation, but what it does to the individual's soul, *rêverie*, and conscience ('pour s'adapter aux mouvements lyriques de l'âme, aux ondulations de la rêverie, aux soubresauts de la conscience').⁵³⁸

In 'Les Yeux des pauvres', then, the poet provides us with a possible answer to this call. Through the gaps and holes that Haussmann had blasted into the lithic cages of the poor, the poem witnesses a family creeping towards café and lovers, a little like insects attracted by glistening lights ('étinceler'). It consists of a father figure 'd'une quarantaine d'années' with tired eyes and a silver beard ('visage fatigué', 'barbe grisonnante'), who is holding the hand of a young boy ('petit garçon'), while also carrying a baby 'trop faible pour marcher':

Les yeux du père disaient: 'Que c'est beau! que c'est beau! on dirait que tout l'or du pauvre monde est venu se porter sur ces murs.'—Les yeux du petit garçon: 'Que c'est beau! que c'est beau! mais c'est une maison où peuvent seuls entrer les gens qui ne sont pas comme nous.'—Quant aux yeux du plus petit, ils étaient trop fascinés pour exprimer autre chose qu'une joie stupide et profonde.

In reference to my Idealist epistemological take on Baudelaire's a posteriori and, indeed, to my reading of 'La Fausse Monnaie', I suggest, here, that the eyes of the poor are attempting to establish empathy so that communication can take place: and successfully so, it seems, for otherwise the narrator would not be actively attempting to 'read' the eyes of the poor ('lire'); and we, in turn, would not encounter them in 'Les Yeux des pauvres'. In other words, the narrator's attempt at reading the eyes of the poor provides a crucial component of the epistemological dialectic that will eventually lead to the emotion of hatred as the (instant's)

⁵³⁷ Ibid., pp. 150–51.

⁵³⁸ 'Lettre à Arsène Houssaye', in *Le Spleen de Paris*, in BOC, I, 275–76.

essence of things; and, indeed, of the mnemonic filtering that will eventually lead to the production of the prose poem itself. As is the case with the beggar's 'yeux suppliants' in 'La Fausse Monnaie', in 'Les Yeux des pauvres', too, the eyes of the poor serve as a medium to feed subjective information into the epistemological dialectic between subject and subject: the eyes, one may argue, serve the narrator as a gateway to the soul of 'the other'.

At this juncture, however, one must point out a crucial difference between the beggar and the narrator in 'La Fausse Monnaie' and the family of the poor and the narrator in 'Les Yeux des pauvres'. In the case of the former, the beggar's plea establishes empathy for communication to take place. In other words: a subject–subject duality is established between the beggar and the friend as well as between the beggar and the narrator ('[l]'offrande de mon ami fut beaucoup plus considerable') in order to secure sustenance: the communication taking place is bidirectional, for the beggar's plea is *answered* in the form of the 'offrande'. In the case of the latter, however, the communication that takes place is unidirectional: in the eyes of the poor, the narrator aims to 'read' their thoughts without ever attempting to respond ('lire [la] pensée' [319]). In an epistemological sense, then, this means that the subject–subject duality between the narrator and the family of the poor is driven, exclusively, by the subject–object duality between the family of the poor and material modernity, as symbolised by the café. More explicitly, what the narrator 'reads' in the eyes of the poor has little to do with their subjective individuality, but everything to do with their alienation, isolation, and exclusion in and from the material spectacle of modern society. In a Lefebvrian context, at this point, the notions of 'critique' and 'auto-critique' begin to merge. What I mean by 'merging' will become clear in the following pages.

In the subject–object duality between the family of the poor and material modernity knowledge is created as follows. In his conceptual function as a Baudelairean modern hero—as is suggested, for example, by the adjective 'pauvre'—the father of 'Les Yeux des pauvres', like the beggar of 'La Fausse Monnaie', is situated outside the close-knit network of monetary relationships that defines modern, capitalist, money economy. He is astonished ('étonner') by the material spectacle ('[q]ue c'est beau! que c'est beau!'), but, like the beggar of 'La Fausse Monnaie', he is also aware of the existential importance of money in order to secure sustenance. On the verge of being conquered by the *moi superficiel* ('[q]ue c'est beau! que c'est beau!'), his *moi profond* remains intact, sheltered by the bubble of his very own economic non-

existence—for example, by the simple fact that he would never be a welcome customer in the café—which, then, allows for the following socio-critical remark: ‘on dirait que tout l’or du pauvre monde est venu se porter sur ces murs’. From the father’s point of view, this is the (instant’s) essence of things, as synthesised from the epistemological dialectic between himself (the subject) and material modernity, once again, as symbolised by the café (the object). Thus, while he is astonished by the material spectacle, in his conceptual function as a Baudelairean modern hero, he also retains a *distance* from it; so much so, in fact, that he seems to be aware of the pseudo-divine message intrinsic to the café’s decorative interior, which, it can be assumed, is primarily aimed at its customers: like your own servants serve you with their ‘joues rebondies’, you, too, should serve your masters and happiness (objective) will *endure*. The father may only interpret this from the viewpoint of a miserable counterfeit, or, perhaps, copper coin: like the heroes of antiquity, accept your place, accept your function, and happiness (objective) will be *imminent*.

Once again, exactly as was the case in ‘La Fausse Monnaie’, then, from the perspective of those who know how to read the situation (‘l’homme sensible qui sait y lire’), the father’s gaze ignites a violent battle between humility (‘humilité’) and reproach (‘reproches’): the former expressing submission to modern, capitalist, money economy (and its inherent social hierarchy), the latter revolting against this submission, cynically sneering at the correlation between Second Empire economic prosperity and the emergence of the proletariat (‘une masse de gros sols’) as material modernity’s ultimate labour force (‘pauvre monde’). Syntactically speaking, this struggle between subjective individuality and objective reality, between the *moi profond* and the *moi superficiel*, or, indeed, between the Hegelian lord and bondsman is emphasised by Baudelaire’s use of the conditional ‘dirait’: one *could* say that all the gold of the poor world has amassed on these walls; but to do so, explicitly, one would risk upsetting those who own money, which, of course, would, then, give rise to more existential fears. Would the beggar of ‘La Fausse Monnaie’ have survived the day, the week, or the month, had the friend and the narrator not stopped, had empathy not been established and communication not taken place? What would happen to the family of the poor if openly criticising the disparity of wealth and thus the Napoleonic phantasmagoria of objective happiness in the form of the material spectacle?

Be that as it may, the young boy, like his poor father, is also astonished (‘[q]ue c’est beau! que c’est beau!’). But, contrary to his father, the boy is, of course, still a child. He does not have to worry about securing sustenance; for that, he has his father. As a consequence, the boy sees more clearly and more rigidly beyond the objective reality of material modernity, also uttering a socio-critical remark, but, this time, with no conditional in place to infuse caution: ‘mais c’est une maison où peuvent seuls entrer les gens qui ne sont pas comme nous’. From the boy’s (as opposed to the father’s) point of view, then, this is the (instant’s) essence of things: rigid social stratification, symbolised as much by the dynamic between the café’s interior and exterior as it was by the friend’s meticulous sorting of change in ‘La Fausse Monnaie’.⁵³⁹

At this point, only the baby remains. Out of all the three family members, the baby of ‘Les Yeux des pauvres’—with eyes that remind one of Goethe’s symbol of the star, where *hope* ceases only within the symbolic absolute—personifies most *purely* the notion of sheltered subjective individuality and, specifically, its corresponding subjective happiness.⁵⁴⁰ The baby’s eyes express only unfiltered joy (‘joie’) at the sight of all that rambles and shines (‘étinceler’). There is neither gold nor social strata: for the baby, the (instant’s) essence of things *is* subjective happiness. Baudelaire knows this and finds two suitable terms: ‘stupide’, sure, but also ‘profond’.

Once again, up until this point, the experience acquired and the knowledge created via the narrator’s *reasoning with* and mnemonic filtering of (the instant’s) objective reality is grounded in the subject–subject duality between the narrator and the family of the poor, but essentially driven by the subject–object duality between the family of the poor and material modernity. In the following paragraph, as a result of feeding subjective information into the epistemological dialectic between the narrator and the family of the poor—through the medium of eyes—the (unidirectional) communication taking place between the former and the latter—that which the narrator reads in the eyes of the poor—establishes empathy, as regards the family of the poor, and sparks the emotion of love (as opposed to hatred), as regards the lover; the emotion of love, as we know, eventually turning into hatred—the (instant’s) essence of

⁵³⁹ In chapter 4, I have presented a similar argument with regards to the boy of the prose poem ‘L’Horloge’.

⁵⁴⁰ As regards the reference to Goethe and the symbolic absolute, see the section on ‘Perceiving Time and Space: Baudelaire’s Modern Artist and Child’ in chapter 3.

things—as already presented to the reader in the opening paragraph of the poem (‘je vous hais’). The shift from empathy (the family of the poor) and love (the lover) to hatred, then, occurs simultaneously with the shift from subjective happiness to objective happiness—that is, in this particular case, the shift from the subject–subject duality between the narrator and the family of the poor to the subject–subject duality between the narrator and his lover. As was the case in ‘La Fausse Monnaie’ (‘[m]ais celui-ci [l’ami] rompit brusquement ma rêverie en reprenant mes propres paroles’), here, too, objective reality pierces and pops the narrator’s bubble of subjective individuality, subjective evaluation, and, consequentially, also subjective happiness. The poem’s penultimate paragraph, followed only by a single sentence, thus reads as follows:

Les chansonniers disent que le plaisir rend l’âme bonne et amollit le cœur. La chanson avait raison ce soir-là, relativement à moi. Non seulement j’étais attendri par cette famille d’yeux, mais je me sentais un peu honteux de nos verres et de nos carafes, plus grands que notre soif. Je tournais mes regards vers les vôtres, cher amour, pour y lire *ma* pensée; je plongeais dans vos yeux si beaux et si bizarrement doux, dans vos yeux verts, habités par le Caprice et inspirés par la Lune, quand vous me dites: ‘Ces gens-là me sont insupportables avec leurs yeux ouverts comme des portes cochères! Ne pourriez-vous pas prier le maître du café de les éloigner d’ici?’ (318–19, Baudelaire’s emphasis)

Much in the spirit of Idealism, from the perspective of the narrator (‘relativement à moi’), subjective happiness in the form of empathy (the family) and love (the lover) occurs. It is empathy that enables the narrator to acquire experience and to create knowledge on the basis of (unidirectional) communication with the family of the poor through the medium of eyes. The narrator is allowed access to the soul of the poor; an epistemological connection that—in the case of Baudelaire’s modern heroes and, specifically, his modern artist and child—*increases* subjective happiness (‘le plaisir rend l’âme bonne et amollit le cœur’) by *decreasing* objective happiness (‘je me sentais un peu honteux de nos verres et de nos carafes, plus grands que notre soif’).

And this is the crucial moment, when, in ‘Les Yeux des pauvres’, subjective happiness turns into objective happiness, love turns into hatred, and the Lefebvrian notions of

‘critique’ and ‘auto-critique’ merge into one: from within the sphere of subjective happiness, the narrator turns to his lover, not merely seeking to establish a similar sort of subject–subject duality already in place with the family of the poor—a form of silent communication or ‘telecommunication’, as Blood would argue, grounded in the establishment of empathy—but also (and, perhaps, more importantly so) to confirm the possibility thereof (‘[j]e tournais mes regards vers les vôtres, cher amour, pour y lire *ma pensée*’ [Baudelaire’s emphasis]). At this juncture, then, once again, the narrator faces a very similar scenario to the one already addressed in ‘La Fausse Monnaie’. Due to the *rapidité* of material modernity and the lover’s fragmented a priori (just like the friend in ‘La Fausse Monnaie’, here, in her conceptual function as the generic individual), empathy between the narrator and the lover can no longer be established and communication can no longer take place. The epistemological dialectic between the two subjects is interrupted, fragmented, and cannot be completed: ‘Ces gens-là me sont insupportables avec leurs yeux ouverts comme des portes cochères! Ne pourriez-vous par prier le maître du café de les éloigner d’ici?’ The experience acquired and the knowledge created in the subject–subject duality between the narrator and the family of the poor, which is essentially driven by the subject–object duality between the family of the poor and material modernity, can, suddenly, no longer be *communicated*. Individual knowledge can no longer multiply into *common knowledge*, which leads us back to the (instant’s) essence of things from the narrator’s point of view: the emotion of hatred.

The moment the narrator attempts to feed the experience acquired and the knowledge created—firstly, in the subject–object duality between the family of the poor and material modernity, and, secondly, in the subject–subject duality between the family of the poor and himself—into the subject–subject duality between himself and his lover, is also the moment the family’s ‘critique’ of material modernity translates into the narrator’s ‘critique’ of his lover and as such also into an ‘auto-critique’ (Lefebvre). For the narrator knows very well that in order to have an interpersonal, as opposed to monetary relationship with his lover, empathy (‘The ability to understand [comprehend] and share the feelings of another.’ [OED]) has to be established for communication to take place. If that empathy can no longer be established in the sphere of subjective individuality, it has to be established in the sphere of objective reality: material modernity, as symbolised by the café. The poem’s final sentence makes this explicit: ‘Tant il est difficile de s’entendre, mon cher ange, et tant la pensée est incommunicable, même entre gens qui s’aiment!’ (319). Firstly, the (double) use of ‘tant’, here,

creates a correlation between the difficulty of establishing empathy ('difficile de s'entendre'), the corresponding difficulty of communication taking place ('la pensée est incommunicable'), and, of course, the emotion of love ('gens qui s'aiment'). The interpersonal relationship between the narrator and the lover—empathy, here, in the form of love—can only prevail if the lack of subjective individuality and its corresponding subjective happiness is accepted and embraced, and the homogenising omnipresence of objective reality and its corresponding objective happiness is maintained and fostered. Secondly, Baudelaire's emphasis on the possibility of establishing empathy *despite* the lack of subjective individuality and its corresponding subjective happiness ('difficile de s'entendre'; 'la pensée est incommunicable') is highlighted by the key verbs 's'entendre' and 's'aimer'. Both are, of course, reflexive, and both thus play upon the correlation introduced by the use of 'tant': *despite* the difficulty or, indeed, impossibility of comprehending *each other*, there may still be the possibility of loving *each other*.

The antagonism between love and hatred—that is, the hatred between two lovers—with which the poem begins ('je vous hais') is, therefore, not only clearly reflected in the final two paragraphs of 'Les Yeux des pauvres', but also further elaborated upon. As a result of predominantly subjective information circulating within the epistemological dialectic between subject (the narrator) and subject (the lover), empathy is established, here, once again, in the form of love. As is the case for the baby's emotion of joy ('joie'), from this point of view, the narrator's emotion of love *is* subjective happiness. As we know, however, as a consequence of the *rapidité* of material modernity, the epistemological dialectic between two subjects also becomes interrupted and fragmented. Empathy in the sphere of subjective individuality can no longer be established and communication can no longer take place. For the emotion of love to prevail, then, empathy has to be outsourced into the sphere of objective reality, which is precisely the dynamic—or, indeed, dialectic—that will eventually produce the (instant's) essence of things in the form of hatred. The (unidirectional) communication taking place between the narrator and the family of the poor results in the former's realisation that empathy in the form of love between himself and his lover is no longer grounded in subjective individuality and its corresponding subjective happiness, but, first and foremost, in objective reality and its corresponding objective happiness, as symbolised by the café. The narrator *does not* hate the lover, but, rather, the externalised and objectified version of love that is necessary for them to remain lovers. In other words, the narrator hates the lover ('je vous hais') for

intrinsically imposing the necessity to externalise and objectify empathy.⁵⁴¹ The emotion of hatred—the (instant’s) essence of things—referred to so clearly at the beginning of the poem, is thus not merely directed at the lover, but, rather, at the epistemological dialectic(s) that eventually lead to the externalisation and objectification of empathy in material modernity. And at this very moment, the narrator realises that the emotion of hatred is also directed at himself. What one encounters is the Lefebvrian notion of ‘auto-critique’.

‘The Metropolis and Mental Life’ (1903): The Blasé (and the Dandy)

*one examines the body of culture with reference to the soul [...]*⁵⁴²

In my respective approaches to the notions of ‘exchange’ and ‘communication’ in the prose poems ‘La Fausse Monnaie’ and ‘Les Yeux des pauvres’, I argued that subjective information is fed into the epistemological dialectic between subject and subject, for example, through the medium of eyes. Indeed, we all must have heard it before: ‘the eyes are the window to your soul’. While it is uncertain to whom one should attribute the axiom’s indisputable fame, its relevance in the context of the present discussion seems rather straightforward.⁵⁴³ Particularly, that is to say, when one has begun said argument with reflections on Simmelian thought and, specifically, the sociologist’s *Philosophy of Money*. Here, as we know, Simmel essentially argues that in modern, capitalist, money economy, interpersonal relationships are replaced by monetary relationships. In an essay that appeared much later than his *Philosophy*, ‘The Metropolis and Mental Life’, then, Simmel moves away from material modernity’s idiosyncratic monetary representation of interpersonal relationships in order to focus, more specifically, on modern city existence:

⁵⁴¹ It may be worth pointing out that the externalisation and objectification of empathy referred to, here, also occurs in my reading of ‘La Fausse Monnaie’, when the intensity or ‘quality’ of empathy is equated with the size or ‘quantity’ (Bergson) of the narrator’s and the friend’s monetary gift to the beggar. Again, for an enlightening discussion of the aporia of giving a gift, specifically in the context of ‘La Fausse Monnaie’, see Jacques Derrida, *Given Time. I, Counterfeit Money*.

⁵⁴² Georg Simmel, ‘The Metropolis and Mental Life’ (1903), in *The Blackwell City Reader*, ed. by Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson (Oxford and Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), p. 11. All further references will be provided in-text.

⁵⁴³ Potential candidates range far and wide from Cicero to Emerson.

The metropolis has always been the seat of money economy because the many-sidedness and concentration of commercial activity have given the medium of exchange an importance which it could not have acquired in the commercial aspects of rural life. (12)

The reason why, at this point, it seems useful and important to return to Simmel is twofold. Firstly, in his ‘The Metropolis and Mental Life’, Simmel provides a sociologico-psychological answer to the aesthetico-theoretical discourse on modern city existence as explicitly initiated by Baudelaire in his *dédicace* to Houssaye. By now, we have referred to it a number of times, and suffice it to remind the reader, here, that the *dédicace* addresses the poet’s aesthetico-methodological approach the relationship of cause and effect between external, physical, spatial and internal, psychological, temporal fragmentation. Secondly, to say it in just one word: blasé. The concept of the blasé is Simmel’s answer to the very query the *dédicace* raises: ‘There is perhaps no psychic phenomenon which is so unconditionally reserved to the city as the blasé outlook’ (14). The blasé, therefore, not merely refers us back to Baudelaire’s ‘miracle d’une prose poétique’, complementing the present enquiry with a slightly more sociological—perhaps even scientific, though not necessarily empirical—approach to the matter, but will serve, moreover, as a helpful transition from the rather isolated notions of ‘exchange’ and ‘communication’ towards a slightly broader perspective on the socio-collective experience of modernity (Kaplan) in Baudelaire: the poet’s perception of ‘Society and Existence from the Viewpoint of Death’, as is addressed in the subsequent section.

Baudelaire uses the term ‘blasé’ on various occasions throughout his œuvre, though he never actually intends to provide a fully-fledged definition of the concept behind the term. It thus comes as a relief that meaning and application seem to vary only slightly, if at all. In ‘Fusées’ (posthumously in 1867), Baudelaire states: ‘Le mélange du grotesque et du tragique est agréable à l’esprit comme les discordances aux oreilles *blasées*’⁵⁴⁴ (my emphasis). In ‘Choix de Maximes consolantes sur l’amour’ (1846), he writes: ‘Pour certains esprits plus curieux et plus *blasés*, la jouissance de la laideur provient d’un sentiment encore plus mystérieux, qui est la soif de l’inconnu, et le goût de l’horrible’⁵⁴⁵ (my emphasis). Moreover, in ‘La Morale du joujou’ (1853): ‘Quelle simplicité de mise en scène! et n’y a-t-il pas de quoi

⁵⁴⁴ ‘XII’, in ‘Fusées’, in *BOC*, I, 661.

⁵⁴⁵ ‘Choix de Maximes consolantes sur l’amour’, in *BOC*, I, 546–52 (pp. 548–49).

faire rougir de son impuissante imagination ce public *blasé* qui exige des théâtres une perfection physique et mécanique, et ne conçoit pas que les pièces de Shakespeare puissent rester belles avec un appareil d'une simplicité barbare?'⁵⁴⁶ (my emphasis). In his 'Exposition universelle 1855: beaux-arts', the penultimate sentence in the section on Ingres reads as follows: 'Aux excentriques, aux *blasés*, à mille esprits délicats toujours en quête de nouveauté, même de nouveautés amères, il plaisait par la bizarrerie'⁵⁴⁷ (my emphasis). And, finally, in the prose poem 'Une mort héroïque' (1863): 'Tout ce public si *blasé* et frivole qu'il pût être, subit bientôt la toute-puissante domination de l'artiste'⁵⁴⁸ (my emphasis). In all of these instances, the denotations and connotations of the term 'blasé' are indirect, to say the least; yet, for all intents and purposes, what seems to crystallise is the idea of a society removed from any conceptions of existential profundity—from any conceptions connected to the sphere of the *moi profond*—as if nothing ever truly counts anymore except the fleeting nature of novelty and *étonnement*.⁵⁴⁹ The clearest manifestation of such a tentative reading may, perhaps, be the use of 'blasé' in conjunction with 'frivole' in 'Une mort héroïque'.

Simmel, I argue, would agree with such an approach to the Baudelairean *blasé* and begins his analysis with the following statement:

The deepest problems of modern life flow from the attempt of the individual to maintain the independence and individuality of existence against the sovereign powers of society, against the weight of the historical heritage and the external culture and technique of life. This antagonism represents the most modern form of the conflict, which primitive man must carry on with nature for his own bodily existence. (11)

To rephrase this in the terminology applied throughout this study, we may say that, for Simmel, '[t]he deepest problems of modern life' are based on the attempt to shelter subjective individuality from objective reality, the *moi profond* ('independence and individuality') from the *moi superficiel* ('sovereign powers of society'); Simmel's 'deepest problems of modern

⁵⁴⁶ 'La Morale du joujou', in *BOC*, I, 581–87 (p. 583).

⁵⁴⁷ 'Ingres', in 'Exposition universelle 1855: beaux-arts', in *BOC*, II, 583–90 (p. 589).

⁵⁴⁸ 'Une mort héroïque', in *Le Spleen de Paris*, *BOC*, I, 319–23 (p. 322).

⁵⁴⁹ The reader should be reminded, here, that Baudelaire's use of 'étonner' in the context of photography initiated our transition from a priori to a posteriori and from the individual to society.

life', it seems, are precisely what informs the Baudelairean experience of modernity, as discussed throughout this study. In this context, for the sociologist, too, the struggle to shelter subjective individuality from objective reality is essentially manifested at a psychological level, or, as the title to his essay suggests, as a form of 'mental life', specifically linked to modern city existence. Simmel goes on to explain that

[t]he psychological foundation, upon which the metropolitan individuality is erected, is the intensification of emotional life due to the swift and continuous shift of external and internal stimuli. (11)

Once again, for the sake of clarity, one should project this statement onto the terms and concepts applied throughout my study. Here, the 'psychological foundation' refers to the generic individual's fragmented *a priori*. In Simmel, as much as in my own argument, the 'metropolitan individuality', then, is, in fact, a non-individuality as it signifies the decay and depletion of subjective individuality, subsequently leading to Benjaminian socio-collective homogenisation as a consequence of the *rapidité* of material modernity.⁵⁵⁰

Terminologically speaking, Simmel complicates the matter by referring to 'metropolitan individuality' as an 'intensification of emotional life'. This is, in fact, a most necessary opportunity to clarify a concern that might have crossed the reader's mind by now: the mutual exclusiveness of subjective individuality and objective reality as well as the mutual dependence of Baudelairean *imagination* and the Idealist epistemological concept of *reason*. Within (and with an emphasis on) the theoretico-philosophical model I propose in this study, the 'intensification of emotional life' connotes affiliation with subjective individuality and thus the modern artist's *imagination*. In Simmel, however, it does not. 'Intensification', here, is synonymous with the Benjaminian shock and its corresponding trauma, denoting an experience that is 'too intense' for the generic individual's subjective individuality to cope with. In this context, again, one is not merely reminded of Baudelaire's use of the term 's'adapter' in the *dédicace* to Houssaye, but also of the famous parenthesis of the verse poem 'Le Cygne'—'(la forme d'une ville // Change plus vite, hélas! Que le cœur d'un mortel)'—highlighted by Ross Chambers in his take on Baudelaire's *le beau moderne*, as addressed in chapter 2. Be that as it

⁵⁵⁰ This line of argument is presented in chapter 3.

may, in the context of Simmel's 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', this means that 'internal stimuli' *adapt* to 'external stimuli': external, physical, spatial fragmentation turns into internal, psychological, temporal fragmentation, and *imagination* turns into rationality. Simmel states a little further down the line: 'Instead of reacting emotionally, the metropolitan type reacts primarily in a *rational* manner' (12; my emphasis). The terminological and conceptual twists and turns, here, seem endless, and I admit to perceiving inconsistencies in the theoretical setup that allows Simmel to argue his case. Nonetheless, it is important to underline, at this point, that the antagonists of subjective individuality and objective reality, *imagination* (Baudelaire) and rationality (Simmel), are connected via the individual's ability *to reason* in the Idealist epistemological sense of the term—that is, via the individual's epistemological engagement, or, once again, in the case of modern aesthetic production, the modern artist's mnemonic filtering. It is *reason* that allows for subjective individuality (the *moi profond*) to be sheltered from objective reality (the *moi superficiel*) and, again, in the case of modern aesthetic production, for the latter to be infused with the former via mnemonic filtering.

Once these terminological and conceptual difficulties are clarified, Simmel's argument seems to align perfectly. For the sociologist, external, physical, spatial fragmentation' translates into 'the rapid telescoping of changing images', that is, 'violent stimuli' (11).⁵⁵¹ The instant is what is 'grasped at a single glance'. As is the case in Baudelaire's *dédicace*, for Simmel, too, modern city existence is the individual's all-determining physical or spatial surrounding:

To the extent that the metropolis creates these psychological conditions—with every crossing of the street, with the tempo and multiplicity of economic, occupational and social life—it creates in the sensory foundations of mental life [...] a deep contrast with the slower, more habitual, more smoothly flowing rhythm of the sensory mental phase of small town and rural existence. (11–12)

As he had already done in his *Philosophy*, here, Simmel addresses the issue of the individual's high quantity of low-quality relationships as a symptom of modern, capitalist, money economy:

⁵⁵¹ On the concept of violence, see my outline of Debarati Sanyal's *The Violence of Modernity: Baudelaire, Irony, and the Politics of Form* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006) in the subsection on 'Time, Trauma, Violence' in chapter 2.

‘the last remnants of domestic production and direct barter of goods have been eradicated and [...] the amount of production on direct personal order is reduced daily’ (13); ‘[t]he relationships and concerns of the typical metropolitan resident are so manifold and complex [...] their relationships and activities intertwine with one another into a many-membered organism [crowd, society]’ (13). At this point, objectified time is also brought into the mix: ‘the lack of the most punctuality in promises and performances would cause the whole to break down into an inextricable chaos’ (13). Indeed, prior to introducing the mental state of being blasé as material modernity’s ultimate psychological consequence, Simmel concisely summarises my approach to the relationship of cause and effect between external, physical, spatial and internal, psychological, temporal fragmentation, as addressed throughout this study:

But here too there emerge those conclusions which are in general the whole task of this discussion, namely, that every event, however restricted to this *superficial* level it may appear [Bergson], comes immediately into contact with the depths of the soul, and that the most banal externalities are, in the last analysis, bound up with the final decisions concerning the meaning and the style of life. Punctuality, calculability and exactness, which are required by the complications and extensiveness of metropolitan life, are not only most intimately connected with its capitalistic and intellectualistic [objective reality, rationality] character but also colour the content of life and are conducive to the exclusion of those irrational, instinctive, sovereign human traits and impulses [subjective individuality, *imagination*] which originally seek to determine the form of life from *within* [time, *durée*, the *moi profond*] instead of receiving it from the *outside* in a general, schematically precise form [space, the *moi superficiel*]. (13; my emphasis)

In essence, then, these are the ‘deepest problems of modern life’, which Simmel addresses in his opening remarks on the individual’s attempt to ‘maintain the independence and individuality of [their] existence against the sovereign powers of society’.

Referring back to this duality between the individual and modern society, between internal and external stimuli, Simmel introduces his conception of the blasé as a consequence of their ‘rapidity [*rapidité*] and contradictoriness, they force the nerves to make [...] violent responses, tear them about so brutally that they exhaust their last reserves of strength and,

remaining in the same milieu, *do not have time* for new reserves to form’ (my emphasis). This is the theoretical foundation of the Benjaminian shock and its corresponding trauma. Remember that Benjamin was a student of Simmel. What emerges, from these reflections, is that ‘[t]he essence of the blasé attitude is *indifference* towards the distinction between things’ (14; my emphasis). The key term, here, is ‘indifference’ as the antagonist to the ‘difference’—or, to remind the reader, once again, of Chambers’ approach to Baudelaire’s *le beau moderne*—to the ‘distance’ between, precisely, subjective individuality and objective reality, the *moi profond* and the *moi superficiel*. The individual’s blasé attitude is a psychological indifference towards the decreasing difference or distance between subjective individuality and objective reality. It is also the socio-collective indifference towards any form of existential profundity, as tentatively referred to by Baudelaire in his use of the term ‘blasé’. In order to describe the blasé individual’s situation, Simmel helpfully applies a well-known term: in material modernity, society becomes ‘homogenous’ (14). To refer, one final time, to Chambers, who, as we know, grounds his analysis in the Idealist epistemological tradition: ‘The paradox is this: to know an object is to become alienated from that object. This is because the condition of all knowledge is that it be mediated; a condition whose consequence is that the object becomes alienated from “itself”’.⁵⁵² In Hegelian dialectic, becoming blasé thus means the object remains stuck in the state of being for an other.

Much of the argument elaborated throughout this study is, therefore, absorbed by Simmel’s concept of the blasé, down to the sociologist’s own take on modern, capitalist, money economy as well as its Idealist epistemological implications in the context of ‘exchange’ and ‘communication’, as addressed earlier in this chapter. Regarding exchange, Simmel perceives the psychological indifference of the blasé to be represented by the universal eligibility of money—that is, more specifically, by its *characterless* nature:

⁵⁵² Ross Chambers, ‘Modern Beauty: Baudelaire, the Everyday, Cultural Studies’, *Romance Studies*, 26.3 (July 2008), 249–70 (p. 249).

[The blasé] is the correct subjective reflection of a complete money economy to the extent that money takes the place of all the manifoldness of things and expresses all qualitative distinctions between them in the distinction of how much [quantitative].⁵⁵³ (14)

As for communication, the same indifference towards the ‘qualitative distinctions’ between the ‘manifoldness of *things*’ (my emphasis), as represented by money, occurs also with regards to the manifoldness of *individuals*. Once again, with the decay and depletion of subjective individuality as a consequence of the generic individual’s fragmented a priori—as a consequence of the *rapidité* of material modernity—and, specifically, with the replacement of interpersonal relationships by monetary relationships, just like money, society, too, becomes *characterless*. Here, for Simmel, indifference turns into a ‘slight aversion, a mutual strangeness and repulsion which, in a close contact which has arisen any way whatever, can break out into *hatred* and conflict (15; my emphasis). The mention of ‘hatred’, here, serves as a welcome reminder of the subject–subject duality between the narrator and the lover in my reading of ‘Les Yeux des pauvres’. Empathy turns into antipathy, which is the ‘latent adumbration of actual antagonism since it brings about the sort of distancing and deflection without which this type of life could not be carried on at all’ (15).⁵⁵⁴

Baudelaire knows this. Leading us back to the theoretico-philosophical beginnings of this study, the poet merges the exclusive faculties of the modern artist and the child with the homogenising forces of modern, capitalist, money economy in the notion of dandyism: ‘une institution en dehors des lois’ for those ‘[qui] possèdent ainsi, à leur gré et dans une vaste mesure, *le temps et l’argent*’⁵⁵⁵ (my emphasis). The key element of this passage is, of course, ‘le temps et l’argent’. Consciously or not, Baudelaire’s modern artist and child continuously foster their perception of internal time in the form of *durée* via the faculties of *rêve*, *rêverie*, *ivresse*, and *imagination*, sheltering subjective individuality from objective reality; the generic individual, however, loses touch with these faculties—they submit to the fragmentation of

⁵⁵³ In a slightly different, yet highly complementary sense, Simmel’s use of the term ‘qualitative’ serves as a helpful reminder of Henri Bergson’s concept of *durée* as an internal, *qualitative* reflection of external, *quantitative* singularities or fragments. See the section on the ‘Fragmented a priori and the Bergsonian Selves’ in chapter 3. See also, ‘The Blasé Attitude’, in *The Philosophy of Money*, pp. 256–57.

⁵⁵⁴ Simmel’s use of the term ‘distancing’, here, should not be confused with Chambers’ concept of ‘distance’, as frequently referred to. The former simply describes the idea of individuals ‘growing apart’.

⁵⁵⁵ ‘Le Dandy’, in ‘Le Peintre de la vie moderne’, in *BOC*, II, 709–12 (p. 710).

durée—in order to embrace modern, capitalist, money economy, and to join the socio-collective, homogenous hunt for the next best thing. In material modernity, the generic individual is a commodity fetishist. For Baudelaire, then, the dandy personifies an intersection: the dandy has time as well as money—‘le temps et l’argent’—‘dans une vaste mesure’, and the latter has the power to shield the former from the Benjaminian shock and its corresponding trauma. The dandy *is not* the Marxist factory worker, continuously facing external, physical, spatial as well as internal, psychological, temporal fragmentation, as symbolised by the conveyor belt; the dandy’s a priori is never truly fragmented. As such, the dandy, too, is a Baudelairean modern hero, situated outside of modern society—dandyism is ‘une institution en dehors des lois’—as a result of the privileged abundance of ‘le temps et l’argent’. As Baudelaire writes in ‘Le Peintre de la vie moderne’ (1863): ‘Le dandysme est le dernier éclat d’héroïsme dans les décadences.’⁵⁵⁶

There are two further mentions of the blasé in the Baudelairean œuvre, which further reinforce this claim. Both are to be found in the by now well-known ‘Le Peintre’. The first links ‘le dandy’, specifically, to the blasé: ‘Le dandy est blasé, ou il feint de l’être, par politique et raison de caste’.⁵⁵⁷ The second occurs a little later, and, again, specifically addresses ‘le dandy’:

L’Homme riche, oisif, et qui, même blasé, n’a pas d’autre occupation que de courir à la piste du bonheur; l’homme élevé dans le luxe et accoutumé dès sa jeunesse à l’obéissance des autres homme, celui enfin qui n’a pas d’autre profession que l’élégance, jouira toujours dans tous les temps, d’une physionomie distincte, tout à fait à part.

The dandy is the modern artist, the child, and the generic individual in one: a sort of all-in-one entity fully in the grasp of material modernity and the fatalism it represents—in short, the socio-collective, homogenising hunt for the next best thing (‘[il] n’a pas d’autre occupation que de courir à la piste du bonheur’, ‘accoutumé dès sa jeunesse à l’obéissance des autres homme’)—but, at the same time, remaining *distanced* from it. In this case, however, that distance is not achieved on the basis of *rêve*, *rêverie*, *ivresse*, and *imagination*, but, rather, stems from the

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 711.

⁵⁵⁷ ‘L’Artiste, homme du monde, homme des foules et enfant’, in ‘Le Peintre’, in *BOC*, II, 687–94 (p. 691).

abundance of ‘le temps et l’argent’ (‘l’homme élevé dans le luxe’). Contrary to what was suggested just a moment ago, this also renders the dandy neither modern artist, nor child, nor generic individual. For Baudelaire, the dandy is a hypocrite ‘[qui] sourira comme le Lacédémonien sous la morsure du renard’.⁵⁵⁸ According to Benjamin, it is the dandy, too, who would walk a tortoise on a leash through the arcades, allowing the animal to determine the walking speed. Why? For no specific reason at all: simply because they can.

Darkness There: Society and Existence from the Viewpoint of Death

*Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,
“Sir,” said I, “or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you”—here I opened wide the door;—
Darkness there and nothing more.⁵⁵⁹*

Towards the end of this study, then, and in the context of material modernity’s homogenised, blasé society, it is time to return, more specifically, to the notion of darkness, as initially introduced in chapter 1. So far, it served as an intellectual stimulus, or metaphoric framework in order to address the epistemological challenges of acquiring experience and creating knowledge in material modernity: the generic individual becoming increasingly enveloped by epistemological darkness as a consequence of their fragmented a priori, itself a consequence of the *rapidité* of material modernity. Moreover, it prompted reflection on the way in which those challenges are, then, aesthetically represented by Baudelaire in his function as the first poet of modernity. But, throughout this study, I have also hinted at a secondary connotation of the term ‘darkness’, or, rather, a secondary set of connotations addressing the notion of fatalism as a form of existential, socio-collective determinism. In the context of Poe’s ‘The Raven’, apart from the poem’s overall dark, fatalistic, and deterministic atmosphere, this is particularly highlighted by the repeated and inescapable croaking of ‘nevermore’. It seems to me that Baudelaire’s fatalistic concerns regarding modern human existence tie more than just loosely

⁵⁵⁸ ‘Le Dandy’, in ‘Le Peintre’, in *BOC*, II, 711.

⁵⁵⁹ Edgar Allan Poe, ‘The Raven’, in *The Complete Tales and Poems* (New York, NY: The Modern Library, 1938), pp. 943–46 (p. 943; ll. 19–24).

into the epistemological concerns discussed up until this point, and I am inclined to argue that neither can be discussed without an appropriate consideration of the other. In the following section, I shall thus further broaden my perspective on the Baudelairean experience of modernity—on the poet’s a posteriori, specifically—by providing concluding reflections on its sociological, as opposed to epistemological dimension. Essentially, I shall propose what one may refer to as a theory of Baudelairean fatalism.

The term ‘fatalism’ is not frequently associated with the Baudelairean œuvre and, indeed, the poet himself uses the term ‘fatalisme’ only twice with vague references to a certain ‘oriental fatalism’ as some form of laziness or resignation.⁵⁶⁰ Yet, commentators frequently recognise Baudelaire’s ‘obsession with original sin’, as Françoise Meltzer has put it,⁵⁶¹ which may implicate a certain tendency towards what is, in the grand narrative of Christianity and Western culture, most commonly understood as fatalistic: humanity’s ever-nagging curiosity as the origin of socio-cultural decay and ultimately existential failure. In Baudelaire, this undertone is often interpreted as a deep socio-cultural pessimism, leaving commentators such as Walter Benjamin, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Georges Bataille with impressions that remind one more of a fatalistic or deterministic stance: ‘with Baudelaire, a taboo is placed on the future’ (Benjamin); ‘he chose to consider his life from the point of view of *death* as though it had been suddenly frozen by a premature end’ (Sartre; my emphasis); ‘in Baudelaire the denial of Good was basically a denial of the primacy of the future’ (Bataille).⁵⁶² As F. W. J. Hemmings states

⁵⁶⁰ Baudelaire uses ‘fatalisme’ twice. Once in the ‘Salon de 1846’, when describing Alexandre-Gabriel Decamps’ ‘je ne sais quel tableau turc’ as ‘plein de paresse et de fatalisme’ as well as in ‘Le Peintre’, when referring to ‘la femme errante’ and ‘la femme révoltée’ as ‘fumant des cigarettes pour tuer le temps, avec la résignation du fatalisme oriental.’ See *BOC*, II, 415–96 (pp. 450 and 721). The term ‘fatalité’ is used more frequently and in various ways, generally denoting that something is finite, usually in a negative way. The greatest difference to the term ‘fatalisme’ is that it refers most often to individual destinies, though, exceptions exist such as when he cites Hugo in his criticism of *Les Misérables*: ‘Tant qu’il existera, par le fait des lois et des mœurs, une damnation sociale créant artificiellement, en pleine civilisation, des enfers et compliquant d’une fatalité humaine la destinée qui est divine... tant qu’il y aura sur la terre ignorance et misère, des livres de la nature de celui-ci pourront ne pas être inutiles.’ See *BOC*, II, 217–24 (p. 218). Baudelaire follows this up by lamenting: “‘Tant que...!’ Hélas! Autant dire TOUJOURS! Mais ce n’est pas ici le lieu d’analyser de telles questions.’ The adjective ‘fatal(e)’ is used in a similar manner to ‘fatalité’, both leading towards failure or disaster. The adverb ‘fatalement’ is also used rather frequently, and in most cases simply denotes ‘inevitable’.

⁵⁶¹ Françoise Meltzer, *Seeing Double: Baudelaire’s Modernity* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), p. 12.

⁵⁶² Benjamin, ‘Central Park’, trans. by Edmund Jephcott and Howard Eiland, in *The Writer of Modern Life*, p. 135; Jean-Paul Sartre, *Baudelaire*, trans. by Martin Turnell (New York, NY: New Directions, 1967), p. 161; Georges Bataille, ‘Baudelaire’, in *Literature and Evil*, trans. by Alistair Hamilton (London: Marion Boyars, 2001), p. 58.

in his biography of the poet, ‘there is little evidence that Baudelaire seriously visualised the afterlife in conventional terms of heaven and hell’ and, indeed, the idea that the future had no place in Baudelaire’s vision of modern human existence thus makes it unlikely that the poet perceived humanity’s predetermined end as a punishment brought upon us by divine powers.⁵⁶³ On the contrary, as has been illustrated throughout this study, Baudelaire’s socio-cultural concerns, grounded in the socio-collective experience of modernity, were of a more fundamental—and thus, perhaps, metaphysical or a priori—dimension, addressing modern human existence at its very core.

In order to initiate this analytical shift of focus, it is necessary to turn to the longest fragment of Baudelaire’s intimate journal, ‘Fusées’ of which the first few lines read as follows:

*Le monde va finir. La seule raison pour laquelle il pourrait durer, c’est qu’il existe. Que cette raison est faible, comparée à toutes celles qui annoncent le contraire, particulièrement à celle-ci: qu’est-ce que le monde a désormais à faire sous le ciel?*⁵⁶⁴ (my emphasis)

The poet seems to be sure: this world will come to an end. Not because a divine fist will turn it into fire and brimstone, nor because warfare and socio-political upheaval will reduce all of civilisation into ‘[d]es ruines herbues’;⁵⁶⁵ a point he makes early on in the same fragment of ‘Fusées’. Rather, what concerns Baudelaire are questions addressing the purpose of human existence. In material modernity, specifically, what task has humanity set for itself? What is the force that drives us? And where does it drive us to? The poet shares his view most violently in ‘Au Lecteur’,⁵⁶⁶ the first poem of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, where he addresses his readership and, by extension, all of modern society including himself (‘—hypocrite lecteur,—mon semblable,—mon frère !’). The poem begins with the following stanza:

⁵⁶³ F. W. J. Hemmings, *Baudelaire the Damned: A Biography* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1982), p. viii.

⁵⁶⁴ ‘XV’, in ‘Fusées’, in *BOC*, I, 663–67 (p. 665).

⁵⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁶ ‘Au Lecteur’, in *Les Fleurs du Mal*, in *BOC*, I, 5–6 (p. 5).

La sottise, l'erreur, le péché, la lésine,
Occupent nos esprits et travaillent nos corps,
Et nous alimentons nos aimables remords,
Comme les mendiants nourrissent leur vermine.

Baudelaire does not see the intentions—good or evil, for that matter—necessary to furnish humanity with a task and thus human existence with a purpose. All that seems to be at the centre of our attention is '[l]a sottise, l'erreur, le péché, la lésine'. The poem continues to paint an opulent picture of how modern society revolves around its own egocentrism without realising or, even worse, without caring ('Nos péchés sont têtus, nos repentirs sont lâches' [l. 5]). As Satan's puppets ('C'est le Diable qui tient les fils qui nous remuent!' [l. 13]), humans move only in one direction: towards hell ('Chaque jour vers l'Enfer nous descendons un pas' [l. 15]). For Baudelaire, this seems to be the only outlook recognisable on the 'canevas banal de nos pitieux destins' (l. 27): a fatalistic outlook, to say the least. In the last stanza, then, the poet identifies the origin of all this evil; the force, or lack thereof, that drives human existence: 'C'est l'Ennui!' (l. 37), he cries out, and instantly coins a term that runs like a golden thread through his entire œuvre.

The concept of ennui links directly to Damian Catani's concept of the ethics of vice, discussed in chapter 2,⁵⁶⁷ as the modern artist's primary source of aesthetic inspiration in material modernity. As such, the critic explains: '[T]he ennui that characterises the modern condition can be overcome through the urban vice that is also a product of this very modernity'.⁵⁶⁸ 'Ennui', here, designates and defines *spleen* in Baudelaire; and the *spleen* of modern human existence is, of course, absolutely key in the context of Baudelairean fatalism as it refers us back to the question asked in 'Fusées': 'qu'est-ce que le monde a désormais à faire sous le ciel?' If *spleen* and ennui are what Baudelaire perceives as the underlying socio-collective predicament that defines modern human existence, then, clearly the answer must be: nothing. There is no purpose, no task humanity strives to achieve, for Baudelaire only sees a void denoting the meaninglessness of modern human existence in rather absolute terms.

⁵⁶⁷ See in particular the section on 'Second Empire Aesthetics'.

⁵⁶⁸ I cited this statement before in the section on 'Second Empire Aesthetics' in chapter 2. Damian Catani, *Evil: A History in Modern French Literature and Thought* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 46.

For the French philosopher André Hirt, author of an extensive essay on the ‘Le monde va finir’ fragment of ‘Fusées’, Baudelaire’s perception of the meaninglessness of modern human existence (his subjective individuality), is closely interrelated with the social, cultural, political, ethical, and economic traits that are idiosyncratic to the period of his lifetime (his objective reality). For Hirt, however, Baudelaire’s objective reality must include the subjective individuality of contemporaries as long as their ‘subjective individualitie-s’ are made public in some form or shape—for example, as an artwork or a newspaper article. Almost in passing, then, Hirt provides not merely a final nuance to the overall argument, as presented throughout this study, but also to this chapter’s Hegelian-derived focus on the epistemological dialectic between subject and object as well as subject and subject. In short, what Hirt makes explicit, here, is that one’s objective reality is never exclusively objective as it always includes objects that have emerged from the subjective individualities of contemporaries (such as, once again, an artwork or a newspaper article). For the philosopher, this also means that subjective individuality must always be a sort of socio-collective phenomenon, a *Zeitgeist* that echoes through history, continuously defending its subjectively defined value-systems against the hegemony of objective reality. In other words and with a Kantian twist: one’s perception of objective reality—one’s *a posteriori*—is, in fact, nothing but a mere reflection, a shadow of the accumulation of all of society’s ‘*a posteriori*-s’. The term Hirt uses to describe this phenomenon is ‘*écholalique*’, originally used in psychology, and denoting ‘meaningless repetition of another person’s spoken words as a symptom of psychiatric disorder’. Its relevance for my own discussion is, then, in referring to the continuous circulation of subjective information within the totality of all epistemological dialects between subjects and objects as well as subjects and subjects. Ultimately, this leads to the socio-collective phenomenon we have, so far, referred to as *common knowledge*—that is, individual knowledge as multiplied by the crowd. With reference to the sonnet ‘A une passante’, Hirt clarifies:

Il aura fallu, pour Baudelaire, chercher et reconnaître ce qui passe en lui, ce dont il est lui-même le passeur. Quelle vérité, en effet, est en mesure d’apparaître et de se laisser comprendre? Car Baudelaire, en son originalité et sa singularité, n’est pas seul.⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁹ André Hirt, *Baudelaire: Le Monde va finir* (Paris: Éditions Kimé, 2010), p. 8.

Not only does Hirt's reference to 'de se laisser comprendre' remind one strongly of subject–subject dualities as my Idealist epistemological approach to the Lefebvrian notion of 'auto-critique', as addressed, previously, in my reading of 'Les Yeux des pauvres', but also makes a case for Baudelaire's nihilist vision of the future. However fierce and brutal the poet's perception of modern human existence might have been, in the end, it was a socio-cultural outlook based on the socio-collective experience of his time. Baudelaire's experience of modernity, in other words, functions as a representation of the Second Empire's socio-cultural status quo.

But I am adding these additional layers of complexity not merely in order to contextualise my claim that there is a notion of fatalism intrinsic to the Baudelairean œuvre, but also because it leads the way to an understanding of more frequent and well-known Baudelairean terminology. Baudelaire, as we know by now, absorbed with great attention everything related to the urban evil (Catani) surrounding him. His subjective individuality was moulded by years of engagement with the arts and further shaped by the feeling of solitude and lack of social affinity, which the poet had experienced increasingly since childhood. Moreover, Baudelaire's extreme ethico-political sensitivity, addressed in chapter 2 with reference to Delacroix,⁵⁷⁰ surely, aided in this process. It is this subjective individuality that allowed Baudelaire to observe with great clarity the kaleidoscopic dance of industrialisation, mass-commodification, moral decay, and profound socio-political upheaval—and to label the objective reality of his period as *progrès* and later *modernité*. These are terms that have, to this day, by no means lost their accuracy and socio-political poignancy; and they are terms, of course, that have led to the numerous scholarly endeavours scrutinising the Baudelairean œuvre from the viewpoint of modernity and material modernity, specifically, including this very study. For Baudelaire, *progrès* and *modernité* are synonyms referring to an objective reality that is nothing but a simulacrum—if even that—of its former self. The poet writes in 'Fusées':

La mécanique nous aura tellement américanisés, le progrès aura si bien atrophié en nous toute la partie spirituelle, que rien parmi les rêveries sanguinaires, sacrilèges, ou anti-naturelles des utopistes ne pourra être comparé à ses résultats positifs.⁵⁷¹

⁵⁷⁰ See in particular the section on 'Second Empire Aesthetics'.

⁵⁷¹ 'XV', in 'Fusées', in *BOC*, I, 665–66.

Baudelaire condemns the impact of *progrès* on society, and the *modernité* that emerges from this dilemma. For him, it erases the necessity of, or, perhaps, the opportunity for a constant epistemological dialectic between subjective individuality ('la partie spirituelle') and objective reality ('le progrès'), the former simply being overrun by the *rapidité* of latter. As we know, in consequence, modern human existence is increasingly driven by the (monetary [Simmel]) value-systems of objective reality, leaving the generic individual in the mental state of being blasé. From an Idealist epistemological perspective, at this point, one may encounter the core of Baudelairean fatalism:

[C]e n'est pas particulièrement par des institutions politiques que se manifesterà *la ruine universelle*, ou *le progrès universel*; car peu m'importe le nom. Ce sera par *l'avilissement des cœurs*.⁵⁷² (my emphasis)

Without any further explanation necessary, the 'avilissement des cœurs' referred to, here, seems to echo strongly in what we have, so far, described as the decay and depletion of subjective individuality in material modernity. It emphasises Baudelaire's awareness of the generic individual being turned into a faceless phantom in the crowd, trying, breathlessly, to comply with the dictates of *progrès* and *modernité*; it stands for the replacement of subjective individuality by objective reality; and it addresses directly the socio-collective predicament of *spleen* and ennui as a result of this subordination; for what purpose, what excitement is there if we cannot any longer follow our hearts?

Considering Baudelaire's continuous direct and indirect references to the decay and depletion of subjective individuality—emphasised above and highlighted throughout this study—it becomes clear that the notion of fatalism, as I argue, intrinsic to the poet's œuvre, revolves around questions of free will. For the sociologists Émile Durkheim and Max Weber, two highly influential figures in the establishment of sociology as an academic discipline in the late nineteenth century, a lack of free will was one of the major concerns for societies throughout history. Diachronically speaking, for Durkheim and Weber, the increasing absence of the individual's intellectual self-awareness—in the context of material modernity, the fragmentation of the generic individual's a priori on a socio-collective scale—provided the

⁵⁷² Ibid., p. 666.

conceptual framework in which social bonds were established. Both thought of the term ‘fatalism’ as a suitable description. For Durkheim, fatalism simply denoted the individual’s subordination to empirical (over-) regulation on a political plane; for Weber, meanwhile, it was a ‘psychological consequence of theology’, of the indestructible belief in the guidance of divine powers.⁵⁷³ Interestingly, in a Baudelairean sense, these are almost antagonistic perspectives, considering that the poet perceived the abandonment of religion (‘la partie spirituelle’) as the crucial step towards domination by objective reality (*progrès* and *modernité*); and a step, therefore, ultimately causing the reawakening of that same blasphemous curiosity, which, initially, led to the consumption of a forbidden fruit. For Durkheim, specifically, the arrival at the age of mass-consumerism was a deeply political topic and the moulding of socio-collective conscience for political interests (as opposed to religious guidance) is, then, in a broader and, perhaps, anachronistic sense, what Baudelaire referred to as *progress* and *modernité*: a development, for the time being, climaxing in the economic paroxysm of the Second Empire. In any case, however, for both sociologists, an approach to the notion of fatalism requires reflections on the power relations between subjective individuality and objective reality on a socio-collective scale.

In 1926, Karl Mannheim, considered one of the founders of the ‘sociology of knowledge’, published such reflections in *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* by taking into account both Weberian thought (positing theology as the driving force that imbues society with a lack of free will) and Durkheimian thought (where political power is the cause of the same phenomenon).⁵⁷⁴ For Mannheim—who uses the terms ‘rationality’ and ‘irrationality’ as replacements for Hirt’s approach to subjective individuality and objective reality—the rational is always closely intertwined with the irrational, just as politics can never be separated from individual interests and motivation. In fact, for Mannheim, it is the irrational that turns rationality into politics. Otherwise one would simply speak of administration. As a necessary consequence, politics aims to eradicate the irrational from the socio-collective sphere in order to shield and further propagate its own interest and

⁵⁷³See Eric Y. Liu, ‘Religion and Mental Health in China,’ in *Towards a Sociological Theory of Religion and Health*, ed. by Anthony Blasi (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 148–51.

⁵⁷⁴ See Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (1926) (London and Hanley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976).

motivation.⁵⁷⁵ Here, Mannheim recognises three stages or, rather, ethical principles, which have, over certain periods of human history, dominated social development.

The first was marked by society's collective understanding of humans as subjects serving divinity. As Weber has shown, this is not only of relevance in the Western hemisphere, but is equally important in Eastern societies. Mannheim terms this automatic and willing submission to divine powers the 'ethics of fatalism'. The sheer length of the period in which this was the dominant ethical principle hints, already, at the powerful, ideologico-religious grip in which society was held. We can conceive, here, of an objectivity of fatalism, so to speak, created by a thriving symbiosis between clerical and aristocratic elites in order to keep socio-collective subjectivity in check. It also demonstrates how much influence the adherence to fatalistic beliefs must have had on the value-systems of most societies and cultures worldwide.

The first break in this tradition of blind submission came in the form of eighteenth-century Enlightenment and its belief in empiricist pragmatism, as opposed to religious spirituality. Later, nineteenth-century Romanticism extended this with its notions of self-reflexivity and individualism. As Ian Donnachie and Carmen Lavin remark on the period from 1780 to 1830:

From all sides, Enlightenment confidence in reason and empiricism was challenged in contradictory impulses. [...] Freedom found new forms of expression, breaking down barriers in life and in art with fresh emphasis on the spontaneous and the intuitive, and a delight in imagination and exoticism. New perceptions of human aspirations brought a significant shift in thinking of human beings first and foremost as members of society to human beings as individuals, radically altering conceptions of human nature. There was suddenly a whole different way of looking at life. Romanticism came as a reaction to the mechanistic and the urban, bringing an emphasis on wildness and the sublime in nature [...] The universal theme through this age is the emergence of human individuality [...] The spiritual, intellectual and moral conflicts—between sense and sensibility, personal

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 170–71.

aspirations and social integration—are the critical dilemmas whose repercussions are still with us today.⁵⁷⁶

These ‘ethics of conscience’, as Mannheim describes them, allowed the individual to initiate new causal sequences ‘through the belief in the indeterminateness of his own decisions’.⁵⁷⁷ This is, most pressingly, the society of post-revolutionary France: caught between a rock and a hard place, trying to establish a suitable balance between a reshaped, as yet inexperienced social world, and the residual, yet strong forces of Royalism and Catholicism.

The third and latest (but not last) stage, Mannheim, then, allocates to his own time, the twentieth century. Here, the ‘ethics of responsibility’ begin to bloom, where ‘the world of social relations is no longer inscrutable or in the lap of fate but, on the contrary, some social interrelations are potentially predictable’.⁵⁷⁸ The freely won subjective individuality and irrationality that dominated nineteenth-century Europe now not only had to be in accord with the dictates of conscience, but ‘should take into consideration the possible consequences of each action in so far as they are calculable, and [for conscience to] be subjected to critical self-examination in order to eliminate all the blindly and compulsively operating factors’.⁵⁷⁹

Baudelaire would, perhaps, have agreed to this three-stage evolution of ethics, though, from the poet’s perspective, the third stage might well have been labelled the ‘ethics of decay’. Mannheim, perhaps, caught up in a rising, interwar, left-wing intellectualism, perceived the third stage as a decisive blow to reactionary ideology and as a leap towards socio-political liberalism. For Baudelaire, however, this latest stage would have been nothing less than the beginning of the end: a viewpoint, which, upon closer inspection, highlights the apparent paradoxical nature of his fatalism and reminds one of the antagonistic opposition of Weberian and Durkheimian sociology. As the monument of theological fatalism slowly collapsed, the repercussions, for Weber, were an increased potential for free will, but, at the same time, society’s utter inexperience of dealing with free will. From this situation emerged an elite of cunning political operators, who, for Durkheim, only rebranded already known

⁵⁷⁶ I. Donnachie and C. Lavin (eds.), ‘Introduction’, in *From Enlightenment to Romanticism: An Anthology*, 2 vols (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), II, xi.

⁵⁷⁷ Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, p. 170.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

mechanisms of power-acquisition in order to keep society in its mental state of servitude. More specifically, political power was able to perpetuate the socio-collective efforts of striving towards an unachievable goal: to be nearer the Lord by following the rules of the clergy; or to be nearer the commodity by following the rules of the bourgeoisie. For Mannheim, this was the necessary process for humanity to climb out of the ideological hole in which it had been intellectually hibernating for millennia; a process that would finally lead us towards the ‘ethics of responsibility’.

For Baudelaire, so much is clear by now, the same process signalled the very opposite: not a socio-collective rising out of intellectual stagnation, but a drowning in the puddles of mud left behind by material modernity. In recent decades, then, it seems, commentators have established a sort of ethical consensus, situated somewhere between these opposing ideological poles: between Mannheim’s ‘ethics of responsibility’ and Baudelaire’s ‘ethics of decay’. We may recall, here, my earlier reflections on Jacques Rancière and the inextricably interwoven nature of politics and aesthetics within his concept of the distribution of the sensible. In this context, it seems worth reemphasising that aesthetics have always been crucial weaponry in the polemic battle between good and evil—for Rancière, two terms and concepts very much interchangeable as they differ only in the contradictory perceptions of opposing parties. Following this reversal further, in contemporary societies, the opposition between good and evil as well as any other oppositions driven, purely, by contradictory perceptions, are increasingly abolished. From a macro point of view, then, there are no oppositions, no contradictions left; a situation, which, in theory, should allow for the definition of a new task and purpose towards which humanity then may strive. Ethics, here, no longer equal morals, but only a universal standard:

The reign of ethics is not the reign of moral judgements over the operations of art or of political action. On the contrary, it signifies the constitution of an indistinct sphere in which not only is the specificity of political and artistic practices dissolved, but so also is that which formed the very core of ‘old morality’: the distinction between fact and law, between what is and what ought to be. Ethics

amounts to the dissolution of norm into fact: in other words, the subsumption of all forms of discourse and practice beneath the same indistinct point of view.⁵⁸⁰

Such a development, commonly referred to as the ‘ethical turn’,⁵⁸¹ does not allow for impressions of increasing social responsibility (Mannheim), or, indeed, decay and depletion (Baudelaire). All that must remain is the idea of political stability: a two-fold construct, promising unity, but, implicitly, distinguishing between those who create the consensus, and those who must trust in the consensus. Indeed, Rancière turns Mannheim’s ‘ethics of responsibility’ into the ‘ethics of consensus’: ‘the ways in which yesterday’s aesthetic and political radicality have been adapted to contemporary conditions’, or, to refer to the words of Claire Bishop, ‘the collapse of artistic and political dissensus in new forms of consensual order’.⁵⁸²

Returning now to Baudelairean fatalism, what is truly fascinating about the above theory is that Rancière perceives the omnipresent exclusiveness of consensus as the new social radicality that had formerly brought the era of oppositions and dissensus to an end, including grand-narrative dichotomies such as religion versus *progrès*, tradition versus *modernité*, or Royalism versus Republicanism. However, embedding his ideas in the ideologies of good and evil, or, more specifically, terror (terrorism) and counter-terror (war against terrorism),⁵⁸³ Rancière declares, once again, the overturning of one ethical principle (consensus) by another: the ‘ethics of infinite evil and of art devoted to the interminable mourning of irremediable catastrophe.’⁵⁸⁴ Without wishing to create anachronisms, here, let us project this statement onto Baudelaire’s perception of material modernity and modern human existence. In this context, infinite evil in the form of *progrès* and *modernité* penetrates the socio-collective subjectivity that had, for two millennia, stood against the will of objective reality, sheltered by the protective barrier of religion. The irremediable catastrophe, then, is the inherent loss of religious guidance, leading inevitably towards the decay and depletion of subjective individuality. While one has

⁵⁸⁰ Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), pp. 109–10.

⁵⁸¹ Another important theorist is Mikhail Bakhtin, whose early works on ethics ‘can present him as an author or precedent of the “ethical turn”’. See L. Steinby and T. Klapuri (eds.), ‘Introduction’, in *Bakhtin and His Others: (Inter)subjectivity, Chronotope, Dialogism* (London: Anthem Press, 2013), p. xx.

⁵⁸² Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, p. 130; Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012), p. 28.

⁵⁸³ Rancière’s ultimate example is the international war on terror with its notions of ‘infinite justice’ against ‘infinite evil’ and the legitimisation of warfare in the name of human rights.

⁵⁸⁴ Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, p. 130

to be very cautious, when comparing the Baudelairean experience of modernity with the ethical conundrums of contemporary world politics, it is somewhat intriguing to see how daringly original these first attempts truly were. After all, ‘opposition’ or ‘contradiction’ are likely to be some of the most frequent terms used in scholarship on the poet. Be that as it may, if one looks at the notion of fatalism as a causal chain guided by opposing forces—an epistemological dialectic in its own right—then, for Baudelaire, what emerged must have been nothing less than a Faustian trade: we accept modern human existence, as advertised by material modernity (objective reality, the *moi superficiel*) in exchange for our individual selves (subjective individuality, the *moi profond*). What takes place, here, clearly, is an ‘*avilissement des cœurs*’.

Considering the decay and depletion of socio-collective subjectivity as the ultimate Baudelairean consequence of *progrès* and *modernité*, then, a final theoretico-philosophical stance on the issue of fatalism comes to mind. For the American philosopher Mary Midgley, since the Cartesian division of mind and body, there is a distinct problem of selfhood that arises, when arguing about free will: our efforts are increasingly concentrated on understanding the body, while forgetting about the mind. In extreme forms, this view leads to the idea that all of our physical activities take place without being affected by our psychological activities; they take place without being affected by our continuous attempt to acquire experience and create knowledge, which is ‘merely seen as a side effect.’⁵⁸⁵ In philosophy, this is referred to as epiphenomenalism, a concept, which dates back to post-Aristotelian times, but which reemerged during the nineteenth century. Could Baudelaire have adhered to the idea of such an ‘extreme’ or ‘mechanistic’ fatalism, as Midgley calls it? Could he have perceived the ‘*avilissement des cœurs*’—the price we pay for modern human existence—as the beginning of an era, where a mindless body-machine reacts only to the external stimuli of objective reality? Hardly so, considering that Baudelaire believed the origins of our predetermined end to be found in the thought-provoking curiosity that characterised original sin. It seems likely, however, that Baudelairean fatalism is situated somewhere between the two ideas that socio-collective emancipation from religion leads to *progrès*, *modernité*, and thus the decay and depletion of subjective individuality (the *moi profond*); and, consequentially, that our physical

⁵⁸⁵ Mary Midgley, *Science and Poetry* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 99. Midgley writes: ‘[The] division within our notion of ourselves is notoriously most acute over the “problem of free will”. That problem, as we now conceive it, largely arises out of our current habit of splitting human beings into separate mind and body and then forgetting about the mind.’

activities are exclusively *determined* by the objective reality that has taken its place (the *moi superficiel*) as is, though, only indirectly, the case in epiphenomenalism.⁵⁸⁶ The inevitability of this process is hinted at in the Baudelaire sonnet ‘Le Rebelle’, which I would like to cite in full:

Un Ange furieux fond du ciel comme un aigle,
Du mécréant saisit à plein poing les cheveux,
Et dit, le secouant: ‘Tu connaîtras la règle!
(Car je suis ton bon Ange, entends-tu?) Je le veux!

Sache qu’il faut aimer, sans faire la grimace,
Le pauvre, le méchant, le tortu, l’hébété,
Pour que tu puisses faire à Jésus, quand il passe,
Un tapis triomphal avec ta charité.

Tel est l’Amour! Avant que ton cœur ne se blase,
A la gloire de Dieu rallume ton extase;
C’est la Volupté vraie aux durables appas!’

Et l’Ange, châtiant autant, ma foi! qu’il aime,
De ses poings de géant torture l’anathème;
Mais le damné répond toujours: ‘Je ne veux pas!’⁵⁸⁷

Religion is the horse hair that keeps the Damocles sword of *progrès* and *modernité* from carrying out its fatal strike: an imminent tragedy made explicit by the somewhat violent imagery of a furious angel seizing a sinner firmly by the hair. Shaking him, the angel demands the recognition of religious commandments (‘Tu connaîtras la règle!’). It warns of the ‘avilissement des cœurs’ (‘Avant que ton cœur ne se blase’ [specifically, the reader should note

⁵⁸⁶ In short, the *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* defines ‘epiphenomenalism’ as follows: ‘Epiphenomenalism is the view that mental events are caused by physical events in the brain, but have no effects upon any physical events. Behavior is caused by muscles that contract upon receiving neural impulses, and neural impulses are generated by input from other neurons or from sense organs. On the epiphenomenalist view, mental events play no causal role in this process.’ See William Robinson, ‘Epiphenomenalism’, *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2015), ed. by Edward N. Zalta <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/epiphenomenalism>> [accessed 20 May 2016].

⁵⁸⁷ ‘Le Rebelle’, in *Fleurs du Mal* (1868), in BOC, I, 139–40.

the noun ‘cœur’ in conjunction with the verb ‘blaser’]). It emphasises that only God’s glory may show the way to a new purpose (‘A la gloire de Dieu rallume ton extase’). This basic plot is not only reflected, but further supported by the sonnet’s rhetoric: similar to the 1860 verse poem ‘L’Horloge’, most of stanzas 1 to 3 are written in direct speech and thus address the individual ‘personally’ as a representation of society, that is, without the protective masque of an impersonal moralist or ethical doctrine, behind which the individual may hide their guilt.

Indeed, the syntactic setup of the poem plays strongly upon the feeling of guilt that is so clearly induced by its content. The stanzas seem to be split between bad angel, good angel scenarios. The first quatrain leaves the reader curious. The angel is enraged and nothing seems to suggest that the speaker’s disobedience may result in anything less than damnation as the ultimate punishment. The fierce ‘[t]u connaitras la règle!’—the poem’s only divergence from the present tense—is more than just an imperative (for example, ‘Sache qu’il faut aimer’). It clearly and unmistakably predicts an outcome: a vision driven by the speaker’s anticipation of how severe the punishment may be; in case he fails to comply. Fear is struck into his heart, but only for one purpose: to open the arms and to welcome back the frightened sheep from his odyssey into the wilderness of atheism. The second quatrain, then, is dedicated to this feeling of comfort. It gives the speaker the opportunity to achieve redemption by aiming all efforts at welcoming Christ into his life. The first tercet, still completely phrased in direct speech, continues to provide a welcoming atmosphere by trying to convince the speaker of his true purpose—that is, to earn the messiah’s love as the only means of salvation. In the second tercet, then, the reader encounters a rupture in the dogmatic tone established by the use of direct speech. Pushed into the background by the sudden use of indirect speech (‘Et l’Ange, châtiant autant, ma foi!’), the reader’s attention is turned to the tercet’s concluding statement, when the sinner, already damned, utters, ‘[j]e ne veux pas’. This verbal exclamation mark at the end of the poem is, once again, carried out in direct speech, addressing the reader ‘personally’, and hinting at material modernity’s inevitable abdication from religion. It also stands in direct (and somewhat obstinate) opposition to the explicit, reappearing aggressiveness of the angel (‘De ses poings de géant torture l’anathème’), who, arguably, already realises that his pampering with promises of redemption will remain unfruitful. In these final moments of the dialogue, the setting thus changes back into a bad angel scenario with no further options left to explore.

Moreover, if we agree that ‘Le Rebelle’ is essentially about the increasingly failing dialogue between religion and society—as well as about the inevitability of this process—then, another detail becomes particularly interesting. While the poem is in many ways of classical form and shape (e.g. alexandrine, ABABCDCDEEFGGF rhyme pattern), it features an early caesura (after the fourth syllable) in the first line of the first tercet:

Tel est l’Amour! Avant que ton cœur ne se blase,

This slight but well-placed divergence from the traditional norm hints at Baudelairean concerns regarding the future of modern aesthetic production. Only for a moment, subtly, perhaps subconsciously, it shifts the reader’s attention to one of the great emotions—‘l’Amour!’⁵⁸⁸—from which—prior to material modernity and thus prior to the ethics of vice that define modern human existence—aesthetic representation had so frequently drawn its aesthetic inspiration;⁵⁸⁹ an emotion, as we know, now in imminent danger of being replaced by the ‘avilissement des cœurs’ and, indeed, by the socio-collective stupor of the blasé. The volta’s function as a connector between the second quatrain and first tercet, here, is strengthened, allowing for the angel’s apparent good will to be placed at the very centre of the sonnet before the reader’s attention is, once again, shifted to the disenchantments of the second tercet and its conclusion.

This subtle introduction of issues addressing aesthetic production in material modernity is further elaborated upon in the verse poem ‘La Voix’.⁵⁹⁰ Here, recalling the good angel, bad angel scenarios of ‘Le Rebelle’, the speaker, still a child for most of the poem, encounters two demonic voices:

Deux voix me parlaient. L’une, insidieuse et ferme,
Disait: ‘La Terre est un gâteau plein de douceur;
Je puis (et ton plaisir serait alors sans terme!)
Te faire un appétit d’une égale grosseur.’

⁵⁸⁸ Note the capitalisation as well as the use of an exclamation mark.

⁵⁸⁹ The reader should be reminded of Poe’s statement in ‘The Philosophy of Composition’, as addressed at the very beginning of this study: ‘the death of a beautiful woman is unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world, and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover.’ Edgar Allan Poe, ‘The Philosophy of Composition’, in *The Complete Poems and Stories*, ed. by Edward H. O’Neill, 2 vols (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), II, 978–87 (p. 982).

⁵⁹⁰ ‘La Voix’, in *Les Épaves*, in *BOC*, I, 170.

Et l'autre: 'Viens! oh! viens voyager dans les rêves,
Au-delà du possible, au-delà du connu!'

Clearly, the first voice tries to tempt the child into joining material modernity's socio-collective, homogenising hunt for the next best thing: it quite literally tries to awaken that unstoppable hunger for more, which is so often associated with the material desires sparked by the emergence of mass-commodification ('La Terre est un gâteau plein de douceur; // Je puis [...] // Te faire un appétit d'une égale grosseur.'). The second voice, then, plays upon the child's future as an artist and suggests to leave behind all that glistens and shines ('étinceler' ['Les Yeux des pauvres']). The child is invited to join the exciting adventures that *rêve*, *rêverie*, *ivresse*, and *imagination* have to offer, beyond the possible and beyond the known ('Au-delà du possible, au-delà du connu!'). Just as in the verse 'L'Horloge' as well as in 'Le Rebelle', once again, the speaker and, by extension, the reader is addressed 'personally' via direct speech, and successfully so, for the speaker replies:

Je te répondis: 'Oui! douce voix!' C'est d'alors
Que date ce qu'on peut, hélas! nommer ma plaie
Et ma fatalité. Derrière les décors
De l'existence immense, au plus noir de l'abîme,
Je vois distinctement des mondes singuliers,
Et, de ma clairvoyance extatique victime,
Je traîne des serpents qui mordent mes souliers.

In contrast to the speaker of 'Le Rebelle', the speaker-child of 'La Voix', still sheltered by the faculties of *rêve*, *rêverie*, *ivresse*, and *imagination*, opts for the life of an artist, or, more specifically, for the life of a man of letters, a claim supported by the poem's initial setting:

Mon berceau s'adossait à la bibliothèque,
Babel sombre, où roman, science, fabliau,
Tout, la cendre latine et la poussière grecque,
Se mêlaient. J'étais haut comme un in-folio.

Retrospectively, however, the choice is not made without regret. For the self-reflective, grown-up speaker-artist, this was not only the moment, when he decided to follow his dreams, but also when the painful misery of his existence was set in stone: ‘Que date ce qu’on peut, hélas! nommer ma plaie // et ma fatalité’. How much such a statement can be read through the lens of an economically deprived Baudelaire remains debatable. What we do know is that, although ‘Le Rebelle’ and ‘La Voix’ were both published for the first time in 1861, the latter is likely to have been written, when the second edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal* was already in print.⁵⁹¹ As regards the former, ‘Prarond cite [‘Le Rebelle’] au nombre des poèmes qu’il a entendu réciter avant la fin de 1843’.⁵⁹²

As discussed throughout this study, Baudelaire’s fate as a poet was defined (and refined) by his modern aesthetic quest to extract *le beau* from *le mal*, ultimately leading to the establishment of prose poetry as a literary genre; a form of poetic Modernism grounded in the poet’s conception of *le beau moderne* and aesthetic *éternité*. Prose poetry is capable of representing, in content *and* poetic form, modern human existence; it is capable of representing the *progrès*, the *modernité*, and the ‘avilissement des cœurs’ the poet thought to be the driving forces that would eventually lead humanity to its predetermined end. While poems such as ‘Le Rebelle’ and ‘La Voix’ pick up on these socio-religious reflections in their content, similarly to the prose poems, they also seem to adapt (‘s’adapter’) in terms of poetic form. With the exception of one small detail, ‘Le Rebelle’ is a fully traditional sonnet. Almost twenty years later, ‘La Voix’ still shows traditional traits such as the alexandrine or the ABAB (and so forth) rhyme pattern, but the poem’s overall appearance is more fluid, not bound by stanzas and their inherent stylistic limitations. Carefully, here, one could thus interpret these slight stylistic concessions as a methodological response to the nature and challenges of aesthetic production in material modernity.

Now, in the sections on ‘Second Empire Aesthetics’, ‘Baudelairean Aesthetics’, and ‘Baudelairean Poetics’ at the very beginning of this study, I have discussed, at length, how this aesthetic evolution, or, perhaps, aesthetic decay, is addressed in the Baudelairean œuvre—his poetry as well as theory—and how it eventually leads to the establishment of prose poetry as a literary genre. In the specific context of Meltzer’s remark on the poet’s ‘obsession with

⁵⁹¹ See ‘Notice’ to ‘La Voix’, in *BOC*, I, 1153–54.

⁵⁹² See ‘Notice’ to ‘Le Rebelle’, in *BOC*, I, 1106–07 (p. 1106).

original sin', then, one may find that the analytical task of projecting the notion of fatalism onto modern aesthetic production is furthermore spurred: here, by the somewhat odd analogy between Baudelaire's prose poetry and a mutilated serpent in the *dédicace* to Houssaye. As is well known, in Christian symbolism, the serpent stands for original sin. Unlike the religious philosophy of, for example, Joseph de Maistre, who saw evil and original sin as local errors with the possibility of redemption,⁵⁹³ poems such as 'Le Rebelle' suggest that Baudelaire truly did believe in the fatalistic finality of modern human existence—symbolised as such by the serpent as well as original sin, though, not necessarily, incurred by enraging divinity. Thinking, once again, of the slight stylistic concessions encountered in 'Le Rebelle' and 'La Voix'—and highlighting the term 'concession', here, specifically—one could thus argue that they envelop a subtle message: grounded in his own obsession with original sin, perhaps, what Baudelaire foresaw was the fatalistic finality of aesthetic production itself as one last ultimate stylistic concession in response to the fatalistic finality of modern human existence. Be that as it may, it seems indisputable that the poet was a most talented visionary, as regards questions of aesthetic production, anticipating the emergence of Modernism long before names such as Manet, Degas, and the like were admitted to the Salons; and long before Mallarmé as well as Rimbaud found poetic inspiration in *Les Fleurs du Mal* and *Le Spleen de Paris*. And, perhaps, it is precisely this fatalistic outlook on modern human existence as well as modern aesthetic production, too, which Baudelaire refers to, when writing in 'La Voix':

Et, de ma clairvoyance extatique victime,
Je traîne des serpents qui mordent mes souliers.

⁵⁹³ In *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, Maistre writes: 'L'homme, malgré sa fatale dégradation, porte toujours des marques évidentes de son origine divine, de manière que toute croyance universelle est toujours plus ou moins vraie, c'est-à-dire que l'homme peut bien avoir couvert et, pour ainsi dire, *encroûté* la vérité par les erreurs dont il l'a surchargée; mais ces erreurs sont locales, et la vérité universelle se montrera toujours.' Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* (La Colombe, 1960), p. 120, as cited in Bernard Howells, *Baudelaire: Individualism, Dandyism and the Philosophy of History* (Oxford: Legenda, 1997), p. 127. See also Arthur Bradley, 'Reactionary and Romantic: Joseph de Maistre and Shelley', in *Reinventing Christianity: Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, ed. by Linda Woodhead (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001).

Conclusion to Experiencing Modernity: *Les Fleurs du Mal* and *Le Spleen de Paris*

While the preceding section on ‘Society and Existence from the Viewpoint of Death’ provided concluding reflections on the epistemological concerns that have guided my analysis up to this point, throughout this study, I have also consistently discussed and illustrated how these concerns filter into Baudelairean aesthetics and poetics, respectively. In contrast to the rather isolated notions of ‘exchange’, ‘communication’, and ‘the blasé’, in the following, I thus wish to conclude this second (though, by no means secondary) train of thought by offering a broader contextualisation of both *Les Fleurs du Mal* as well as *Le Spleen de Paris*. Specifically, I propose a closer look at Baudelaire’s ‘Projets de préface’, the by now well known ‘Lettre à Arsène Houssaye’ as well as the prose poem ‘Les Bons Chiens’.

‘Les Projets de préface’ (posthumously between 1868–1968)

Attempting to explain the creative rationale behind his collection of verse poetry, Baudelaire’s ‘Projets de préface’ were written as a response to the severe public dismissal of *Les Fleurs du Mal* in 1857.⁵⁹⁴ There are four ‘Projets’ of which only the first seems to have been edited to completion.⁵⁹⁵ ‘Projets’ II and III are fragmentary only and ‘Projet’ IV is of an altogether different nature, linked to previous attempts by a bracketed ‘à confondre peut-être avec d’anciennes notes’. Claude Pichois provides a few more details: it is likely (though, not certain) that the four ‘Projets’ are presented in the same chronological order in which they were conceived: ‘Projets’ I–III address the second edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, while ‘Projet’ IV is more clearly intended for the third.⁵⁹⁶ Baudelaire writes, for example: ‘[*Les Fleurs du Mal*] ose affronter aujourd’hui pour la troisième fois le soleil de la sottise’.⁵⁹⁷ The first time the idea of

⁵⁹⁴ The following is based on Claude Pichois’ ‘Dossier des Fleurs du Mal’, in *BOC*, I, 1166–224. As regards the publication dates of the ‘Projets de préface’, Pichois writes: ‘Les projets ont été publiés partiellement par Charles Asselineu dans sa biographie de Baudelaire (Lemerre, 1868) et par Octave Uzanne (*Le Livre*, 10 mars 1881), puis, presque intégralement par Eugène Crépet dans les *Œuvres posthumes* de 1887. L’édition la plus fidèle aux autographes a été donnée en 1968 dans l’édition Crépet-Blin-Pichois des *Fleurs du Mal* (J. Cortie, édit.). *Ibid.*, p. 1167.

⁵⁹⁵ For reasons of brevity and clarity, I shall focus only on ‘Projet’ I.

⁵⁹⁶ Pichois writes: ‘Il est difficile de déterminer si tel projet fut écrit pour la deuxième ou pour la troisième édition.’ See ‘Dossier des Fleurs du Mal’, in *BOC*, I, 1167. ‘Projet’ II consists only of a few fragmentary notes very similar to the content of ‘Projet’ I. Pichois points out that ‘Projets’ II and III could have been conceived prior to ‘Projet’ I.

⁵⁹⁷ ‘Projet’ IV, in *BOC*, I, 184–86 (p. 184).

a preface surfaces is in a letter to Veillot from 15 December 1859, and it is in the particular relationship between the poet and Veillot, ‘le polémiste’, that one discovers a certain insecurity on the part of Baudelaire regarding the nature and function of *Les Fleurs du Mal*.

In 1857, Veillot sympathised with Baudelaire and regretted the unfortunate position he was in. Only a little later, however, in an article that appeared in *Réveil* on 15 May 1858, Veillot brutally attacked the poet, placing him among figures such as François Ponsard, whom Baudelaire abhorred (‘exécré’), and Alfred de Musset. Baudelaire’s potential ‘counter-attack’, Pichois argues, is to be found in the clear tendency of ‘Projets’ I–III to serve as defences of the *l’Art pour l’Art* doctrine:

Baudelaire, qui se voyait reprocher de chanter des ‘vulgarités infâmes’, allait retourner ce reproche contre son adversaire et, en se vengeant, défendrait la cause des ‘Artistes’.⁵⁹⁸

Whether or not they were intended as a counter-attack against Veillot, an analysis of the ‘Projets’ shows that this tendency towards a defence of *l’Art pour l’Art* is quickly negated by the very same key questions that most often resurface whenever scholarship addresses the Baudelairean œuvre:⁵⁹⁹ ‘qu’est-ce que la Poésie? quel est son but?’⁶⁰⁰ These questions are too frequent and too prominent, and the poet’s interest in the Paris and the Parisians of his day too pertinent and mature, for them to be brushed aside by an invocation of the *l’Art pour l’Art* doctrine. And, of course, Pichois does not attempt to do so. Instead, he points out three of Baudelaire’s letters dating from 1860—two to the poet’s editor Poulet-Malassis and one to his mother—in which a great deal of insecurity surfaces, as regards the task of deciding on the content of a potential preface; a reflection, certainly, of the insecurity caused by the 1857 public dismissal of his verse collection.⁶⁰¹ While this insecurity is only implicit in the letters to Poulet-Malassis, in the letter to his mother, the poet is slightly more open and admits:

⁵⁹⁸ ‘Dossier des Fleurs du Mal’, in *BOC*, I, 1167.

⁵⁹⁹ In light of Baudelaire’s *escrime* metaphor, as discussed in the section on ‘Baudelairean Aesthetics’ in chapter 2, the reader should be reminded that the poet refers to the *l’Art pour l’Art* doctrine of the *École païenne* as ‘une escrime dans le vide’. See ‘L’École païenne’, in *BOC*, II, 44–49 (p. 48).

⁶⁰⁰ ‘Projet’ I, in *BOC*, I, 181–82 (p. 182).

⁶⁰¹ The term ‘insecurity’, along with its close relatives ‘instability’ and ‘confusion’, should be kept at the forefront of the reader’s mind throughout this conclusion: in various shapes or forms, they have guided and informed the

Il y a une préface en prose, d'une violente bouffonnerie. J'hésite à l'imprimer, et cependant je ne me rassasierai jamais d'insulter la France.⁶⁰²

Pichois concludes:

Par-là s'explique que Baudelaire ait finalement renoncé à faire précéder son livre d'une préface. L'édition de 1857 avait été dénoncée pour son immoralité par la presse, en particulier par le *Figaro*. Répondre aux journalistes, les railler, mettre la France en cause, lui reprocher d'être la patrie de l'*antipoésie*, c'était une erreur. Baudelaire l'avait bien compris.⁶⁰³ (my emphasis)

Indeed, Baudelaire had understood: he had understood that the hypocritical crowd was in no position to engage with the nature of its own hypocrisy,⁶⁰⁴ appearing to rise higher and higher towards the sun, yet falling deeper and deeper into the existentialist *gouffre* of material modernity.⁶⁰⁵ Baudelaire frames this experience of *gouffre* most explicitly by granting it an eponymous verse poem in which he writes, for example: 'J'ai peur du sommeil comme on a peur d'un grand trou.'⁶⁰⁶ Acting, here, as a synonym for the Baudelairean experience of modernity, the reader should note, specifically, the reference to 'sommeil' in conjunction with my own conceptual approach to the faculties of *rêve*, *rêverie*, *ivresse*, and *imagination*, as elaborated throughout this study. For this experience to be translated into poetry, for it to be transformed into aesthetic *éternité*, language would need to fall alongside its heroes; the reception of his work in 1857 had taught Baudelaire as much, and chapter 2 has already

Idealist epistemology, as proposed in this study, as well as its application to Baudelaire in his function as the first poet of modernity.

⁶⁰² B*Corr*, II, 98.

⁶⁰³ 'Dossier des Fleurs du Mal', in BOC, I, 1167.

⁶⁰⁴ The final line of the final stanza in 'Au Lecteur' as the first poem of *Les Fleurs du Mal* famously reads as follows: '— Hypocrite lecteur,—mon semblable,—mon frère!' See 'Au Lecteur', in *Les Fleurs du Mal*, in BOC, I, 5–6 (p. 6).

⁶⁰⁵ The idea of 'gouffre' is one of the more prominent analogies used to frame the Baudelairean experience of modernity. The poet provides us with a verse poem of the same title, and Benjamin Fondane, considered one of the first to read Baudelaire through an exclusively ideological lens, entitled his early study on Baudelairean modernity, *Baudelaire et l'expérience du gouffre* (Paris: Complexe, 1994). See also *Une Poétique du gouffre: Sur Baudelaire et l'expérience du gouffre de Benjamin Fondane*, Actes du colloque de Cosenza, 30 septembre à 1–2 octobre 1999, ed. by Monique Jutrin and Gisèle Vanhese (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino Editore, 2003).

⁶⁰⁶ 'Le Gouffre', in *Les Fleurs du Mal*, in BOC, I, 142–43 (p. 143). The reader should also be reminded of the line, 'Le gouffre a toujours soif; la clepsydre se vide' (l. 20), in the 1860 verse poem 'L'Horloge', as discussed in the section on 'Photography, Memory, Imagination (and Happiness)' in chapter 4.

addressed, explicitly, the aesthetic assimilation of *spleen* and the *Idéal* in the form of *le beau moderne*. Most famously, in this context, it is Barbara Johnson, who, in the aforementioned *Défigurations du langage poétique: la seconde révolution baudelairienne*,⁶⁰⁷ declares Baudelaire's prose poetry to represent the Icarian Fall of art. As we know from my review of her scholarly take on Baudelaire's theory of the comic in chapter 2, Michele Hannoosh agrees, arguing that the notion of *dédoublement* essentially addresses the individual's ability to witness their own failure of being absolute.

Be that as it may, Baudelaire had also understood that his own hypocrisy was of the exact same nature as that of the crowd. The tension created between content and poetic form—between evil and beauty, so to speak—could not be overruled by the public's appreciation of the former over the latter. Pichois' use of the term 'antipoésie' is helpful: Baudelaire's *antipoésie* in the form of highly ironic prose poetry was the aesthetic response to the perceived *antipoésie* of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, where the friction between content and poetic form had eventually led the poet into court on the charge of undermining public morals. Experimenting with prose poetry allowed Baudelaire to turn evil into beauty (and vice versa). It also allowed the poet to do so covertly with the aesthetic aim that neither be distinguishable from the other. This is the irony one discovers in *Le Spleen de Paris*, a defused version of the aesthetic sarcasm—the discrepancy between content and poetic form—that had brought down *Les Fleurs du Mal*, and where the rationale still reads: on a golden platter I shall dissect the mud that builds your existence. Suzanne Bernard would refer to that same mud, when writing about Baudelaire's prose poems: 'Dans *Le Spleen de Paris*, la boue reste boue, noire et gluante'.⁶⁰⁸

'Lettre à Arsène Houssaye' (1862)

What I take, here, as the beginning of my own contextualising rationale is the idea that with the 'Projets' Baudelaire not only reflected on his own aesthetic production, but also looked more closely at that which had to be aesthetically represented: his experience of modernity. From an Idealist epistemological point of view, I have argued that this experience begins with

⁶⁰⁷ Barbara Johnson, *Défigurations du langage poétique: la seconde révolution baudelairienne* (Paris: Flammarion, 1979).

⁶⁰⁸ Suzanne Bernard, *Le Poème en prose: de Baudelaire jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: Librairie Nizet, 1959), p. 108.

the individual's a priori or *pure* perception of space and time, both becoming increasingly fragmented as a consequence of the *rapidité* of material modernity. Via Baudelaire's *dédicace* to Houssaye, fragmented space has become a rather prominent theme in Baudelaire studies. In order to address fragmented time, however, one has to choose a slightly different approach. Unlike space, time has no 'concrete' representative such as the modern city. It is abstract and remains abstract, except, as has been argued,⁶⁰⁹ if captured by a clock or a watch. The most prominent example of fragmented time in Baudelaire is, of course, the poet's famous definition of modernity as the transitory, the fugitive, and the contingent; but apart from that, occasions, where it is made graspable in his œuvre are rare, and the same is true of the 'Projets'. In fact, there are hardly any terms that refer to time, or the passing, standstill, and, indeed, fragmentation thereof. The first two thirds of 'Projet' I—up until its final paragraph—seem to be limited to the double use of the term 'siècle'. This is helpful, but not enormously so. It merely means that Baudelaire provides a timeframe in which his experience of modernity has evolved. It presents the external, objective timeframe in which internal, subjective time in the form of *durée* is slowly shattered into instants: a newly emerging and particularly modern temporal unit; and in the eyes of Baudelaire the source of Constantin Guys' aesthetic sublimity ('le peintre de la circonstance'/'vie moderne').

In 'Projet' I, the only further reference to time up until that point is made, when Baudelaire writes: 'je n'aurais jamais cru que notre patrie pût marcher avec une telle *vélocité* dans la voie du *progrès*' [Baudelaire's emphasis].⁶¹⁰ The term 'vélocité' in conjunction with 'progrès' reminds one of the 1860 verse poem 'L'Horloge', where the clock serves as an allegory for time—in many ways, acting like a mechanical God forcing its subjects into submission ('c'est la loi!'). In material modernity, one has to keep up with *vélocité* and *progrès*, otherwise one would become a Baudelairean modern hero, situated outside the close-knit network of monetary relationships that defines modern, capitalist, money economy. To fragment this depiction of time would potentially mean to dissemble the God and to vanquish its fatalistic objectification of one's lifetime and the passing thereof. This was not an option.

⁶⁰⁹ See chapter 4 and in particular the section on 'Photography, Memory, Imagination (and Happiness)'.
⁶¹⁰ 'Projet' I, in *BOC*, I, 181.

As we know, the poet had an ‘obsession with original sin’ (Meltzer) and there was no happy ending in sight.⁶¹¹ The last paragraph of ‘Projet’ I is key and should be cited in full:

J’avais primitivement l’intention de répondre à de nombreuses critiques et, en même temps, d’expliquer quelques questions très simples, totalement obscurcies par la lumière moderne: qu’est-ce que la Poésie? quel est son but? de la distinction du Bien d’avec le Beau; de la Beauté dans le Mal; que le rythme et la rime répondent dans l’homme aux immortels besoins de monotonie, de symétrie et de surprise; de l’adaptation du style au sujet; de la vanité et du danger de l’inspiration, etc., etc.; mais j’ai eu l’imprudence de lire ce matin quelques feuilles publiques; soudain, une indolence, du poids de vingt atmosphères, s’est abattue sur moi, et je me suis arrêté devant l’épouvantable inutilité d’expliquer quoi que ce soit à qui que ce soit. Ceux qui savent me deviennent, et pour ceux qui ne peuvent ou ne veulent pas comprendre, j’amoncellerai sans fruit des explications.⁶¹²

I should like to split this paragraph into two halves, the cut-off point being located after the double use of ‘etc.’. The first half consists of Baudelaire’s typical reflections on the nature and function of aesthetic production in material modernity (‘qu’est-ce que la Poésie? quel est son but? de la distinction du Bien d’avec le Beau; de la Beauté dans le Mal’) in relation to modern human existence (‘que le rythme et la rime répondent dans l’homme aux immortels besoins de monotonie, de symétrie et de surprise’). The terms ‘monotonie’, ‘symétrie’, and ‘surprise’ are particularly reminiscent of Benjaminian concerns, and it is here, too, that Baudelaire diverges most notably from the tendency towards a defence of the *l’Art pour l’Art* doctrine. Considering the ‘immortels besoins’ as a cynical sneer at the fatalistic nature of modern human existence and those who succumb to it, in this context, all three terms designate a form of causal chain: ‘monotony’ refers to the growing importance of factory work in the Parisian banlieue; ‘symmetry’ refers to material modernity’s socio-collective, homogenising hunt for the next best thing; and ‘surprise’, then, refers to the Benjaminian shock: the generic individual facing the material spectacle of the modern multitude, leaving them in traumatic

⁶¹¹ Françoise Meltzer, *Seeing Double: Baudelaire’s Modernity* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), p. 12.

⁶¹² ‘Projet’ I, in *BOC*, I, 182.

confusion. At this point, it seems almost as if Baudelaire is referring to the chain of events that would lead to his very own shock and trauma in 1857.

The second half of this final paragraph begins with ‘mais j’ai eu l’imprudence de lire ce matin quelques feuilles publiques; soudain, une indolence, du poids de vingt atmosphères, s’est abattue sur moi’. The ‘quelques feuilles publiques’, mentioned only in passing—a feeling further enhanced by the generic ‘quelques’—suddenly links Baudelaire’s aesthetico-theoretical pondering to the public dismissal of his verse collection. The unexpectedness of this event is hinted at by two textual elements. Firstly, the transition between the first and second half of the final paragraph comes as ‘etc., etc.; mais’. A stream of consciousness is *interrupted* and *fragmented* by objective reality in the form of an irritable ‘mais’. Secondly, and more importantly for the present enquiry, one must have a closer look at the adverb ‘soudain’. ‘Soudain’ means ‘suddenly’, ‘in an instant’, ‘without the time to comprehend’. In a footnote, earlier, I mentioned that the terms ‘insecurity’ and its close relatives ‘instability’ and ‘confusion’ should be kept at the forefront of the reader’s mind throughout this conclusion. In an Idealist epistemological sense, the term ‘confusion’, especially, serves as a particularly appropriate way to describe the impact of the generic individual’s fragmented a priori on the acquisition of experience and the creation of knowledge. Within the timeframe provided by the instant, the generic individual can no longer contemplate, can no longer comprehend, can no longer synthesise. Before one may grasp what has happened in any given instant, it has long passed, followed and superseded by the next, and so forth; what I have previously referred to as a mosaic of instants in motion and thus a kaleidoscope of incomprehension and consequential *confusion*; as we have seen, eventually rendering the generic individual blasé. Baudelaire leaves the reader on this note, in a state of confusion—how else could it be?—with his final sentence ending in ‘j’amoncellerai sans fruit les explications’.⁶¹³ Baudelaire does this, precisely, within an *amoncellement* of instants entitled *Le Spleen de Paris* in which confusion is turned into a form of rhetoric we have previously addressed as irony and ambiguity. Almost a century later, Michel de Certeau would prominently discuss similar concerns by defining the act of walking in the city precisely as such: a form of rhetoric.⁶¹⁴

⁶¹³ ‘Projet’ I, in *BOC*, I, 182.

⁶¹⁴ Michel de Certeau, ‘Walking in the City’, in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven Rendall (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988).

I opened these reflections on my ‘contextualising rationale’ by referring, in passing, to Baudelaire’s *dédicace* and, in spite of having cited from it frequently throughout this study (or, perhaps, precisely because I have done so), it seems useful, here, to return to the same text once again and in slightly more detail. I have already mentioned that the idea of a preface for *Les Fleurs du Mal* initially surfaced in 1859. It is unknown, when exactly ‘Projet’ I was written, but it appeared for the first time in Poulet-Malassis’ preparations for the 1861 edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal*. The *dédicace* was written in 1862 and it seems reasonable to believe that ideas already expressed in ‘Projet’ I echo strongly in these reflections on the nature and function of prose poetry: ‘que le rythme et la rime répondent dans l’homme aux immortels besoins de monotonie de symétrie et de surprise’, ‘de l’adaptation du style au sujet’ (‘Projets’); ‘le miracle d’une prose poétique, musicale sans rythme et sans rime, assez souple et assez heurtée pour s’adapter aux mouvements lyriques de l’âme’ (‘Lettre à Arsène Houssaye’). Briefly, then, it was mentioned that the *dédicace* traditionally serves as a form of analytical gateway to external, physical, spatial fragmentation in Baudelaire. In response, and considering, once more, that Baudelaire compares *Le Spleen de Paris* to a serpent, I now wish to propose a closer look this analogy from the viewpoint of time and fragmented time, specifically. As well-known as this passage is, it should be cited in full:

Mon cher ami, je vous envoie un petit ouvrage dont on ne pourrait pas dire, sans injustice, qu’il n’a ni queue ni tête, puisque tout, au contraire, y est à la fois tête et queue, alternativement et réciproquement. Considérez, je vous prie, quelles admirables commodités cette combinaison nous offre à tous, à vous, à moi et au lecteur. Nous pouvons couper où nous voulons, moi ma rêverie, vous le manuscrit, le lecteur sa lecture; car je ne suspends pas la volonté rétive de celui-ci au fil interminable d’une intrigue superflue. Enlevez une vertèbre, et les deux morceaux de cette tortueuse fantaisie se rejoindront sans peine. Hachez-là en nombreux fragments, et vous verrez que chacun peut exister à part. Dans l’espérance que quelques-uns de ces tronçons seront assez vivants pour vous plaire et vous amuser, j’ose vous dédier le serpent tout entier.

The question of why exactly Baudelaire chose the serpent as an apt analogy for his collection of prose poetry remains puzzling, and scholarship has provided numerous suggestions. In the context of Baudelairean fatalism, discussed and presented as the epistemological conclusion to this study in the section on ‘Society and Existence from the Viewpoint of Death’ in chapter 5, the serpent’s symbolic value in the Christian context of original sin seems most intriguing as it links the fall of art to the fall of man just as Johnson did by comparing *Le Spleen de Paris* to the Icarian Fall. Towards the end of the following interpretation of ‘Les Bons Chiens’ as the final poem in the collection—and in the context of the Baudelairean experience of modernity, specifically—I shall propose an alternative reading to the original sin paradigm. For now, however, I wish to concentrate on just a couple of curious fragments from the passage above, and to read them through the lens of original sin, but this time with a decidedly temporal twist.

What does Baudelaire exactly say at this point? He compares *Le Spleen de Paris* to a serpent. Why? Because just like a serpent, he claims, his collection of prose poetry has neither head nor tail, neither beginning nor end. The curious reader will instantly note that this comparison is rather grotesque as a serpent has, indeed, a head and a tail, and most certainly its head does not equal its tail. Furthermore, the serpent’s butcher (whether ‘tous’, ‘vous’, ‘moi’, or ‘lecteur’) will quickly realise that by no means can the individual pieces (‘tronçons’) of a mutilated serpent survive on their own (childhood rumours say this may be true of earthworms, but, surely, this is not what Baudelaire had in mind), nor can the pieces of a serpent be merged back together in any given order. My previous reference to its Christian symbolism, however, may allow for an interpretation from the perspective of time and fragmented time. Here, in line with Baudelaire’s explicit definition of the serpent as symbolising the *entirety* of *Le Spleen de Paris* (‘le serpent tout entier’), one may consider the series of ‘[la] rêverie’, ‘le manuscrit’, and ‘[la] lecture’ as representing the *entirety* of the Baudelairean experience of modernity: Baudelaire’s writing, Houssaye’s publishing, society’s reading. In this scenario, the serpent could, then, be interpreted, more broadly, as the timeline of human existence beginning with original sin and leading, inevitably, to the Baudelairean experience of modernity and its inherent notion of fatalism, as is aesthetically represented in and by *Le Spleen de Paris*. Moreover, from this point of view, the mutilation of the serpent becomes the fragmentation of this very timeline and, by extension, of history. As we know, the fragments of history, then, feed into Baudelaire’s aesthetico-theoretical discourse on modern human existence via Walter

Benjamin's concept of the dialectical image, as discussed in chapter 3: 'But precisely modernity is always citing primal history. [...] *Ambiguity* is the appearance of dialectic in images, the law of dialectics at a standstill' (my emphasis).⁶¹⁵ Interestingly and certainly helpfully, Benjamin's focus on 'ambiguity', here, also allows one to incorporate the collection's ironic character into this reading of the serpent analogy. Moreover, in this context, what also becomes fragmented is the 'intrigue superflue' of human existence—once again, a most fatalistic and deterministic stance, to say the least.

'Les Bons Chiens' (1865)

As one of the only critics to ever provide a full-length study of Baudelaire's *Le Spleen de Paris* by approaching the collection as a whole, singular entity, as opposed to a mutilated serpent, Edward Kaplan has argued that the final poem, 'Les Bons Chiens',⁶¹⁶ does, indeed, serve as its conclusion.⁶¹⁷ Moreover, we must note the omnipresent and continuous discussion (as well as corresponding critical consensus) on Baudelaire's prose poetry as the aesthetico-theoretical conclusion to Baudelaire's modern aesthetic quest of extracting *le beau* from *le mal*. Following Kaplan, my approach will thus attempt to read the collection's final poem not merely as a conclusion to *Le Spleen de Paris*, but as a conclusion to the conclusion, so to speak—much as Sonya Stephens considers the *dédicace* as a prose poem on the prose poem.⁶¹⁸

'Les Bons Chiens' begins by introducing Baudelaire's initial quest for aesthetic inspiration. It is dedicated to the painter Joseph Édouard Stevens and, as Pichois points out, inspired by his painting *L'Intérieur du saltimbanque*.⁶¹⁹ Nonetheless, Baudelaire begins the poem by referring to his admiration for the naturalist scientist Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon

⁶¹⁵ Walter Benjamin, 'Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century' (1935), trans. by Howard Eiland, in *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire*, ed. by Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 30–45 (p. 41).

⁶¹⁶ 'Les Bons Chiens', in *Le Spleen de Paris*, in BOC, I, 360–3. All further references will be provided in-text.

⁶¹⁷ See Edward K. Kaplan, *Baudelaire's Prose Poems: The Esthetic, The Ethical, and The Religious* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1990). See also, Maria C. Scott, 'Baudelaire's Canine Allegories: "Le Chien et le Flacon" and "Les Bons Chiens"', *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 33.1–2 (Fall–Winter 2004–05), pp. 107–19.

⁶¹⁸ See the section on 'Baudelairean Poetics' in chapter 2.

⁶¹⁹ Pichois writes: 'Dans *L'Indépendance belge*, une note de présentation indiquait que ce petit poème avait eu pour cause le don fait par Joseph Stevens à Baudelaire d'un gilet que le poète admirait fort, don assorti de cette condition: le poète "écrivait quelque chose sur les chiens des pauvres". Le morceau est d'ailleurs inspiré par un tableau au moins (*L'intérieur du saltimbanque*) de J. Stevens, peintre animalier, qui fut l'un des rares artistes à consoler Baudelaire dans son exil.' See 'Notice' to 'Les Bons Chiens', in BOC, I, 1350–53 (p. 1351).

(‘ce peintre de la nature pompeuse’ [360]) as well as by calling upon the heavenly help of the novelist Laurence Sterne ‘pour m’inspirer [narrator] en faveur des bons chiens, des pauvres chiens, un chant digne de toi [Sterne], sentimental farceur, farceur incomparable’ (360). The immediate references to and grouping of a painter, a scientist, and a novelist perceived as a comedian not only hints at the breadth of ideas that could potentially act as aesthetic inspiration, but also suggests a certain level of uncertainty, or, perhaps, *confusion*, as regards the question of how to represent these ‘good dogs’ to whom the title refers. How should their story be told? By now, of course, we can assume that this initial, yet most likely artificial confusion may be part of the representational scheme itself: the socio-collective experience of modernity as essentially and inevitably leading to the mental states of incomprehension, consequential confusion, and eventually the blasé. Be that as it may, the poem starts *confusingly*, to say the least, and, at this early stage, the reader can only wonder why these good dogs occupy the most prominent position of the title. Considering the collection as a whole, however, it can be assumed that the reader has already come across ‘Le Chien et le flacon’ (1862), as yet another canine prose poem, where Baudelaire links the behaviour of dogs metaphorically to the state of modern human existence. Here, the animalistic, the instinctive, the unconscious characteristics of a dog remind the narrator of the generic individual’s superficial and numb state of mind we have previously come to define as the blasé: ‘the correct subjective reflection of a complete money economy’ (Simmel). In ‘Les Bons Chiens’, then, this metaphor is taken a step further, not only because the poem is about six or seven times longer than ‘Le Chien et le flacon’, but, more importantly, because it reads—through the lens of irony and allegory—like an encyclopaedic summary of the main issues addressed throughout *Le Spleen de Paris*.

There are two main reasons why dogs should serve Baudelaire particularly well as allegoric mirrors for humanity, the condition of modern human existence, and, indeed, anything that is tangential to the human sphere. The first reason is generic and straightforward. Dogs have always been man’s best friend. In most cultures, their life is (and has been) more integrated into the human social construct than the life of any other pet or animal. The question of why that is the case naturally follows from this fact and, without attempting to create a full-scale argument on the topic, it seems safe to say that it is their superior intelligence, their ability to *adapt* (‘s’adapter’), and their slight, yet intriguing proclivity to empathy, which distinguishes dogs from the rest of the animal kingdom. Not surprisingly, then, towards the end of ‘Les Bons Chiens’, Baudelaire speaks of

ces philosophes à quatre pattes, esclaves complaisants, soumis ou dévoués, que le dictionnaire républicain pourrait aussi bien qualifier d'*officieux*, si la république, trop occupée du *bonheur* des hommes, avait le temps de ménager l'*honneur* des chiens! (362; Baudelaire's emphasis)

As Sonya Stephens has pointed out in a similar context before, Plato also wrote about dogs as the most philosophical of all animals, linking his conception of philosophy to the ability *to reason*: to acquire experience and create knowledge.⁶²⁰ To say it in Plato's own words:

[The dog] classifies what it sees as friendly or hostile solely on the fact that it knows one, and doesn't know the other. *It must be a lover of knowledge* if it defines friend and enemy by means of knowledge and ignorance.⁶²¹ (my emphasis)

In Greek, the term 'philosophia' derives from two terms translating into 'love of wisdom' or 'love of knowledge', therefore rendering dogs philosophical in the eyes of the philosopher, and providing a conceptual framework in which dogs may be attributed the ability *to reason*.

Indeed, it must be this extraordinary talent—to acquire experience and create knowledge—that allows dogs to establish what this study has repeatedly referred to as subjective individuality. Baudelaire grants them *honneur*, a verbal token of respect for the embrace of empathy, which, in the human sphere, as we know, the poet sees increasingly lost to the *rapidité* of material modernity. Throughout the poem, this duality between man and dog is repeatedly made explicit. Baudelaire writes:

Arrière la muse académique! Je n'ai que faire de cette vieille bégueule. J'invoque la muse familière, la citadine, la vivante, pour qu'elle m'aide à chanter les bons chiens, les pauvres chiens, les chiens crottés, ceux-là que chacun écarte, comme pestiférés et pouilleux, excepté le pauvre dont ils sont les associés, et le poète qui les regarde d'un œil fraternel. (360)

⁶²⁰ Sonya Stephens, 'Boundaries, Limits and Limitations: Baudelaire's *Poèmes-Boutades*', *French Studies*, 52.1 (1998), 28–41 (p. 35).

⁶²¹ Plato, *The Republic*, trans. by Tom Griffith, ed. by G.R.F Ferrari (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 60.

The terms ‘familière’ and ‘fraternel’ are key in this passage. They signify the intimate link between man and dog, the close relationship that comes to the surface once an observer looks behind the simplifying façade of a dog being nothing more than a pet. Baudelaire was such an observer—a Parisian prowler, to remind the reader of Kaplan’s terminology—and, perhaps, an exemplary one. Aesthetically inspired by the ethics of vice that define modern human existence, hidden deep within the spectacle of material modernity, which so easily interrupts and fragments the epistemological process by distracting one’s focus, his ‘œil fraternel’ spotted something heroic, as we shall see; something he himself felt comfortable endowing with a certain empathy. What Baudelaire thought of as ‘good dogs’ were ‘les pauvres chiens, les chiens crottés, ceux-là que chacun écarte’. In the subsequent paragraph, the poet explains:

Fi du chien bellâtre, de ce fat quadrupède, danois, king-charles, carlin ou gremlin, si enchanté de lui-même qu’il lance indiscrètement dans les jambes ou sur les genoux du visiteur, comme s’il était sûr de plaire, turbulent comme un enfant, sot comme une lorette, quelquefois hargneux et insolent comme un domestique! Fi surtout de ces serpents à quatre pattes, frissonnants et désœuvrés, qu’on nomme levrettes, et qui ne logent même pas dans leur museau pointu assez de flairer pour suivre la piste d’un ami, ni dans leur tête aplatie assez d’intelligence pour jouer au domino! (360)

The strong, even insulting distinction drawn between the ‘bons chiens’ and the ‘fat[s] quadrupède[s]’ is of crucial importance, when reading *Le Spleen de Paris* as a poetic representation of modern human existence. The poem is a tribute to the good dogs and their *honneur*: their ability to reason as well as their slight, yet intriguing proclivity to empathy that enables them to appear as ‘familière[s]’ and ‘fraternel[s]’. This *honneur*, however, becomes a rare phenomenon, only to be found in those who were, for whatever reason, never given the chance or option to swim in the vast and tempting current of socio-cultural decay. Moreover, Baudelaire chose the term ‘serpent’ as an apt description of their antagonists, the ‘fat[s] quadrupède[s]’; yet another hint at the numerous connotations linking the poem’s scenario to the existential failure the poet perceived as a result of *progrès* and *modernité*. Repeatedly, I have referred to Baudelaire’s obsession with original sin and, indeed, to the serpent’s Christian symbolism as the very incarnation of humanity’s blasphemous curiosity: it stands for the ever-nagging urge to rationalise (Simmel) and to progress, an urge given utmost attention in the

phantasmagorical environment so deliberately created by Napoléon III's politics of economic rejuvenation.

Through a lens that shows the spectator a playful engagement with the world of dogs, 'Les Bons Chiens' thus turns out to be an encyclopaedic and severely critical account of modern society: from a Benjaminian perspective, for Baudelaire, this is a society increasingly driven into the *homogenisation* of material modernity. Here, Baudelaire finds and embraces a very specific subset of individuals who, because of their personal background or current circumstance, have managed, willingly or not, to keep a certain *distance* from the superficial crowd. Ross Chambers, as we know, highlights this distance as the essential precondition for the acquisition of experience and the creation of knowledge: for the transformation of the 'unnoticeable' into something 'noteworthy'; a 'distance' that Georg Simmel also refers to as a 'difference' in the context of the *blasé*; and thus a distance that allows this specific group of individuals to contemplate life beyond all of material modernity's distractions, and to focus purely on the existential. These individuals are situated both inside and outside of the crowd, immune to the instant's inherent confusion, and unwilling or unable to bow before the mechanical God of the verse poem 'L'Horloge' ('c'est la loi'). Uncoupled from material modernity's 'vélocité dans la voie du progrès' ('Projet' D)—as is suggested by the type of adjectives Baudelaire uses ('pauvres', 'crottés', 'pestiférés', 'pouilleux')—these individuals, represented by the good dogs, have the ability to accept modern city existence and the challenges it imposes. They are Baudelaire's modern heroes, an antithesis to the generic individual, and the *dramatis personae* to whom *Le Spleen de Paris* covertly pays its homage. Baudelaire emphasises this repeatedly:

Je chante le chien crotté, le chien pauvre, le chien sans domicile, le chien flâneur, le chien saltimbanque, le chien dont l'instinct, comme celui du pauvre, du bohémien et de l'histrion, est merveilleusement aiguillonné par la nécessité, cette si bonne mère, cette vraie patronne des intelligences! (361)

Je chante les chiens calamiteux, soit ceux qui errent, solitaires, dans les ravines sinueuses des immenses villes, soit ceux qui ont dit à l'homme abandonné, avec des yeux clignotants et spirituels: 'Prends-moi avec toi, et de nos deux misères nous ferons peut-être une espèce de bonheur!' (360)

For those who know *Le Spleen de Paris*, it becomes clear that most of the forty-nine prose poems preceding ‘Les Bons Chiens’ deal with individuals that fit more than just loosely (indeed, with surprising exactness) into this pattern of characteristics: the poor, the homeless, the flâneur, the street artist. All of them are Baudelaire’s modern heroes, often borne from within the seething lower social stratum of what we call the modern city. They are waste products of material modernity and modern human existence, calamitous figures whose inner value and strength is disregarded and rejected by all those who have joined the socio-collective, homogenous hunt for the next best thing. These antiheroes have nothing to offer but vague reflections of modern human existence for those who know where to look. For Baudelaire, it is precisely these reflections that provide the fabric of *Le Spleen de Paris*.

Rendez-vous d’affaires, rendez-vous d’amour. A travers la brume, à travers la neige, à travers la crotte, sous la canicule mordante, sous la pluie ruisselante, ils vont, ils viennent, ils trottent, ils passent sous les voitures, excités par les puces, la passion, le besoin ou le devoir. Comme nous, ils se sont levés de bon matin et ils cherchent leur vie ou courent à leurs plaisirs. (361)

Thus it appears that ‘Les Bons Chiens’ stands for much more than ‘just’ an ironic and allegoric twisting of objective reality. Indeed, it may be more apt to refer to it as a fable:⁶²² a short story aiming to embrace, summarise, and convey the ‘morale désagréable’, which James Hiddleston already perceived as a dominant theme running through *Le Spleen de Paris*.⁶²³ Be that as it may, it becomes clear that, for Baudelaire, the world of dogs is in many ways similar to the world of man. This is true in a structural sense—that is, dogs mirroring the traits of their respective environments (for example, a warm and comfortable bourgeois home [‘fat quadrupède’], or the everyday fight for survival in the streets of Paris [‘bons chiens’]). But it is also true in a philosophical sense: dogs from their position as lovers of wisdom and knowledge are able *to reason with* their individual state of being.

⁶²² The *OED* defines a fable as ‘a short story, typically with animals as characters, conveying a moral’. Kaplan refers to the prose poems as fables of modern human existence.

⁶²³ Hiddleston writes at the beginning of his chapter on ‘Une Morale désagréable’: ‘It was Baudelaire’s stated intention in *Le Spleen de Paris* to emphasise the random and accidental aspects of his thought and inspiration and to draw, or to give the impression of drawing, from his observation of Paris street scenes through the disillusioned eyes of a man afflicted by the ennui of a vast modern capital, an unpleasant moral lesson.’ James Hiddleston, *Baudelaire and Le Spleen de Paris* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 33.

For Baudelaire, in the phantasmagorical environment of Second Empire Paris, this ability *to reason* fades away—is interrupted and fragmented—lost to the generic individual’s continuous epistemological attempts to comprehend (a given instant’s) objective reality. In a society with newly emerging modes of mass-production at hand, led by a political system whose survival was ultimately based on the successful use of propaganda and the spectacular, the art of socio-collective distraction became paramount. What resulted was the splitting of the crowd into more or less two fractions: a majority made up of those who indulge fully in the superficial splendour of material modernity, including the masses of factory workers carving out their miserable existence in the name of a materialist teleology; and a minority consisting of those who kept, or were forced to keep a *distance*. The latter, I have come to define as Baudelaire’s modern heroes: in many ways, simulacra of classical heroes, but equally distinguished from the crowd by accepting the challenges life imposes upon them and by maintaining the ability *to reason with* their individual state of being. They incarnate modern existence as the conscious witnesses of humanity’s lost cause. They are the good dogs of the collection’s final poem—a concluding hymn, sweet and caring, to the heroes, who populate not merely the fantastic scenarios of *Le Spleen de Paris*, but, indeed, modern human existence itself. As we know, in the context of Delacroix’s aesthetic of the public and lines blurred by colour: ‘cet hymne compliqué s’appelle la couleur’ (‘Salon de 1846’). Moreover, at this point, one may also encounter yet another reading of Baudelaire’s serpent analogy, away from the original sin paradigm. In ancient Greece already, the serpent acted as a symbol: it designated the death of a hero.⁶²⁴

This particular socio-cultural reading of ‘Les Bons Chiens’ is further reinforced by the poem’s final three paragraphs in which Baudelaire compares himself to the two ancient poets Virgil and Theocritus. Baudelaire had received a waistcoat from Joseph Stevens as a sign of gratitude for writing ‘Les Bons Chiens’ and Virgil and Theocritus had themselves received, ‘pour prix de leurs chants alternés, un bon fromage, une flûte du meilleur faiseur, ou une chèvre aux mamelles gonflées’ (362). Both poets are considered founders of bucolic poetry, expressing a longing for the calm and quiet of the countryside. At the end of *Le Spleen de Paris*—and certainly at the end of a poetic journey that led the poet, his modern aesthetic quest, and his readership straight into the heart of material modernity and modern city existence,

⁶²⁴ Christopher P. Jones, *New Heroes in Antiquity: From Achilles to Antinoos* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 15.

uncovering, pitilessly, its inherent *spleen* and ennui—perhaps even a dedicated Parisian prowler such as Baudelaire himself finally felt a desire to escape by thinking ‘aux étés de la Saint-Martin et à la beauté des femmes très mûres’ (363).

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Particularly in the somewhat discouraging context of epistemological as well as existential darkness, it seems to me that there is something uplifting about ‘Les Bons Chiens’. Indeed, Kaplan designates the prose poem as a form of poetic friendship and states: The most explicitly autobiographical fable, “The Good Dogs” cites more authors, living and ancestral, than any of the others, emphasizing its kinship with an artistic community. Baudelaire’s friends, during his stay in Brussels, recognizing its biographical origin, appreciated the “prose poem” as a reciprocal act.⁶²⁵ The concept of friendship, of course, also connotes a form of longing: a longing for closeness, a longing for warmth, a longing to share. It is worth recalling, here, that I began this study with the emotion of the Romantic longing for lost love. ‘Friendship’, ‘closeness’, ‘warmth’, ‘sharing’, ‘love’: indirectly, the empathy required in order to *experience* all of these sentiments and emotions also connotes a desire for stability and safety; for a shelter that may serve as a haven of calm in the perpetual fragmentation of material modernity. Conceptually projecting this fragmentation onto Idealist metaphysics, I have shown that such a shelter is increasingly difficult to find. In the specific context of the Baudelairean experience of modernity, it seems exclusively reserved for the faculties of the modern artist and the child. From the viewpoint of empathy, especially, this is not necessarily a good thing: for children grow up and modern artists are rare. But, as was the case in Goethe’s *Elective Affinities*, in ‘Les Bons Chiens’, when thinking ‘aux étés de la Saint-Martin et à la beauté des femmes très mûres’, perhaps, what the narrator does—explicitly and purposefully—is to *choose an interruption* in order to connote *hope*:⁶²⁶ hope that not everything is as it seems; hope that in a fatalistic sense not everything is lost; and hope that one may eventually find light in the epistemological darkness that characterises modern human existence. On this slightly positive note and in the name of *rêve*, *rêverie*, *ivresse*, and *imagination*, I now wish to leave the reader with a citation from an unpublished fairy tale I am currently authoring as a creative reworking of this very

⁶²⁵ Kaplan, *Baudelaire’s Prose Poems*, pp. 159–66 (p. 159).

⁶²⁶ See my discussion of Benjaminian modernity in chapter 3 and in particular in the subsection on ‘Walter Benjamin and the First Poet of Modernity’.

study. As is so often the case in fairy tale scenarios, in a kingdom dominated by evil, an oracle speaks to the child-protagonist:

Little Lucy, listen carefully:

Dreams are never simply dreams...

...they are glimpses into the future, if you only choose to follow them.

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