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Man's search for Identity in the Modern  
World: Baudelaire as Poet, Prophet and Moralist.

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### ABSTRACT

The search for identity by modern man is caused by the frustration he encounters in the face of rapid industrial and material advance which is not counterbalanced by spiritual progress.

This is the problem which Baudelaire examines. When satisfaction and gratification of physical desires prove ephemeral, man rebels against the standards he has been brought up to believe in. Wine and drugs fail to expand his personality sufficiently for him to achieve fulfilment, and he comes to realise that he must use his own creative ability in order to gain any sense of achievement or satisfaction.

But his experiences give him some insight into his own failings, and some idea of his capabilities.

Chapter I sets Baudelaire against the background of nineteenth-century change, drawing out the reasons for man's disorientation. In Chapter II various ideas are examined which Baudelaire shared with the Romantic writers and which he developed further as he studied man's search for identity.

Much of man's anguish is centred on ennui and frustration, which are examined in Chapter III.

Failure to reach harmony leads man to investigate the inner being, hoping through wine and drugs to expand this aspect of his personality, as is shown in Chapter IV.

Frustration then leads to revolt and reorientation, dealt with in Chapter V, which closes with man's contemplation of the meaning of death.

Chapter VI is concerned with Baudelaire's interpretation of true progress, a topic which is essential to his concepts of harmony and identity, for these latter concepts deal with the whole man, the achievement of balanced spiritual and physical harmony.

Throughout, Baudelaire is shown as being not only a poet, but also a moralist and prophet.



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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

The context which gave rise to the  
particular ideas and problems which  
concern Baudelaire.

The nineteenth century in France was a time of change and reform, an age of social reorganisation and revolution when existing values and well-tried institutions were overturned with no clear indication of what should replace them. The social and industrial revolutions seemed to declare that "new" and "different" were synonymous with "better". This is not to say that new systems actually offered the individual any hard and fast standards by which to measure himself or his achievement on a physical plane or on a spiritual one. On the contrary the old standards were swept away with nothing to shore up the structure or the moral standards on which man depended for his security. The effect on the individual was to make him unstable and insecure.

This dilemma is the very problem which troubles Baudelaire, and which he seeks to understand. He attributes metaphysical anguish in the face of material advancement and industrial progress to the fact that man mistakes these for true progress:

Demandez à tout bon Français qui lit tous les jours son  
journal dans son estaminet ce qu'il entend par progrès,  
il répondra que c'est la vapeur, l'électricité et  
l'éclairage au gaz, miracles inconnus aux Romains, et  
que ces découvertes témoignent pleinement de notre  
supériorité sur les anciens; tant il s'est fait de  
ténèbres dans ce malheureux cerveau et tant les choses de  
l'ordre matériel et de l'ordre spirituel s'y sont si  
bizarrement confondues! (1)

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(1) Critique Artistique, "Exposition Universelle de 1855", Oeuvres Complètes, Paris (Gallimard) 1961, p.958. (All further references to Baudelaire's works are to this edition; titles and page references only will be given.)

Having recognised the problem, he shows how man's anguish is revealed in his physical debauchery and spiritual neglect:

Nous nous faisons payer grassement nos aveux,  
Et nous rentrons gaïement dans le chemin bourbeux,  
Croyant par de vils pleurs laver toutes nos taches.<sup>(2)</sup>

and debauchery is followed by a feeling of emptiness:

Après une débauche, on se sent toujours plus seul, plus  
abandonné.<sup>(3)</sup>

The industrialists and purveyors of material progress did not provide man with the necessary, corresponding concepts enabling man to express himself in the face of the new developments. This led to disorientation and the feeling of the emptiness of materialism; but it was a feeling which man in the nineteenth century was incapable of expressing adequately, because his conceptual development lagged a long way behind his material progress.

As well as industrial and material changes, there were political revolutions and social turmoil which disrupted the social order. Different forms of government were overthrown and, with the rejection of the monarchy, religion and the Church lost much ground. Deprived of spiritual values and religious faith, man began to founder.

On the literary scene many established conventions and ideas were being rejected. Imagination, sensitivity and freedom either replaced reason and order, or made them subordinate.

The Romantic movement generally encouraged men to look to their senses and imagination rather than listen to the dictates of reason. It urged man to see himself first and foremost as an individual, and only secondly as a member of society. The man in harmony with himself was that man who found himself most completely and naturally in harmony

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(2) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Au Lecteur", vv.6-8, p.5

(3) Journaux Intimes, (Hygiène), p.1265

with his environment. That most men failed in this is shown by the emphasis on melancholy and ennui. But the Romantic writers did much to encourage in man the idea of pride in himself, the recognition of his own importance, and the intrinsic worth of the individual. Despite the excitement, stimulation and novelty of the period, a deep anguish was experienced by some sensitive individuals, and expressed by contemporary writers, because the overthrow of existing standards and orders was not counterbalanced, leaving man in a social, spiritual and moral vacuum. Baudelaire was one such writer.

Baudelaire's reaction to contemporary problems.

Baudelaire was well aware of the ravages of materialism and the hollow emptiness it brings to man. He describes these effects through a vivid presentation of contemporary reality in urban scenes of many kinds. He seeks to portray man's sickness of soul, and to make abundantly clear his tendency towards evil and vice. He rebelled against conventional standards of behaviour, unable to accept that such restraints were applicable to a man of genius; but he rebelled also against the moral rebels of the time, the dandies<sup>(4)</sup>, for he could not align himself with them either, because he considered their behaviour and attitudes irresponsible.

Not only does he deal with the physical environment which aggravated man's sickness, he turns also towards the spiritual sphere, thus expressing his desire to develop the spiritual side of human existence in relation to the material world. Again, he does not understand "spirituel" in the conventional religious manner, for he was a rebel as much against the church as against any other social institution. He placed great value on the individual, and it is in relation to the individual and his anguish that Baudelaire deals with the problem of materialism. He examines the problem from three standpoints as a poet, as a prophet, and as a moralist.

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(4) See James Laver, Dandies, London, 1968, pp. 63-79

Firstly, as a poet Baudelaire treats the problem by giving his own experiences a general application while yet retaining a measure of individuality and personal identity. Baudelaire has very definite ideas about what is required of the poet and his work, and the position the poet should hold in society, as is found in the Salons and in Les Fleurs du Mal.

Some of his requirements for a poet were similar to those of the Romantic writers. For instance, the use of imagination and the senses. But his attitude towards these faculties considerably outstripped that of his contemporaries. He calls imagination "La Reine des Facultés" and clearly defines its work:

Elle est l'analyse, elle est la synthèse...  
Elle décompose toute la création, et, avec  
les matériaux amassés et disposés suivant des  
règles dont on ne peut trouver l'origine que  
dans le plus profond de l'âme, elle crée un  
monde nouveau, elle produit la sensation du  
neuf.<sup>(5)</sup>

And in L'Oeuvre et la Vie de Delacroix he insists on the supremacy of imagination and its importance both in the creativity achieved by the man of genius, the poet, and in understanding the world.

... tout l'univers visible n'est qu'un magasin  
d'images et de signes auxquels l'imagination  
donnera une place et une valeur relative; c'est une  
espèce de pâture que l'imagination doit digérer et  
transformer. Toutes les facultés de l'âme humaine  
doivent être subordonnées à l'imagination qui les  
met en réquisition toutes à la fois.<sup>(6)</sup>

His high esteem for imagination goes hand in hand with a preference for artistry as opposed to mere inspiration, for creativity rather than mere expertise. Indeed his main quarrel with Victor Hugo is on this score, for Baudelaire rates him as "adroit" and "correct" rather than

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(5) Salon de 1859, pp.1037-38.

(6) L'Oeuvre et la Vie de Delacroix, p.1122

"inventif" and "créateur".<sup>(7)</sup>

For Baudelaire the essence of being a poet lies in the ability and determination to take those elements from nature which fire the imagination, and then create from them. Indeed, the whole aim of his poetry is to construct a complete architecture from the raw materials in the world:

O vous, soyez témoins que j'ai fait mon devoir  
Comme un parfait chimiste et comme une âme sainte.  
Car j'ai de chaque chose extrait la quintessence,<sup>(8)</sup>

The poet's duty is to refine those elements which he finds in nature in order to extract what is essential. Furthermore the structure which he then creates will be a thing of beauty, for he aims at extracting beauty from the evil around him. Accordingly, he addresses the city, reality, in these terms:

Tu m'as donné ta boue et j'en ai fait de l'or.<sup>(9)</sup>

But his work is not limited to extracting and refining. He must also be able to create a thing of value from apparently worthless material, and his creation will bear little physical resemblance to the elements with which he began. He may even produce a new substance, just as a chemist produces new substances from the elements he uses. More than that even, for Baudelaire like a successful alchemist, claims to have achieved the impossible by changing mud to gold.

While the subject matter of poetry or art must be realistic, it is the overall unity which is important:

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... La première condition nécessaire pour faire un art sain, est la croyance à l'unité intégrale.<sup>(10)</sup>

(7) Salon de 1846, p.889 ("M.Victor Hugo... est un ouvrier beaucoup plus adroit qu'inventif, un travailleur bien plus correct que créateur.")

(8) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Reliquat et Dossier II", p.180

(9) Ibid.

(10) Les Drames et Les Romans Honnêtes, p.620

Secondly, as a prophet, Baudelaire recognises the dilemma and disorientation of man, and also warns of the dire consequences if man continues to ignore this situation when confronting the problem. In addition, he forestalls man's frustration at his inability to reach any final solution to his spiritual problem during his earthly existence, and even hints that no solution might be permanently satisfactory in any dimension. He points to death partly as a way out of man's anguish, partly as a relief from his disorientation, but also as a way of opening up new vistas to man on a spiritual rather than a physical plane and in a new unexplored dimension. In this he is adamant, however, that man still will be venturing into the unknown, - a warning that even this solution may turn out to be empty or frustrating:

- J'allais mourir...

Tout mon coeur s'arrachait au monde familier.

...

Enfin la vérité froide se révéla:

J'étais mort sans surprise, et la terrible aurore

M'enveloppait - Eh quoi! n'est-ce donc que cela?

La toile était levée et j'attendais encore.<sup>(11)</sup>

At the point of death there is an air of expectancy and anticipation. But this is short-lived for death is no different from life in some aspects. Baudelaire uses it partly to introduce the possibility of new experiences but also to stress that there is continuity in man's spiritual existence, for death has come upon the subject before he is aware that any change has taken place. In life as we know it in the physical world man has a spiritual side to his being, but he has tended to lose sight of it in his striving to keep abreast of material progress.

In Les Paradis Artificiels, at the end of "Le Poème du Haschisch", he explains that spiritual means are more valuable and ultimately more satisfying in the quest for identity, for harmony, for the final goal than are artificial means:

L'homme n'est pas si abandonné, si privé de moyens  
honnêtes pour gagner le ciel, qu'il soit obligé  
d'invoquer la pharmacie et la sorcellerie; il n'a pas  
besoin de vendre son âme pour payer les caresses

(11) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Le Rêve d'un curieux," vv.3,8,10-13, pp.121-22.

enivrantes et l'amitié des houris. Qu'est-ce qu'un paradis qu'on achète au prix de son salut éternel? ... La magie les <sup>(12)</sup> dupe et elle allume pour eux un faux bonheur et une fausse lumière; tandis que nous, poètes et philosophes, <sup>(13)</sup> nous avons régénéré notre âme par le travail successif et la contemplation; par l'exercice assidu de la volonté et la noblesse permanente de l'intention, nous avons créé à notre usage un jardin de vraie beauté. <sup>(14)</sup>

Baudelaire is pointing to the frustration and failure which come from artificial stimulation and the short-term satisfaction it provides. True satisfaction, which the poet and philosopher gain through exercise of their mental and spiritual faculties, brings lasting fulfillment which increases as continuous spiritual effort nourishes and maintains growth towards harmony. The word Prophet means one who forewarns or admonishes. Baudelaire does this by pointing to the effects which debauchery has on the personality, (especially his own). But he goes farther, to say that the indulgence of physical faculties constitutes neglect and denial of spiritual values, and that this neglect is harmful both to the individual and to society, for it will become a serious social problem if it is allowed to continue. In this he is predicting the future in an astonishingly accurate manner. But as with most prophets, his warnings fell on deaf ears.

Thirdly, Baudelaire speaks as a moralist, though he himself would be reluctant to accept this role, for he openly rejects conventional morality in favour of an absolute and personal morality which interprets the rightness or wrongness of an action in respect of its relation to the spiritual growth and attainment of harmony in each individual rather than in respect of man's relationship vis-à-vis the rest of society. Because of this interpretation of a personal morality, his ideas coincide with conventional morality on some points, but on other points he is considerably at variance. On the one hand he follows in the classical

(12) Those who seek "paradis artificiels".

(13) The underlining is mine.

(14) Op. cit., p.386-7



tradition of believing that actions are right if they strengthen man's spiritual development and wrong if they inhibit it; on the other hand he foreshadows the notion of "disponibilité", upheld by Gide and other modern writers, in maintaining that man has a large part to play in shaping his own destiny, and that he must not shy away from any experience which might broaden his outlook, however unconventional it might be.

A moralist advocates a definite moral stance, and this Baudelaire does in Les Fleurs du Mal and in Du Vin et Du Hachish. When the first edition of Les Fleurs du Mal was published in 1857 and then condemned as immoral, Baudelaire prepared a defence to show his moral stance. He disclaimed any accusation of immorality and maintained that the book should be taken as a whole and that then the reader would not fail to grasp the aptness and necessity of some unsavory descriptions of evil:

Le livre doit être jugé dans son ensemble,  
et alors il en ressort une terrible moralité. (15)

His greatest quarrel with contemporary morality was its hypocrisy, against which he railed and which he sought to expose through his work:

Qu'est-ce que c'est que cette morale prude, bégueule, taquine, et qui ne tend à rien moins (sic) qu'à créer des conspirateurs même dans l'ordre si tranquille des rêveurs?

Cette morale-là irait jusqu'à dire: DÉSORMAIS ON NE FERA QUE DES LIVRES CONSOLANTS ET SERVANT À DÉMONTRER QUE L'HOMME EST NÉ BON, ET QUE TOUS LES HOMMES SONT HEUREUX. - Abominable hypocrisie! (16)

Indeed he dedicates the work to:

- Hypocrite lecteur, - mon semblable, - mon frère! (17)

Baudelaire's attitude to morality is diametrically opposed to Christian morality, in places. And it was the Christian standard of

(15) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Reliquat et Dossier"; p. 180

(16) Ibid., p. 182

(17) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Au Lecteur", v.40, p.6

morality according to which his work was judged by his contemporaries. Where Christian morality condemns desire and temptation in themselves, Baudelaire accepts them as elements as natural as the need for food and drink, as the normal expression of health, youth and vitality:

J'aime le souvenir de ces époques nues,  
Dont Phoebus se plaisait à dorer les statues.  
Alors l'homme et la femme en leur agilité  
Jouissaient sans mensonge et sans anxiété. (18)

What he does condemn, and very soundly, is the desire for corruption, and the consequences of debauchery:

Le Poëte aujourd'hui, quand il veut concevoir  
Ces natives grandeurs, aux lieux où se font voir  
La nudité de l'homme et celle de la femme,  
Sent un froid ténébreux envelopper son âme  
Devant ce noir tableau plein d'épouvantement. (19)

The basis of his morality is that he only condemns the abuse of normal appetites or the distortion of them. (20) This does not mean, however, that man himself is not corrupt; nor is man that completely natural creature of innocence whom Jean-Jacques Rousseau painted. Indeed, Baudelaire sees much corruption in contemporary society. But he recognises that man is always fighting against those forces trying to rule him, is in constant battle for mastery of his several appetites. But always it is lack of moderation, lack of will-power which cause man to act immorally. And man himself is conscious of this in that he is aware of those two opposing forces which continually tear him apart, body from soul, and prevent him from being at one with himself:

Il y a dans tout homme, à toute heure, deux postulations  
simultanées, l'une vers Dieu, l'autre vers Satan. (21)

(18) Les Fleurs du Mal, V, vv.1-4, p.11

(19) Ibid., vv 15-19, p.12

(20) Cf, Enid Starkie, Baudelaire, Harmondsworth, 1971, p.634 "Yet he was a moralist in the Christian tradition, who expresses revolt against the lure of the flesh, and horror of the pleasures which leave a bitter taste of ashes in the mouth. He demonstrated clearly, without didactic aim, the fundamental truth that

Baudelaire's morality is linked to his attitude to original sin with which man is born, and man's moral progress increases as the effects of original sin decrease in him. So in this sense morality is almost synonymous with progress:

Il ne peut y avoir de progrès (vrai, c'est-à-dire moral) que dans l'individu et par l'individu lui-même. (22)

He approaches morality from the point of view of a philosopher in that morality is linked to the individual and his struggle for identity and harmony within himself despite his heredity, and eventually provokes him into seeking harmony with his environment. There is continual emphasis on the links between progress, civilisation, morality and harmony, for each is defined in terms of one or more of the others. Baudelaire measures man's progress in his relation to the harmony he has achieved, in relation to the identity which he has established, in terms of that personal morality which defines good and bad in reference to mastery over self, knowledge of self and ability to be at peace with self. The great cry of the frustrated, distraught individual in his search for identity is:

- Ah! Seigneur! donnez-moi la force et le courage  
De contempler mon coeur et mon corps sans dégoût. (23)

Baudelaire is a moralist in that he comments on the individual's action and attitudes in the search for identity, translating these actions into right or wrong by reference to their effects on the developing personality and its harmony. He lays down particular conditions under which the personality may develop fruitfully, and points out those conditions which stunt its healthy growth. To do this he takes particular examples, either from his personal experience or from his own observations of others, and develops from them those common features which allow him to propose general judgements or assertions. For instance, he takes several examples of debauchery and draws from them the

retribution inevitably follows excess and vice, that every action bears in itself the seed of its own punishment or reward."

(21) Mon Coeur mis à nu, XI, p.1277

(22) Ibid, IX, p.1276.

(23) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Un voyage à Cythère," vv.59-60, p.113

conclusion that corruption has adverse effects on the development of a balanced personality.

As a moralist, he suggests how to differentiate between good and evil without necessarily experiencing either, - another of his reasons for presenting a work about corruption.

There are two ways in which a moralist can approach his subject. Either he studies life and evolves a definite set of mores from that study; or he makes value judgements about certain situations. Baudelaire combines elements of these two methods, making certain value judgements but leaving the reader to decide how far these judgements apply to his particular case, i.e. he encourages the reader to adopt a moral stance and apply it for himself.

As a poet Baudelaire wishes to create a work of intrinsic value which conveys as convincingly as possible the anguish in modern man; as a prophet he warns man of the consequences of his actions which are determined by this deep anguish; as a moralist he recognises from where this anguish stems.

His contemporary environment provides him with excellent elements with which to perform his act of creation, for all the changes which took place at this time resulted in restlessness and disorientation, a demand for stimulation and for continually new experiences as an escape from the need to come to terms with the prevailing situation. Many, when stimulation and novelty ceased to have much effect, slipped into a state of bored apathy and ennui. Baudelaire makes this ennui a central theme both in the analysis of modern man's problem and in its possible solution. He intends as a poet to depict evil in all its forms so that he can elucidate its nature for others to recognise, throwing it into stark relief by juxtaposing elements of good and evil throughout the work:

... un livre doit être jugé dans son ensemble.

A un blasphème j'opposerai des élancements vers  
le Ciel, à une obscénité des fleurs platoniques.

Depuis le commencement de la poësie, tous les volumes de poësie sont ainsi faits. Mais il était impossible de faire autrement un livre destiné à représenter l'AGITATION DE L'ESPRIT DANS LE MAL. (24)

The particular "mal" on which the problem centres, as Baudelaire sees it, is the emptiness of materialism and the anguish experienced by man in his attempt first to fight against it, then to come to terms with the problem. The terrifying magnitude of the problem he fully matches with the sinister and fearsome interpretation which he gives to "ennui". He not only develops the idea of escape from the world and its problems, but when he has thoroughly examined this avenue and found that the solution to man's problem of disorientation does not lie in escape but in reorientation, he then leads men towards self-examination and to the realisation that the answer to, or at least a way of coping with the situation is in a quest for spiritual harmony rather than material and physical satisfaction and comfort. (25)

So he leads man from the headlong pursuit of sensation and novelty, through the bitter anguish and lethargic despair of ennui, into a spiritual reorientation which will put him on the road to harmony, and lead him to discover wherein his true identity can be found. His solution is not final, nor does he promise that he has found the way out of his dilemma, but he does maintain that some kind of striving after perfection is more valid for man than was the lethargy and self-pity in which he was allowing himself to wallow. The way out of this lethargy is through violent revolt against all his past standards and beliefs, which some may still find shocking; indeed it offended many of his contemporaries. But such an explosion and dispersal of past encumbrances is necessary to clear the way for new firm beliefs. Here he seems to embody the whole spirit of the nineteenth-century rebel, though his personal rejection of old accepted standards is far more radical than that of others in the age against which he is writing.

(24) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Reliquat et Dossier", p.181

(25) Cf. p.1

This revolt is not altogether unusual. It is analogous with adolescent revolt. The adolescent tends to reject everything willy-nilly. Before he can accept anything he must come to terms with it through his own experience, investigations and reasonings. Similarly, Baudelaire's period of revolt in Les Fleurs du Mal is a necessary stage in his growth to spiritual maturity, all the more extreme in him because of the very violence of those forces which he felt were tearing him apart.

Martin Turnell sums up Baudelaire's writing in the following terms:

A good deal of Baudelaire's work is an indictment of a corrupt society. It is one of the signs of his genius that his poetry sprang from a clash between the individual and society. (26)

In Les Fleurs du Mal Baudelaire presents three stages in the individual's attitude towards vice and corruption: firstly, to wallow in it and find it empty of lasting fulfillment; secondly, to reject it because of the emptiness and frustration it leaves in its wake; thirdly to try and find spiritual comfort or compensation.

In the process he discovers the truth about himself, his relationship with his environment and the means of finding the harmony he needs.

The emptiness Baudelaire perceives in physical corruption and debauchery gives rise to ennui, which gathers force as he investigates his inner self, aided by wine and drugs, and eventually goads him into revolt. There follows a contemplation of death and the spiritual world.

Disillusionment with the real world leads to the conviction that only in the spiritual will he get closer to what he should be. But death is symbolic. Baudelaire uses it to introduce us to another dimension which we must contemplate while still living in the real world. We must formulate concepts, try to understand the ideas behind the material progress which has been made, in order to live in the world. Anguish arises from our inability to come to terms with the changes in the physical world. True progress comes only when man has reconciled his spiritual

(26) Baudelaire, London, 1953, p.16

and physical being.

The aim of the thesis is to examine the way Baudelaire expresses this disharmony of man and the environment (that is between man and man, between man and nature) by showing the disorientation of the individual, a subject which he considers as poet, prophet and moralist.

The examination will begin with a review of the ideas Baudelaire shared with the Romantics and the way in which he extended these ideas. Next will be studied the emptiness of the material and physical world, and then ennui.

The use and abuse of alcohol and drugs form an important part of ennui and will therefore be treated separately.

Failure leads to revolt, the contemplation of death and the realisation that man has a spiritual dimension: these will be studied in the latter part of the thesis before, finally, Baudelaire's definition of progress is considered.

\* \* \*



The works which will be most closely looked at in the examination of modern man's problems are four in number:

Du Vin et du Hachish, published in 1851,  
Les Fleurs du Mal, first published in 1857,  
Les Paradis Artificiels, published in 1860,  
Les Petits Poèmes en Prose, published in 1869, and  
 known also as Le Spleen de Paris.

There seems to be an underlying connection between these works in that they each embody some aspect of the metaphysical anguish which Baudelaire depicts on man's behalf in order to lead him towards a reorientation of his spiritual outlook through which he can set out on the journey to discover his true harmony and identity.

Du Vin et du Hachish gives us some idea of the poet's first encounters with hallucinatory drugs and their ability to transport the individual beyond himself. In Les Fleurs du Mal Baudelaire examines evil in all its forms in order to elucidate its nature. Having done this, he leads man away from the physical world into the spiritual world in search of harmony.

In Les Paradis Artificiels Baudelaire modifies considerably some of the attitudes he had earlier expressed. Though he still retains some of the ideas from Du Vin et du Hachish, more weight is given to the less desirable effects of such stimulants. Les Paradis Artificiels adds another dimension to the poet's presentation of man's search for his identity, through a closehand description of the mental and physical degradation entailed in the use and abuse of artificial stimulants to the imagination. What was a fairly mild attitude in Du Vin et du Hachish develops into an unequivocal condemnation of this method of trying to reach paradise, for by the time Les Paradis Artificiels was published Baudelaire had come to know the effects of abuse of this kind both on himself and on some of his acquaintances.

Les Petits Poèmes en Prose present in more detail the physical situations and tableaux of Les Fleurs du Mal, and thus avoid destroying the harmony and order which is an integral part of the latter work.



In addition to these four works, reference will be made to L'Oeuvre et la vie de Delacroix, and to the Salons of 1845 and 1859, as these give us a fairly comprehensive description of Baudelaire's philosophy of poetry and of his requirements for the man of genius, for it is primarily the man of genius who feels most keenly the anguish in the materialism of the modern world.

## CHAPTER II

### Baudelaire and the Romantics

In his presentation of modern man's problem, Baudelaire develops several ideas which he shared with other writers of his day, particularly the Romantics. But though these ideas were not original he gives them a new slant.

Of major importance among these ideas is the place accorded to imagination and sensitivity, for these two elements are vital to the re-establishment of man's equilibrium. These elements are found at their best in the poet or man of genius, who represents man at his finest and most perceptive. His qualities and position, in society are dealt with in some detail in the Salons, in L'Oeuvre et la vie de Delacroix, and in Bénédiction, for it is with reference to him that Baudelaire depicts and defines man's anguish when confronted with evil.

Through the man of genius also we are reminded of the fragility of man's soul and the need to care for it and protect it by the development to the full of man's spiritual life. We are continually asked to consider man in relation to the various elements in his environment, through the isolation imposed on the poet by the very character and qualities which mark him out, for his particular sensitivity and lucidity make him aware of the harsh reality of the physical world.

These ideas are developed in such a way as to point towards a search for identity as a way out of the anguish which the poet feels.

In his introduction to the Salon de 1846 Baudelaire defines quite clearly his attitude to art and the importance it has in the harmonious development of the soul:

Cependant il est juste, si les deux tiers de votre temps sont remplis par la science, que le troisième soit occupé par le sentiment, et c'est par le sentiment seul que vous devez comprendre l'art: - et c'est ainsi que l'équilibre des forces de notre âme sera constitué. (1)

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(1) Opus. cit., p. 875

This statement shows us immediately the angle from which Baudelaire intends to tackle man's problem. He believes that equilibrium must be established in man and that this is possible through the reassociation of art with technical advance. Because art is important in this way, the man of genius is important for he represents man at his spiritual best. An analysis of his qualities, his purpose and his position in society is one way of drawing attention to man as he is ideally. But Baudelaire does not regard his poet in quite this light, for as well as embodying the finest qualities the poet also feels the anguish in the world more acutely because of these qualities. Baudelaire inherited from the Romantics this interest in the relationship of the man of genius with society.

His own definition of Romanticism indicates more of the themes he shared with the Romantics:

Le romantisme n'est précisément ni dans le choix des sujets ni dans la vérité exacte, mais dans la manière de sentir... Pour moi, le romantisme est l'expression la plus récente, la plus actuelle du beau... le romantisme ne consistera pas dans une exécution parfaite, mais dans une conception analogue à la morale du siècle... Qui dit romantisme dit art moderne, - c'est-à-dire intimité, spiritualité, couleur, aspiration vers l'infini, exprimées par tous les moyens que contiennent les arts.<sup>(2)</sup>

Baudelaire regards Delacroix, rather than Hugo, as the best exponent of Romantic ideas and in 1851 he rejects both Romanticism and the theory of "l'art pour l'art":

Mais, par son principe même, l'insurrection romantique était condamnée à une vie courte. La puérile utopie de l'école de l'art pour l'art, en excluant la morale, et souvent même la passion, était nécessairement stérile. Elle se mettait en flagrante contravention avec le génie de l'humanité.<sup>(3)</sup>

(2) Ibid., "Qu'est-ce que le romantisme?" p.879.

(3) Critique Littéraire, "Pierre Dupont", p.605

Léon Cellier maintains that far from denying Romanticism, Baudelaire's aim was to rejuvenate it.<sup>(4)</sup> This is supported by Baudelaire's earlier contention in the Salon de 1845 that the Romantics fall into the trap of believing that inspiration is in itself sufficient for art:

Voilà les dernières ruines de l'ancien romantisme -  
voilà ce que c'est que de venir dans un temps où il  
est reçu de croire que l'inspiration suffit et  
remplace le reste; ... c'est M. Victor Hugo qui a  
perdu M. Boulanger - après en avoir perdu tant  
d'autres- ...<sup>(5)</sup>

His criticism of Hugo reveals that Baudelaire sees the need for something more. He maintains that the mission of the inspired genius is not merely to record his inspiration but to transpose and translate the message into terms that ordinary folk can understand:

... je préfère le poète qui se met en communication  
permanente avec les hommes de son temps, et échange  
avec eux des pensées et des sentiments traduits dans  
un noble langage suffisamment correct.<sup>(6)</sup>

Baudelaire firmly believes that the man of genius is chosen:

Lorsque, par un décret des puissances suprêmes,  
Le Poète apparaît en ce monde ennuyé...<sup>(7)</sup>

He sees suffering as a corequisite to creativity and as a basis for spiritual life:

"Soyez béni, mon Dieu qui donnez la souffrance  
Comme un divin remède à nos impuretés  
Et comme la meilleure et la plus pure essence  
Qui prépare les forts aux saintes voluptés!"<sup>(8)</sup>

but he adds an important qualification: that the poet, or artist, must have the gift of creativity, he must give form to the matter contained in his inspiration:

- (4) Léon Cellier. Baudelaire et Hugo, Paris, 1970, p. 48  
(5) Op. Cit., "Boulanger", p. 827.  
(6) Critique littéraire, "Pierre Dupont", p.606  
(7) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Bénédiction", vv.1-2. p.7  
(8) Ibid., vv. 57-60, p.9

Car il ne sera fait que de pure lumière,  
 Puisée au foyer saint des rayons primitifs,  
 Et dont les yeux mortels, dans leur splendeur entière,  
 Ne sont que des miroirs obscurcis et plaintifs!"<sup>(9)</sup>

He considers art as greater than nature, and the artist almost as great as God, for he puts order into the formlessness of nature:

La nature extérieure... n'est qu'un amas incohérent  
 de matériaux que l'artiste est invité à associer et  
 à mettre en ordre.<sup>(10)</sup>

To be able to deal with the raw materials in nature the creative genius must be endowed with that one quality which Baudelaire ranks above all others: the power of imagination. He defines this in the Salon de 1859<sup>(11)</sup> and he accords supremacy to this particular faculty of the man of genius.<sup>(12)</sup> Because the creative genius has sensitivity and imagination, he is that much more vulnerable than ordinary men, for his lucidity, together with these qualities, makes him aware of the discord in the world around him and of his need to try and counteract it.

Baudelaire links the various aspects of genius through his recognition of the problem of evil in the world. Like Victor Hugo, he recognises that the problem of evil is linked with a duality in nature and in man. Hugo thought that the soul was being continually pulled in two directions, towards good and evil, and that the balance, very finely poised, was found only in man:

L'homme est un équilibre.  
 L'homme est une prison où l'âme reste libre.  
 L'âme dans l'homme agit, fait le bien, fait le mal,  
 Remonte vers l'esprit, retombe en animal.<sup>(13)</sup>

The problem of evil springs from the fact that man alone of all creation cannot see God, is free to act how he will, and therefore not always rightly.

(9) Ibid., vv.73-76, p. 9

(10) L'Oeuvre et la Vie de Delacroix, p.1124

(11) Salon de 1859, p.1037-38

(12) L'Oeuvre et la Vie de Delacroix, p.1122

(13) Victor HUGO, "Ce que dit la bouche de l'ombre", Oeuvres Complètes, Vol.II, Pléiade Edition, Paris, 1967, p.813.

The theory behind Baudelaire's duality is rather different. He suggests a dichotomy between body and soul, that man aspires towards spirituality while at the same time showing marked leanings towards sin and vice:

Il y a dans tout homme, à toute heure, deux postulations simultanées, l'une vers Dieu, l'autre vers Satan.

L'invocation à Dieu, ou spiritualité, est un désir de monter en grade; celle de Satan, ou animalité, est une joie de descendre.<sup>(14)</sup>

His body and soul are torn in opposite directions as a result of this dichotomy, and man becomes a battleground on which good and evil struggle for mastery of his will. That evil is more often successful is implied by the use of "désir" in connection with "spiritualité" and "joie" with "animalité", for while "désir" suggests longing, "joie" brings with it a sense of pleasurable satisfaction at something accomplished. Man's major misfortune in this situation is the fact that he has  
La conscience dans le mal<sup>(15)</sup>

But where Hugo proffers a possible solution, Baudelaire seeks only to throw into relief those elements which will enable man to recognise evil when he sees it. At times the portrayal of evil is overdone, and the poet seems to revel in his subject for its own sake, but he maintains that he has to portray evil in its true state, for his work is about the soul's struggle in the face of evil. He has the major task of extracting beauty from evil. The very difficulty of the task made it the more rewarding, for it was a major obstacle. Striving to overcome such obstacles plays an important part in the development of harmony in the soul, for it entails a working together of differing faculties to a specific end.<sup>(16)</sup>

A poem which illustrates the soul's struggle in the face of evil is "Réversibilité". Baudelaire has taken the litany as the basic form of the poem. The use of this form, coupled with the unholy thoughts that it expresses might constitute blasphemy, or at least shows some similarity to forms of devil worship, for much emphasis is put on anger, vengeance

(14) Mon coeur mis à nu, XI, p.1277

(15) Les Fleurs du Mal, "L'Irremédiable", II, v 8, p.76

(16) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Reliquat et Dossier", p.185

and passion. But a closer analysis leads one to appreciate the effectiveness of this alliance of forme and fond. The overall effect of this use of religious form is not the religiosity which the Romantic writers achieved, but rather a half-satanic, half-desperate plea caused by the state of ennui and frustration in which the poet finds himself. It emphasises the agony which the poet undergoes because of the opposing directions in which he is being pulled as the forces of good and evil vie for mastery over his body and soul through the domination of his will. The antithesis and repetition in each stanza of "Réversibilité" throw these opposing forces into stark relief:

Ange plein de gaieté, connaissez-vous l'angoisse,  
 La honte, les remords, les sanglots, les ennuis,  
 Et les vagues terreurs de ces affreuses nuits  
 Qui compriment le coeur comme un papier qu'on froisse?  
 Ange plein de gaieté, connaissez-vous l'angoisse?

Ange plein de bonté, connaissez-vous la haine,  
 Les poings crispés dans l'ombre et les larmes de fiel,  
 Quand la Vengeance bat son infernal rappel,  
 Et de nos facultés se fait le capitaine?  
 Ange plein de bonté, connaissez-vous la haine?<sup>(17)</sup>

Baudelaire emphasises the fragile nature of man's soul and its vulnerability when confronted with the effects and aftertaste of evil. It is like paper which is easily crumpled and disposed of. It is brittle when exposed unprotected to the ravages of vice and is subject to those variable emotions which seize man's animal nature from time to time. In the "Spleen et Idéal" section of Les Fleurs du Mal, to which this poem belongs, we encounter many emotions, revealing diverse facets of man's soul running the gauntlet of evil and immoderation. In "Duellum" for example, we are shown physical love depicted as a battle of the sexes:

Deux guerriers ont couru l'un sur l'autre;...  
 - O fureur des coeurs mûrs par l'amour ulcérés!  
 Dans le ravin hanté des chats-pards et des onces  
 Nos héros, s'étreignant méchamment, ont roulé,...

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(17) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Réversibilité", vv. 1-10, p.42



- Ce gouffre c'est l'enfer, de nos amis peuplé!  
 Roulons-y sans remords, amazone inhumaine,  
 Afin d'éterniser l'ardeur de notre haine!<sup>(18)</sup>

In "Le Poison" we see the poet's efforts to avoid reality through wine and opium and the false security that they release into man's soul, a security pushed beyond the limits of man's credulity so that he is forced into disappointment and confusion:

Le vin sait revêtir le plus sordide bouge  
 D'un luxe miraculeux,...

L'opium agrandit ce qui n'a pas de bornes,  
 Allonge l'illimité,  
 Approfondit le temps, creuse la volupté,  
 Et de plaisirs noirs et mornes  
 Remplit l'âme au delà de sa capacité.<sup>(19)</sup>

Not only is Baudelaire emphasising the fragile nature of man's soul and the implicit need for man to respect this fragility, but he is showing in no uncertain terms that excesses of any kind are damaging to the soul and that man must learn to exercise self-control, must use his will in order to protect his soul before his will itself becomes worn down and made impotent by debauchery.

The way in which Baudelaire deals with the problem of materialism led him into moral disrepute and religious disgrace. He was regarded with suspicion because he tackled the problem from the side of evil rather than from the side of good. That is, he looked closely at the evils in question and described them in minute detail, as part of his plan to make them more readily recognised. But he did not give such detailed attention to the corresponding good in the world. In a way Baudelaire fell between two stools because, while it was not part of his brief to praise good and virtue, people were not yet ready to view evil objectively, nor were they able to contemplate the possibility that evil could be viewed objectively. He was for the most part a keen observer of evil from which he wanted to

(18) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Duellum", vv1,8-10,12-14, p.34

(19) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Le Poison", vv.1-2,6-10, p.46



extract beauty and in this way draw from it some salutary conclusions regarding man and his search for harmony. Many in his time regarded him as a profligate, outcast from the Church, and thoroughly debauched. Doubtless by the standards of his age he was socially immoral in some aspects of his behaviour. But he openly rejected conventional morality and lived by his own standards, which were just as demanding of him. Moreover as he grew older he became aware of the effects of his earlier mistakes, and changed his standpoint on several issues, notably drug-taking and wine.

In Baudelaire's attitude towards morality, his primary concern is to find what is right for the individual, what will contribute to the harmony and identity towards which the individual is striving. This is part of the importance of the "Spleen et Idéal" poems, for they show the false hope and the ephemeral security, which physical pleasure and excess create, and the ensuing disappointment and frustration. Debauchery, lechery, drunkenness and so on are condemned because of the effects they have on man, by the dissatisfaction and lethargy they create, by the degradation of spirit into which over-indulgence leads. The words themselves imply excess. Baudelaire does not condemn sexuality, wine or any other pleasure in moderation, and indeed he sees in them a kind of beauty which might lead to an enhancement of man's personality and heighten his sensibility. It is the excessive indulgence which he condemns as it upsets the harmony and well-being of the individual and contributes to his anguish, for it causes passion to take over from reason and animality to gain ascendancy over the true nature of man, which is spirituality.

In Baudelaire's poetry we are shown man, particularly the man of genius, not only in relation to society and in isolation, but also in relation to nature, as he searches for identity. The contemplation of nature by the Romantic poets had led them sometimes to an idealisation of nature, such as is found in Lamartine's "Le Lac", or to an excessive subjectivity, as is found in Musset's "Nuits" cycle. Baudelaire was wary of both these attitudes towards nature, finding the former rather an aimless preoccupation, and considering the latter lamentable and mediocre.

Although his own poetry is personal rather than impersonal, though he takes as a starting point his own experience and thoughts, he objectivises these so that the result is universal and general in its appeal. In this respect he tends towards classicism in that his primary interest lies in the discovery of the eternal essence of man rather than in a consideration of the various forms this takes on a temporal plane. This leaning towards classicism makes Baudelaire become gradually more pre-occupied with spiritual matters in direct relation to his disillusionment and disenchantment with the physical world. He finds the physical world insufficient to satisfy the strivings and yearnings of his soul, and believes that material objects must exist only because they have their origins in the world of the spirit. This is the fundamental experience on which the poem "Correspondances" is based:

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.

Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent  
 Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité,

...

Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent. <sup>(20)</sup>

Everything in this world is merely a symbol and the duty of the artist is to decipher the hidden message of nature. Most ordinary men fail to understand this message, for it can be understood only by those who have achieved a high degree of spirituality. Part of man's present anguish is that he has not yet reached those heights from which he can look objectively at the world. That is why Baudelaire proclaimed earlier, in "Élévation":

Heureux celui qui peut d'une aile vigoureuse  
 S'élancer vers les champs lumineux et sereins;  
 Celui dont les penses, comme des alouettes,  
 Vers les cieux le matin prennent un libre essor,  
 - Qui plane sur la vie et comprend sans effort  
 Le langage des fleurs et des choses muettes! <sup>(21)</sup>

(20) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Correspondances", vv 1-6, 8, p. 11

(21) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Élévation", vv 15-20, p. 10

Perhaps already the poet has a glimpse of how his anguish will ultimately be relieved, even if he does not yet see how to achieve it in practical terms. Meanwhile, reality continues to fall short of the ideal.

From the Romantics to Baudelaire there is a development in the conception of man and his isolation, and therefore in the depth of anguish which the individual feels as a result of this isolation. For Lamartine, man's sense of isolation was felt in the face of a compassionate nature in whom the poet could find a refuge from the world. Musset and De Vigny developed this sense of isolation so that the poet became isolated amongst men because he was specially chosen, and against nature which showed itself unmoved by and indifferent to his feelings. The poet-genius as portrayed by Baudelaire suffers a far greater isolation, for not only is he out of his element in the world of men, but both man and nature show themselves hostile to him. M. Ruff has suggested that Baudelaire's turning away from nature is not because of its indifference, but for a deeper spiritual reason linked to his sense of frustration:

Ce n'est pas pour son indifférence à l'égard des hommes  
qu'il se détourne d'elle [la nature], mais parce que,  
tout en participant au péché originel, elle ne participe  
pas à l'effort du salut.<sup>(22)</sup>

Baudelaire insists throughout his work that man's disorientation in the world derives from the fact that he was born with original sin which he can never fully escape. The most he can hope to do is to diminish its effects and in this way work towards harmony within himself:

Théorie de la vraie civilisation.  
... elle est dans la diminution des traces  
du péché originel.<sup>(23)</sup>

He will necessarily regard nature as indifferent or even hostile if it does not help his efforts in finding harmony.

Two poems serve to illustrate these aspects of Baudelaire's thought, "L'Albatros" and "L'Homme et la Mer". The isolation of the poet among men is portrayed in "L'Albatros". After describing the way in which the

(22) M.A. Ruff, Baudelaire, Paris, 1957, p.96

(23) Mon Coeur mis à nu, p.1291

sailors torment the bird on board their ship, Baudelaire compares its fate with that of the poet and his standing amongst his fellows:

Le Poète est semblable au prince des nuées  
Qui hante la tempête et se rit de l'archer;  
Exilé sur le sol au milieu des huées,  
Ses ailes de géant l'empêchent de marcher.<sup>(24)</sup>

This is a far cry from the portrayal of isolation found in "Moïse" or "La Colère de Samson". Baudelaire's interpretation of isolation is far more cruel, for in "L'Albatros" the bird, and the poet, undergo physical torment as well as the psychological disorientation felt by any creature out of its natural environment.

The isolation of the poet in the face of hostile nature is depicted in "L'Homme et la Mer". The sea is a symbol of infinity. It stands for something of which the innermost depths defy exploration. So it is with man's innermost being. And yet while man sees in the sea this reflection of himself he feels resentment and frustration because he can nowhere escape from himself:

La mer est ton miroir; tu contemples ton âme  
Dans le déroulement infini de sa lame,  
Et ton esprit n'est pas un gouffre moins amer.<sup>(25)</sup>

The sea is also a symbol of unity, of an all-engulfing entity where the individual can be lost. The conflict between these two ideas gives rise to the poet's essential dilemma; he wishes to be in harmony with the rest of the world while yet being distinct from it. But the world with which he wishes to be in harmony is a metaphysical ideal rather than the contemporary physical world he sees around him. So he is at odds with himself because he is frustrated in his effort to attain his ideal.

As in some preceding poems in the "Spleen et Idéal" section, for instance, "J'aime le souvenir", "Les Phares" and "La Vie Antérieure", the future ideal is mentioned as though it is in the past, as if the poet already foresees the frustration in which his search will end. In "J'aime le souvenir" he has begun to realise that it is the disparity

(24) Les Fleurs du Mal, "L'Albatros", vv 13-16, p.10

(25) Les Fleurs du Mal, "L'Homme et la Mer", vv 2-4, p.18

between man's spiritual growth and his material progress that causes him to suffer. Gradually he formulates a solution, but without being able to fulfil the conditions needed to achieve that solution. So for the moment nature suggests to him man's continual search for his identity rather than a refuge from the cares of the world. The vastness of the sea reflects the great inner depths which the poet must explore within himself in the frustrating quest for self-knowledge and inner peace:

Homme, nul n'a sondé le fond de tes abîmes,  
O mer, nul ne connaît tes richesses intimes,  
Tant vous êtes jaloux de garder vos secrets! (26)

So in nature and among men, the individual encounters rejection, hostility, and isolation. He feels disoriented and doesn't know where to turn in his search for peace and fulfillment. This gives him an overwhelming sense of frustration for he feels alienated from man and nature, and is everywhere thrown back upon the self from which he is trying to escape.

Man's search for his identity is expressed in different ways, often, metaphorically as a journey during which the poet explores his milieu and pleasure, and tries to escape from frustration and even from life itself. Sometimes the experience will complement the development of his personality, sometimes it will prove detrimental. In the course of his journeys man encounters obstacles which he is able to surmount only with the utmost difficulty, and after much soul-searching and struggle. Already we have noted the isolation of the man of genius from the rest of mankind and from nature, his inability to accept at face value the hollow pleasures of materialism and the ensuing frustration when he looks for something beyond such pleasure. In this context Baudelaire refers continually to "l'abîme", the bottomless gulf into which he is in perpetual fear of falling, particularly when he is overcome by despair:

J'implore ta pitié, Toi, l'unique que j'aime,  
Du fond du gouffre obscur où mon coeur est tombé. (27)

He must try and lift himself out of this abyss and find where his true identity lies.

In examining Baudelaire's ideas against the background of Romanticism we have found that he considers imagination and sensitivity more

(26) Les Fleurs du Mal, "L'Homme et La Mer", vv 10-12, p.18

(27) Les Fleurs du Mal, "De Profundis Clamavi", vv.1-2, p.31

important than inspiration, and that they completely replace logic and reason in their relevance to man's situation. Of prime importance is imagination which ensures that the poet's spiritual outlook will eventually balance his material outlook. But it is imagination combined with the force of will, for both elements are important if man is to order his own destiny. The emphasis must be on a harmonious balance of the faculties rather than a disproportionate emphasis on any particular faculty.

The vulnerability of man's soul in the face of the material and physical world can be lessened if its spiritual needs are given proper consideration.

The man of genius will offer the best guide in the search for identity because his isolation gives him a certain objectivity with which to judge what he encounters and experiences.

Nature does not console, but is a force to be reckoned with; it provides aid in understanding the personality, as for example, when the poet is forced to learn about himself from his contemplation of the sea.

What he learns in his exploration of nature, of his milieu, and subsequently about himself, helps him overcome frustration, and leads to the harmonious reorientation of his personality. How he undertakes this exploration is the subject of the following chapters.

### CHAPTER III

Ennui and frustration in the poet's  
search for identity in the material world.

Because man and nature are hostile or indifferent, Baudelaire looks elsewhere for his identity, examining subjectively and from a personal point of view further aspects of his environment. Frustration and ennui become constantly recurring factors in the various journeys, actual or imaginary, which the poet undertakes. During those journeys he becomes very much aware of the good and evil forces in his environment and the contradictory influences they exert on him. In this he combines the roles of poet and moralist. Firstly he depicts and develops a view of the material world from which he draws those elements which most affect man's personality. Then he shows the results of this interaction measuring them against his particular ethics. The disparity between these factors is such that he regards himself as an exile in the physical world.

As he becomes aware of the futility of materialism without any compensating psychological fulfillment, his introspection turns to spiritual matters. While still aware of the harsh reality of existence and the material world, the poet is through his spiritual insight more able to bear reality and perceive its hidden meaning:

Mon esprit, tu te meus avec agilité  
...  
Envole-toi bien loin de ces miasmes morbides;  
Va te purifier dans l'air supérieur,  
...  
Derrière les ennuis et les vastes chagrins  
Qui chargent de leur poids l'existence brumeuse,  
Heureux celui qui peut d'une aile vigoureuse  
S'élancer vers les champs lumineux et sereins;<sup>(1)</sup>

He looks towards death to bring release for a troubled spirit and harmony for the whole being, but because his relationship with the world

(1) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Elévation", vv 5,9-10, 13-16, p.10



he knows has been shown as unsatisfactory, he begins to doubt the traditional ideas of death, regarding it as an unknown quantity.

One of the dangers of introspection is that it causes ennui, as Baudelaire discovered. The introspective Romantics, too, contemplated their own misfortune and unhappiness, felt ennui and then incorporated this experience in their work.

Some poets, like Victor Hugo, heightened these problems and drew from them solutions by the invention of a latter-day "deus ex machina" in their total world picture. Hugo proffers his solution quite confidently and it is one full of hope founded on his belief in the basic goodness of man and his ability to find the true balance between reason and sentiment. The fullest expression of this philosophy can be found in "Ce que dit la bouche de l'ombre."<sup>(2)</sup>

In Vigny's poetry a different solution emerges in answer to the question posed by frustration. For him the various manifestations of frustration, e.g. in "La Mort du Loup" and in "La Colère de Samson" serve to strengthen his conviction that man alone must work out his own destiny without supernatural or divine intervention.<sup>(3)</sup> But again, as with Hugo, the outcome he foresees is optimistic for he believes in man's ability to harness the forces of progress towards beneficial ends, and has faith in man's desire to work for the good of posterity, as is seen in "La Bouteille à la Mer".<sup>(4)</sup>

Other poets, like Musset, are content merely to have found the cause of ennui, to wallow in the gloom and self-pity which accompany it, then to turn from personal suffering to other subjects, as he does in the "Nuits" poems.<sup>(5)</sup>

Baudelaire, however, gives a fuller interpretation of the ennui he experienced. For him it is no longer merely world-weariness leading to lethargy, but something more sinister: man's sense of failure at his

(2) Victor HUGO, "Ce que dit la bouche de l'ombre", *Oeuvres Complètes*, p. 801.

(3) Douglas PARMEE (ed) *Twelve French Poets*, London, 1961, pp.39-46

(4) *Ibid.*, pp.62-68 Note especially, vv.31-43, 148-154

(5) *Ibid.*, pp.133-148. Note especially, vv.290-305 of "La Nuit d'Octobre"



own inefficiency, a pernicious element causing both material destruction and spiritual devastation. It develops into an almost uncontrollable, destructive force which leaves a trail of wilful depravity in its wake:

Dans la ménagerie infâme de nos vices,  
 Il en est un plus laid, plus méchant, plus immonde!  
 Quoi qu'il ne pousse ni grands gestes ni grands cris,  
 Il ferait volontiers de la terre un débris  
 Et dans un bâillement avalerait le monde;  
 C'est l'Ennui!.....(6)

In this description of ennui two elements are combined; poetic description and moral judgement, the two being quite closely interwoven. "Ménagerie" makes one think of a mixed assortment of creatures confined in somewhat unnatural surroundings and becoming restive; in addition the animal rather than the spiritual nature of man is evoked. Amongst the vices in this menagerie Baudelaire singles out ennui as the dominant one. The vocabulary and images contain value judgements in the connotations of "laid", "méchant" and "immonde"; the progressive intensification of meaning gained through the order in which the adjectives occur is further stressed by the number of syllables being increased progressively in the line. The use of the comparative "plus" emphasises Baudelaire's disapproval of the nature and actions contained in the concept of ennui presented here. The long vowel sounds of "volontiers" and "bâillement" contrast effectively with the sharp crack of "débris" to match the concept of boredom leading to needless destruction and the careless attitude with which it is accepted.

Borgal suggests that this "ennui" is a result of the contradiction between "le quotidien et le mystique" which primitive man believed in, but which more sophisticated thinking has complicated and upset:

Aux yeux du primitif, une seule contradiction existe...  
 le quotidien et le mystique; mais... à l'intérieur de  
 ce sacré se confondent intimement, inextricablement,  
 création, sainteté, puissance, ~~débauche~~ licence, chaos:  
 toutes ces manifestations diverses ne traduisent qu'une

(6) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Au Lecteur", vv.32-37, p.6

seule et même réalité: celle de l'Extrême, ou, si  
l'on veut, de l'Infini.<sup>(7)</sup>

Baudelaire is seen as an example of just such a "primitif" mentality. His frustration develops from his belief in the duality and contradiction he finds in the world, and his attempts to reconcile these opposing elements in the final analysis. His belief, as a poet, in an integral pattern or unity in creation, exemplified by his insistence on a fashioned architecture in Les Fleurs du Mal, further complicates the situation, as does his belief, as a moralist, in man's ability to minimise the workings and effects of original sin.

Having introduced ennui in "Au Lecteur", Baudelaire then catalogues the different ways in which it causes destruction and devastation. In L'Originalité de Baudelaire, Vivier claims of Les Fleurs du Mal that:

Le volume est bâti tout entier sur le conflit entre  
l'aspiration idéale du poète et les réalités décevantes  
que la vie lui oppose.<sup>(8)</sup>

The book develops out of the poet's conception of ennui and his attempts to come to terms with his sense of frustration, perhaps achieving a deeper sense of his own personality on the way.

The first section deals mainly with the divergence between ideals and reality and the resultant spleen, indicating the various media through which the poet has sought to escape only to be thrown deeper into the pit of despair. (The accumulative effect of these media, ennui, will eventually offer the poet a means of overcoming his despair, for his exploration of them will deepen his understanding of himself and lead him beyond himself into a search for what is eternal). The mood varies through this section. At one moment we are made aware of the demonstrative anger of the poet's mother towards God:

(7) C. BORGAL, Baudelaire, Paris (éd. Universitaires) 1961, p.75

(8) R. VIVIER, L'Originalité de Baudelaire, Brussels, 1952, p.22

Je ferai rejaillir ta haine qui m'accable  
 Sur l'instrument maudit de tes méchancetés,  
 Et je tordrai si bien cet arbre misérable,  
 Qu'il ne pourra pousser ses boutons empestés!<sup>(9)</sup>

The anger here is a vengeful determination to repay through the son the wrong that has been committed. This is contrasted in "Le Masque" with the muted but deeply felt anger that one has to go on living in spite of frustration and world-weariness. The anger is made more poignant because it is veiled by apparent serenity and beauty:

Elle pleure, insensé, parce qu'elle a vécu!  
 Et parce qu'elle vit! Mais ce qu'elle déplore  
 Surtout, ce qui la fait frémir jusqu'aux genoux,  
 C'est que demain, hélas! il faudra vivre encore!  
 Demain, après-demain et toujours! - comme nous!<sup>(10)</sup>

There are periods of hatred and revenge, but they are always tinged with despair.<sup>(11)</sup> This is very cleverly depicted by the many references to the poet's constant spiritual aspiration while he himself feels trapped in a bottomless abyss from which he is unable to escape through his own efforts, as is conveyed in the following images which are contrary to one another:

Un Ange, ...

Se débattant comme un nageur  
 Et luttant, angoisses funèbres!  
 Contre un gigantesque remous

...

Un damné descendant sans lampe,  
 Au bord d'un gouffre dont l'odeur  
 Trahit l'humide profondeur,  
 D'éternels escaliers sans rampe.

...

Emblèmes nets, tableau parfait  
 D'une fortune irremédiable,  
 Qui donne à penser que le Diable  
 Fait toujours bien tout ce qu'il fait!<sup>(12)</sup>

(9) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Bénédiction", vv.13-16, p.7

(10) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Le Masque", vv.32-36, p.23

(11) As in "Bénédiction", vv.13-20, "Obsession", vv.5-8

(12) Les Fleurs du Mal, "L'Irremédiable", vv.5,8-10,17-20,29-32,p.75-76

The animal force in man is much stronger than the force exerted over him by spiritual matters. His soul struggles against overwhelming odds to go against the tremendous current of material progress. This is depicted by the angel battling like a swimmer against the heavy swell of the tide. The moralist transposes the image to indicate that man is himself rushing headlong after material ends without giving a thought to his other needs. The poet shows a man condemned to the gloom and stench of a downward spiralling staircase (vv.17-20) and as a ship that is ice-locked (v.25-28). The moralist interprets these images in respect of modern man. It is only as man finds materialism empty and hollow that he realises the strength of those forces that have pulled him down. He has little hope of redeeming himself until he realises his wrong and realigns his thinking to include those elements he has thus far forgotten and ignored. His past negligence in this area is witness in itself to the forces of evil in the world.

In "Moesta et Errabunda", frustration and ennui tended to lead the poet back to a sort of idealism. Because of his dislike for things as they are in the world he seeks refuge in some paradise which he has constructed from memories of the past, or from some utopia where things are better; but, in either case, he is searching for a paradise that he can never reach. Therefore, his idealisation of childhood, which he evokes in the following lines:

Mais le vert paradis des amours enfantines,  
 Les courses, les chansons, les baisers, les bouquets,  
 Les violons vibrant derrière les collines,  
 Avec les brocs de vin, le soir, dans les bosquets,<sup>(13)</sup>

and the awareness that for him this innocence is unattainable, throw him into deeper frustration:

Mais le vert paradis des amours enfantines,  
 L'innocent paradis, plein de plaisirs furtifs,  
 Est-il déjà plus loin que l'Inde et que la Chine?<sup>(14)</sup>

This tactic is similar to that used in "Le Serpent qui danse," where the evocation of various images of the pleasures of the flesh

(13) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Moesta et Errabunda," vv.21-24, p.61

(14) Ibid, vv.25-27

excites the poet momentarily, only to leave him disappointed and thrown into deeper frustration once again:

Quand l'eau de ta bouche remonte  
 Au bord de tes dents,  
 Je crois boire un vin de Bohême,  
 Amer et vainqueur,  
 Un ciel liquide qui parsème  
 D'étoiles mon coeur! (15)

The frustration and disappointment here are not the same as those which the poet feels in "Sed non Satiata," where he was impotent to meet the inexhaustible demands of his mistress:

O démon sans pitié! verse-moi moins de flamme;  
 Je ne suis pas le styx pour t'embrasser neuf fois. (16)

Both experiences, however, lead him inevitably into the gulf of ennui, which is variously referred to, as firstly:

... le Vertige  
 Saisit l'âme vaincue et la pousse à deux mains,  
 Vers un gouffre obscurci de miasmes humains. (17)

Here man is unaware of the path he is following because it is hidden beneath the sordid pleasures of materialism and the physical world. Again the poet is making a value judgement in "miasmes humains", and shows how man learns from the effects of his actions. It is only after experiencing these harmful pleasures and being dragged down that he perceives their full effects. Both these commentaries come within the domain of the moralist.

Or again, ennui is evoked as:

Avalanche, veux-tu m'emporter dans ta chute? (18)

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(15) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Le Serpent qui danse." vv.31-36, p.29

(16) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Sed non Satiata," vv.10-11, p.27

(17) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Le Flacon", vv.14-16, p.46

(18) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Le Goût du Néant", v.15, p.72

Here the poet is resigned to the fact that he will be hard-pressed to react effectively against ennui, and is almost lethargic in his request to be included in the downward slide of the avalanche, for he feels surrounded by gloom and darkness.

This inability to react against ennui is expressed also in "Le Mauvais Moine". Emphasis is in this instance laid on the impotence felt by the feckless monk who cries out when faced with his lack of faith in his own capability:

O moine fainéant! quand saurai-je donc faire  
Du spectacle vivant de ma triste misère  
Le travail de mes mains et l'amour de mes yeux; (19)

Lethargy, which is one of the hallmarks of ennui, is expressed as impotence in one's present situation, coupled with anger at this impotence. Ennui here is beginning to represent the depth of the gulf between the ideal and reality not just in the physical world but in the poet's conception of what he ought to be and do. It is this feeling that causes him to wish himself out of

... un monde où l'action n'est pas la soeur du rêve. (20)

Yet it is hard to be convinced of the poet's lethargy for the constant reappearance of ennui serves to strengthen his determination to vanquish it somehow. Thus the importance of Baudelaire's imagery in the personification of ennui should not be underestimated. He regards it as a hostile and destructive force from which he seeks to escape by various means; but he is constantly brought back to confront the problem.

Two striking images can be compared to illustrate this point. The final three lines of "L'Ennemi" express the effects of the ravages of time and world-weariness on man's soul:

... Le temps mange la vie,  
Et l'obscur Ennemi qui nous ronge le coeur  
Du sang que nous perdons croît et se fortifie. (21)

In these lines the principal idea is that world-weariness and ennui

(19) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Le Mauvais Moine", vv.12-14, p.15

(20) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Le Reniement de Saint Pierre," v.30, p.115

(21) Les Fleurs du Mal, "L'Ennemi", vv.12-14, p.26

drain away one's life-blood, leaving one languid in body and spirit the more they are allowed to devour one, as a leech feeds on its victim. By such draining of life-giving force, the powers of evil are made stronger in proportion to the soul's passivity and negative reaction.

In the next quotation the emphasis shifts to the activity aroused in the soul by such an action:

Femme impure! L'ennui rend ton âme cruelle.

...

Salutaire instrument, buveur du sang du monde.<sup>(22)</sup>

Ennui causes the woman to become cruel, for love no longer affords her that satisfaction she expects. The mechanical monotony of her actions fills her with frustration and anger which she vents on her partner. In doing so she becomes a personification of ennui and the anger it arouses.

This metaphor is repeated in "Le Vampire" where ennui is personified as a physical entity. Frustration and anger are here expressed in terms of a prisoner always weighed down by his ball and chain, by the drunk dependent on his bottle, by the vermin which invade the corpse. Here, as in the previous example it is impossible to break away from the clutches of ennui which inevitably arouses anger:

Hélas! le poison et le glaive  
M'ont pris en dédain et m'ont dit:  
"Tu n'es pas digne qu'on t'enlève  
A ton esclavage maudit,  
Imbécile! - de son empire  
Si nos efforts te délivraient,  
Tes baisers ressusciteraient  
Le cadavre de ton vampire!"<sup>(23)</sup>

Anger, however, is not always the result of ennui. Sometimes, as in "Le Fantôme", the victim is doomed to carry out some impossible task such as that of the cook who is condemned, in order to satisfy his morbid desires, to make a dish out of his own heart:

(22) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Tu mettrais l'univers entier dans ta ruelle", vv.2,10,p.26

(23) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Le Vampire", vv.17-24, p.32



Je fais bouillir et je mange mon coeur<sup>(24)</sup>

"Le gouffre de l'ennui" then becomes closer to despair.

Baudelaire was haunted by thoughts of the abyss, gulf or void. In his Journaux Intimes he confesses:

Au moral comme au physique, j'ai toujours eu la  
sensation du gouffre.<sup>(25)</sup>

The poet-moralist experiences much anguish and regret on contemplating the dark void and emptiness of a world taken up with materialism. This state of mind is expressed in "L'Ennemi" when he contemplates his earlier life and realises the effects of his lack of concern for his own spiritual well-being:

Ma jeunesse ne fut qu'un ténébreux orage,  
Traversé çà et là par de brillants soleils;  
Le tonnerre et la pluie ont fait un tel ravage,  
Qu'il reste en mon jardin bien peu de fruits vermeils.

Voilà que j'ai touché l'automne des idées,  
Et qu'il faut employer la pelle et les rateaux  
Pour rassembler à neuf les terres inondées,  
Où l'eau creuse des trous grands comme des tombeaux.<sup>(26)</sup>

Now that he is older and more perceptive, he is close to despair at the ravages he witnesses, and he gives form to that despair through the image of "des trous grands comme des tombeaux", hinting that it is almost too late to repair the damage done.

In "Le Guignon" the roles of poet and moralist are intertwined again as Baudelaire questions the very purpose of life itself and reminds us of death in his use of Sisyphus as a symbol. He admires in Sisyphus that courage which compelled him to justify his existence. At the same time Baudelaire is reminded that his own life is futile, and seems to be just a movement towards death. The image of the grave suggests the dark void into which everything must fall without hope of

(24) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Le Fantôme," part I, v.8, p.36

(25) Journaux Intimes (Hygiène), p.1265

(26) Les Fleurs du Mal, "L'Ennemi", vv 1-8, p.15-16



rediscovery:

Loin des sépultures célèbres,  
Vers un cimetière isolé,  
Mon coeur, comme un tambour voilé,  
Va battant des marches funèbres.  
- Mainte joyau dort enseveli  
Dans les ténèbres et l'oubli,  
Bien loin des pioches et des sondes; <sup>(27)</sup>

Continually emphasised are the depths of isolation and loneliness felt by the poet, as he contemplates the physical world and its effects, and realises how he has neglected and ignored his spiritual aspirations. The continual references in the "Spleen et Idéal" section to tombs and graveyards, as in

Je suis un cimetière abhorré de la lune. <sup>(28)</sup>

and

Je suis comme le roi d'un pays pluvieux,  
Riche, mais impuissant, jeune et pourtant très vieux,  
...  
Son lit fleurdélié se transforme en tombeau. <sup>(29)</sup>

bear witness to the devastation worldly pursuits are perpetrating on his spiritual being.

To make matters worse, the gulf which he contemplates, which he sees as hell, contains much that he has held dear:

Ce gouffre, c'est l'Enfer, de nos amis peuplé! <sup>(30)</sup>

he proclaims, and in "De Profundis Clamavi" he cries out for someone to take pity on him and help him out of his misery:

J'implore ta pitié, Toi, l'unique que j'aime,  
Du fond du gouffre obscur où mon coeur est tombé. <sup>(31)</sup>

Like Bunyan's Christian in the Slough of Despond he is determined not to accept his frustration as a final answer; there is here the idea

(27) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Le Guignon" vv.5-11, p.16

(28) Les Fleurs du Mal, "J'ai plus de souvenirs que si j'avais mille ans", v.8, p.69

(29) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Je suis comme le roi d'un pays pluvieux" vv.1-2, 9, p.70

(30) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Duellum", v.12, p.34

(31) Les Fleurs du Mal, "De Profundis Clamavi", vv.1-2, p.31

of a force dragging its victim down but not completely engulfing him, because of his faith that there must be something to strive towards.

Having pleaded for help out of the gulf of despair Baudelaire presents various causes of frustration and explores those elements which he thinks will lead him from frustration to harmony. A description of the causes of frustration is not enough in itself. He wants man to realise that material comfort and progress are not ends worth achieving at the expense of spiritual failure. This theme pervades the "Spleen et Idéal" section, particularly in poems such as "J'aime le souvenir de ces époques nues", "L'Ennemi", "Le Flacon", and "Le Mort Joyeux".

These sentiments were echoed in the twentieth century by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry who insisted that man's spiritual disorientation in the face of rapid industrial progress is based on man's failure to adjust and develop his thinking at the same rate as he has adjusted and developed the material world around him.<sup>(32)</sup> In a sense both writers see the secondary cause of ennui as a conceptual one: man's failure to come to terms mentally with material and physical progress, and his failure to develop the terms which he needs to express them. Man needs to establish more sophisticated concepts than he already possesses in order to match the more sophisticated tools he uses and the more sophisticated life-style he has evolved. Once he starts to do this man will begin to come to terms with the fact that he alone is ultimately responsible for his own actions and his own decisions. Baudelaire is not advocating the selfish individualism of the Romantic writers, most of whom recognised its privileges without accepting the responsibilities. He believes that salvation for mankind lies in the full development of the individual, in the full exercise of his powers, in his efforts to find himself and his own harmony, in order to have:

... la force et le courage

De contempler mon coeur et mon corps sans dégoût.<sup>(33)</sup>

Such is the poet's prayer at the end of "Un Voyage à Cythère". It reflects the perennial moralist injunction of "know thyself", a reminder

(32) In particular, "Terre des Hommes", Paris, Gallimard, 1939, p.50-53,

(33) <sup>174-176.</sup> Les Fleurs du Mal, "Un Voyage à Cythère", vv.59-60, p.113

that man will not find harmony, will not be at peace with himself until he accepts himself for what he is, and understands his relationship to his physical environment. To do this, he must investigate his milieu subjectively, exploring various avenues not merely as ways of escape but as means of deepening his knowledge.

Frustration and ennui have led the poet thus far to the idea of evasion, an escape, a way out of his dilemma, a journey into unexplored territory in search of a solution which will help him overcome his frustration. He has failed to break the vicious circle bounded by ennui leading to a search for new sensations which in turn lead to further frustration and ennui. The realisation that he must find some way out of the gulf leads him to investigate the world not merely from a physical angle but in relation to his whole personality. During these investigations it becomes apparent that man's frustration hinges on his interpretation of and attitude to the physical world, and that his thinking must begin to take into account spiritual effects as well as physical reactions. Baudelaire depicts this by exploring the town, and by exploring ideas on death, but relating each to the problem of good and evil in the world.

Much of his work, particularly Les Fleurs du Mal, concentrates on the agony experienced by man through the simultaneous postulations towards good and evil. Much of the attraction of the physical world for man lies in its appeal to his animal instincts and these are strong in him. "Un Voyage à Cythère" expresses the strength of these attractions, but also the extent to which man's spiritual development has been neglected. Baudelaire proposes that man will come closer to finding his inner harmony, closer to spiritual progress in direct relation to the extent to which he can diminish the workings and effects of original sin which is his inheritance from time immemorial. But suffering is part of this process, almost a purification of the soul:

L'homme, c'est-à-dire chacun, est si naturellement  
dépravé qu'il souffre moins de l'abaissement  
universel que de l'établissement d'une hiérarchie  
raisonnable. (34)

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(34) Journaux Intimes, "Fusées", p.1262

He freely admits that all through his journeying he is constantly aware of

Le spectacle ennuyeux de l'immortel péché:<sup>(35)</sup>  
 but from what he calls elsewhere "la boue"<sup>(36)</sup> he can extract something more worthwhile, be it no more than a chastening effect on his soul; for example, frustration and disappointment in love made him suppose he had no place in the harmony of the universe, that he was a discordant note in the scheme of things, or "de trop", as the Existentialists would state:

Ne suis-je pas un faux accord  
 Dans la divine symphonie,  
 Grâce à la vorace Ironie  
 Qui me secoue et qui me mord?<sup>(37)</sup>

Turning towards the town does not relieve his frustration. He still to some extent expects physical gratification or satisfaction to provide that mental exhilaration which announces fulfillment on a spiritual level. He will not feel this exhilaration however, for as he journeys through the town and investigates what it has to offer him, and then as he experiences the furtive pleasure provided by immorality and depravity, he begins to realise that spiritual fulfillment comes only when the individual puts aside his attempts at physical satisfaction.

He realises also how material progress has changed the physical world so that he himself does not recognise those things he once knew. He feels out of place, a misfit, in what were once familiar surroundings. He develops this feeling of exile in the images in "Le Cygne". But the feeling of exile is no longer the gaucherie of "L'Albatros". Provoking scorn and ridicule, it is now frustration combined with muted anger which the poet transfers to the swan:

Je vois ce malheureux...  
 ...  
 Sur son cou convulsif tendant sa tête avide,  
 Comme s'il adressait des reproches à Dieu!<sup>(38)</sup>

(35) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Le Voyage", part VI, v.5. p.125

(36) "Reliquat et Dossier", p.177, "J'ai pétri de la boue et j'en ai fait de l'or."

(37) Les Fleurs du Mal, "L'Héautontimorouménos", vv.13-16, p.74

(38) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Le Cygne", vv.24,27-28 p.82

The poem expresses the poet's determination not to accept frustration as his lot but to search for a better answer. His feelings of exile spring from the realisation that he has lost track of those concepts which balance the material and spiritual elements in him. There is a hint also of the bitter revolt into which his frustration will eventually goad him. The final stanza of the poem suggests that even now the soul still retains dim memories which will be awakened and help in its search for harmony:

Ainsi dans la forêt où mon esprit s'exile  
 Un vieux souvenir sonne à plein souffle de cor!  
 Je pense aux matelots oubliés dans une île,  
 Aux captifs, aux vaincus! ... à bien d'autres encore! (39)

Here is a belief, even though still frail, that man, each individual, is not alone in his search, that there is comfort to be found in the knowledge that others are engaged in a search for harmony and identity. In the twentieth century Albert Camus expressed a similar sentiment in La Mer au plus près.

Chaque cri que nous poussons se perd, s'envole dans  
 des espaces sans limites. Mais ce cri, porté jour  
 après jour par les vents, abordera enfin à l'un des  
 bout aplatis de la terre et retentira longuement  
 contre les parois glacées, jusqu'à ce qu'un homme,  
 quelque part, perdu dans sa coquille de neige,  
 l'entende et content, veuille sourire. (40)

The poet's journey through the town reveals another cause of frustration: the extent to which reality falls short of his ideal. The old man multiplied seven times is reminiscent of the seven deadly sins. This experience leaves him in a state of confusion, spiritual anguish and disorientation:

Car je comptai sept fois, de minute en minute,  
 Ce sinistre vieillard qui se multipliait!

...

(39) Ibid., part II, vv 21-24, p.83

(40) A. CAMUS, Noces suivi de L'Eté, "La Mer au plus près" (Gallimard, 1959), p.184.

Ces sept monstres hideux avaient l'air éternel!

...

- Mais je tournai le dos au cortège infernal.

Exaspéré comme un ivrogne qui voit double,  
Je rentrai, je fermai ma porte, épouvanté,  
Malade et morfondu, l'esprit fiévreux et trouble,  
Blessé par le mystère et par l'absurdité!

...

Et mon âme dansait, dansait, vieille gabarre  
Sans mâts, sur une mer monstrueuse et sans bords!<sup>(41)</sup>

The poet feels threatened by the seven old men just as he feels threatened by the material world and the emptiness to which it leads. Yet he does not understand why he feels this way, almost as if he is an exile in a once familiar environment which has changed beyond recognition, a sentiment similar to that expressed by the *sean*. In addition, the seven old men represent the effects of the material world unalleviated by any spiritual comfort. The poet is becoming very confused and angry because he cannot effectively combat those forces with which he is in conflict. His image of the soul, an old vessel drifting across an endless sea, throws into relief his feelings about death. As yet he does not understand its nature but he is beginning to fear that even that haven will be taken from him, for traditionally death has been seen as the final resting place for the soul, a release from the cares and ills of the world.

In "Une charogne", the sight of a corpse - in a state of putrefaction - is a sudden reminder of death in the midst of life and beauty. Similarly, human beings are subject to decay, wrought by the evil around them. Death then is seen as reintroducing harmony to the whole being. In this Baudelaire is returning to the traditional moralist view that harmony will involve the whole man rather than separate elements of his being. At first he is very much subject to his own despair, and doubts that even "le sommeil promis" of death will come to him:

Voulez-vous...

Montrer que dans la fosse même

Le sommeil promis n'est pas sûr;

(41) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Les Sept Vieillards", vv 35-36, 40, 44-48, 51 -2, p.84



Qu'envers nous le Néant est traître;  
Que tout, même la Mort, nous ment<sup>(42)</sup>

He fears that death may merely turn out to be a continuation of life in the material world rather than the hoped-for relief from pressure. But his looking towards death conveys the hope that there is another dimension to existence, which he can contemplate while still part of the physical world.

Thus far, Baudelaire has interwoven the roles of poet and moralist. He examines the world around him, his milieu, and rejects it as unsatisfactory because the various avenues of exploration increase his ennui and frustration rather than diminish them. Nature made him hostile; the city has made him feel like an exile, for the changes around him have heightened his sensitivity. But the determination to combat ennui, and the effort to try and take spiritual considerations into account, are indications of a reorientation in outlook. His examination of the physical world shows him that fulfillment is ephemeral if spiritual considerations are ignored. His increased sensitivity, disturbed by the threat represented in physical terms such as by "Les Sept Vieillards", leads to doubts about the nature of death. Fearing that he cannot trust traditional ideas here, even though he realises that harmony depends on the unity of all elements in a soul released from discord, he is loathe to trust anything outside himself. In this he is quite close to moralists such as Descartes, who come to believe that knowledge of self is the only reliable basis on which to build any set of principles.

But the poet has learned much about the hollowness and sham of the material world, and the emptiness of mere physical pleasures. He has become increasingly convinced that he must explore the spiritual world, and expand his knowledge about his own spiritual needs, and indeed learn the nature of spiritual existence. In this respect death stands as a symbol that there is a spiritual dimension accessible to man in the material world rather than divorced from it. His exploration now turns towards his own personality, and those media which will deepen and colour his insight by temporarily lifting the restraints imposed by will-power and reason, and allow free-rein to his imagination.

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(42) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Le Squelette Laboureur", part II, vv.9,11-14, p.90.

## CHAPTER IV

### Baudelaire's Self-search: Wine and Drugs

Baudelaire has explored the world around him and found in it no relief from his anguish. Relief must come from within himself, so he explores his own personality, using artificial stimulants as a means of expanding it. However, his disappointment with the short-term stimulation, and the long-term harm envisaged from such experimentation make him realise that he must rely on his own creative efforts for more lasting satisfaction.

His examination of artificial stimulants as an aid to understanding himself ends in a condemnation of their use because of the degradation, and the disintegration of the personality which result. While such aids may show man some of his capabilities, they deprive him of the ability to use this knowledge.

In Les Fleurs du Mal, Baudelaire concentrates mainly on the effects of alcohol.<sup>(1)</sup> In Du Vin et du Hachish and Les Paradis Artificiels he includes other stimulants, particularly hallucinatory drugs.<sup>(2)</sup>

In this part of his quest Baudelaire could be seen merely as searching after new sensations. But his attitude towards the question of drug absorption and his approach to the topic of stimulants as a whole are more thorough and fundamental than merely sensation-seeking. He claims that part of his aim is to examine wine and hashish as means of expanding the personality, to compare them as means of increasing man's awareness of himself and his capabilities, as is shown by the full title of one of his prose works: Du Vin et du Hachish comparés comme moyens de multiplication de l'individualité. The main differentiation he is going to make between wine and hashish is in their effects, for wine consoles whereas hashish and other hallucinatory drugs merely amplify the emotions and personality as they are at the time of absorption. This

(1) However, see J.-S. Chaussivert, "Le sens haschischin de 'l'Invitation au Voyage'", AUMLA, No.45, May 1976, pp.27-35, where the verse poem is examined as an expression of "l'expérience toxicomane". I have been unable to consult the work of E.J. Mickle Jr., "The Artificial Paradises in French Literature, I. The Influence of Opium and



is stated quite clearly in "Le Poison" where the poet has sought briefly to taste infinity:

Le vin sait revêtir le plus sordide bouge  
D'un luxe miraculeux,

...

L'opium agrandit ce qui n'a pas de bornes,  
Allonge l'illimité,  
Approfondit le temps, creuse la volupté,  
Et de plaisirs noirs et mornes  
Remplit l'âme au delà de sa capacité.<sup>(3)</sup>

This poem was first published 20th April 1857, some six years after "L'Âme de vin" and "Du vin et du Hachish", but in Les Fleurs du Mal it is placed quite early, perhaps to anticipate the conclusions Baudelaire wishes us to reach with him in this matter. Already we are aware of what his attitude will be, but cannot yet judge the strength and vehemence of the arguments with which he will support this attitude. He extends the idea of wine as a comforter and consoler helping man strive towards God and express the poet within himself. The "soul of wine" addresses man thus:

J'allumerai les yeux de ta femme ravie:  
A ton fils je rendrai sa force et ses couleurs  
Et serai pour ce frêle athlète de la vie  
L'huile qui raffermir les muscles des lutteurs.  
  
En toi je tomberai, végétale ambroisie,  
Grain précieux jeté par l'éternel Semeur,  
Pour que de notre amour naisse la poésie  
Qui jaillira vers Dieu comme une rare fleur!<sup>(4)</sup>

Baudelaire concentrates here on the invigorating effect of wine by showing how it revives the workman's family while it at the same time consoles them. Alison Fairlie suggests that it is one of the symbols

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Haschisch on the Literature of French Romanticism and Les Fleurs du Mal, Chapel Hill, 1969, which is mentioned in note 1 (p.34) of J.-S. Chaussivert's article.

(2) Baudelaire recognises at the outset the "propriétés excitantes" of hashish (p.351) and hence of hallucinatory drugs, many of which are derived from hashish. They have more recently been defined as:

for the desire to transform life, drawing out and heightening those forces already struggling in man.<sup>(5)</sup> The transport of delight, conjured up in "ravie", combines with a determination to make life worthwhile even though a struggle be involved, for it is the effort which helps man attain harmony in himself, and leads to that spiritual fulfillment suggested in lines 23 and 24 for the poet by "la poésie qui jaillira vers Dieu." But the imagery emphasises that man must play his part in this, in that he provides the fertile ground for the seed which enters him, as the wine, to flourish. The revitalising effect of wine is underlined by the other meaning of "ravie":- ravished, for as well as being made extremely joyful by the wine, there is the underlying sexual imagery of new life having been implanted in the woman by the mention of her son. However, it is primarily the growth process that is emphasised. The fertilisation process is considered more fully in vv.23-24, where it is the union of the man and wine which creates poetic vision. In both images a combination of the capacity to love and the need to create produces something new from what is given; from the physical union there is the son, from the seed, "le grain précieux" will come "une rare fleur". The "rare fleur" reminds us of the poet's true task. He must create some new object from the elements he finds in nature and in the world around him.

These sentiments are expanded in section II of Du Vin et du Hachish:

Qui conquie a eu un remords à apaiser, un souvenir  
à évoquer, une douleur à noyer... tous enfin vous ont  
invoqué, dieu mystérieux caché dans les fibres de la  
vigne. Qu'ils sont grands les spectacles du vin,  
illuminés par le soleil intérieur.

...

Il me semble parfois que j'entends dire au vin...  
"Homme, mon bien-aimé, je veux pousser vers toi...  
un chant plein de joie, de lumière et d'espérance.  
... J'allumerai les yeux de ta vieille femme... Et

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"drugs which create vivid distortion of the senses without greatly disturbing the individual's consciousness." JONES, SHAINBERG & BYER, "Drugs Alcohol and Tobacco", San Francisco, 1970, p.27.

- (3) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Le Poison", vv.1-2,6-10, p.46
- (4) Les Fleurs du Mal, "L'âme du Vin", vv.17-24, p.100
- (5) Baudelaire: Les Fleurs du Mal, London, 1960, p.53

ton cher petit, tout pâlot... je lui rendrai les  
belles couleurs de son berceau.

... Je tomberai au fond de la poitrine comme une  
ambrosie végétale. Je serai le grain qui fertilise  
le sillon douloureusement creusé! Notre intime  
réunion créera la poésie... et nous voltigerons vers  
l'infini.<sup>(6)</sup>

As in *L'âme du vin* it is the comfort and inner warmth brought with wine that is emphasised, particularly in the image of the sun. The images of light, joy and hope recur, reemphasising the comfort and consolation to be found in the heart of wine as in the bosom of the family. In both extracts the wife and the son remind us that the physical union between man and his earthly love creates a new entity, and anticipates the union of wine and the poet as a spiritual counterpart to that relationship.

Further, wine sheds light on those parts of the personality which man had forgotten in the everyday hustle and bustle of life, making them appear as memories of an idyllic past, as in *"les belles couleurs de son berceau"*. This reminds us of the idealisation of childhood that formed part of *"Moesta et Errabunda"* and the way that reality and material cares have taken their toll on the *"cher petit, tout pâlot."* Baudelaire reiterates the way in which wine inspires the poet by providing him with the seed to plant in the furrow he has prepared through the struggles and anguish of his day to day life. But his creativity will link forces with the power in the wine to make them one, and together they will attain that calm sense of unity and ecstasy towards which he is striving, and which Baudelaire will later compare to the kief of the drug taker.

To appreciate fully the implications of the effects of wine in releasing the poetic element in the soul, we must remember that the poet symbolises man at his spiritual best, the one most fitted to explore and discover those elements wherein man's harmony may lie. To be able to approach poetic creativity in even a small way represents in the

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(6) Du Vin et du Hachish, p.325-326

ordinary man a step towards the unity for which he is striving. An artificial stimulant which helps achieve this, which helps release this poetic element in man, must therefore be of some worth.

Yet Baudelaire does not say that wine and its effects are all to the good. Sometimes it serves only to console without stimulating poetic creativity, and in this respect it is not God-given, but has been found by man as a means of overcoming his frustration:

Pour noyer la rancœur et bercer l'indolence  
De tous ces vieux maudits qui meurent en silence,  
Dieu, touché de remords, avait fait le sommeil;  
L'Homme ajouta le Vin, fils sacré du Soleil!<sup>(7)</sup>

Sometimes even, wine serves only to remind man of his degradation, to deepen his remorse at his evil deeds, and to remind him how far he is from finding harmony and self-respect through self-knowledge. Indeed it tends to release the animal nature of man by sedating those parts of the brain which act as a control on his behaviour:

Ma femme est morte, je suis libre!  
Je puis donc boire tout mon soûl.

...

L'horrible soif qui me déchire  
Aurait besoin pour s'assouvir  
D'autant de vin qu'en peut tenir  
Son tombeau; ...

...

Me voilà libre et solitaire!  
Je serai ce soir ivre mort;  
Alors sans peur et sans remords,  
Je me coucherai sur la terre,  
Et je dormirai comme un chien!<sup>(8)</sup>

Baudelaire notes in this poem the progressive depressant effects of alcohol, from the feeling of exhilaration, through the deadening of

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(7) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Le Vin des Chiffonniers," vv.29-32, p.102

(8) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Le Vin de l'Assassin ", vv.1-2,9-12,41-45, p.102-103

various controls to the completely relaxed sleep which one usually associates with animals. Research has verified these findings: that alcohol alters the balance of one's faculties, depressing some elements and therefore giving the impression of stimulating others. This has been studied more recently by scientists who report:

Alcohol is a sedative, or depressant; in other words, it slows down the action of the brain. With small amounts of alcohol in the blood, the first part of the brain to be depressed is the center that controls judgement and inhibitions, often called the highest center of the brain. When this part is depressed, a person feels apparent stimulation due to his release from inhibitions. As the drinker takes in more alcohol, more primitive, or lower, parts of the brain are depressed progressively.<sup>(9)</sup>

Alcohol does not expand the personality sufficiently to achieve that permanent exhilaration and inner calm for which the poet is looking. For inner harmony, there must be a perfect balance of man's faculties, and alcohol serves only to distort this balance. Furthermore, the release from inhibition tends to make the individual inordinately concerned with his own capabilities, giving rise to pride in what he has achieved rather than determination to strive for harmony:

Tout cela ne vaut pas, ô bouteille profonde,  
Les baumes pénétrants que ta panse féconde  
Garde au coeur altéré du poète pieux;  
  
Tu lui verses l'espoir, la jeunesse et la vie,  
- Et l'orgueil, ce trésor de toute gueuserie,  
Qui nous rend triomphants et semblables aux Dieux!<sup>(10)</sup>

While rejecting wine, Baudelaire does not condemn it as worthless. It has shown man that hope, pride and self-respect are within his grasp if he goes on striving for them. In Du Vin et du Hachish he defends his support of wine as a necessary element in man's life:

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(9) JONES, SHAINBERG & BYER, Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco, San Francisco, 1970, p.61

(10) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Le Vin du Solitaire", vv.9-14, p.104

Beaucoup de personnes me trouveront sans doute bien indulgent. "Vous innocentiez l'ivrognerie, vous idéalisiez la crapule." J'avoue que devant les bienfaits je n'ai pas le courage de compter les griefs. D'ailleurs, j'ai dit que le vin était assimilable à l'homme, et j'ai accordé que leurs crimes étaient égaux à leurs vertus. Puis-je mieux faire? J'ai d'ailleurs une autre idée. Si le vin disparaissait de la production humaine, je crois qu'il se ferait dans la santé et dans l'intellect de la planète un vide, une absence, une défectuosité beaucoup plus affreuse que tous les excès et les déviations dont on rend le vin responsable.<sup>(11)</sup>

Baudelaire does not take nearly the same tolerant attitude when he is dealing with hallucinatory drugs as a means of expanding the personality. It seems no accident that his condemnation of the use of such drugs, and the users, precedes his main investigations into Les Paradis Artificiels. He is careful to warn men to choose the time when they submit themselves to the influence of hashish for it amplifies those emotions which are present at the time of absorption:

J'ai oublié de dire que le hachish causant dans l'homme une exaspération de sa personnalité et en même temps un sentiment très vif des circonstances et des milieux, il était convenable à ne se soumettre à son action que dans des milieux et des circonstances favorables. Toute joie, tout bien-être étant surabondant, toute douleur, toute angoisse est immensément profonde; Ne faites pas par vous-même une pareille expérience, si vous avez à accomplir quelque affaire désagréable, si votre esprit se trouve porté au spleen, si vous avez un

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(11) Du Vin et du Hachish, p.328

billet à payer. Je l'ai dit, le hachish est impropre à l'action. Il ne console pas comme le vin; il ne fait que développer outre mesure la personnalité humaine dans les circonstances actuelles où elle est placée.<sup>(12)</sup>

While one of the qualities of wine had been its ability to make man forget the present for a while, to take him quite away from material concerns, hashish amplifies contiguous circumstances and entrenches man firmly in a seemingly eternal present. To extract any benefit from this experience the individual must make sure the circumstances are conducive to the mood he wishes to create, for once, under the influence of hashish his personality disappears. Baudelaire stresses the need for company, but this is predominantly as a safety measure, for while drug-taking is a communal activity, the pleasure derived is particularly solitary, a point which he will emphasise later (P.343). He now briefly outlines the stages which the effects of hashish take him through; the hilarity followed by a sense of weakness climaxed by vertigo and a calm motionless state of bliss, the "Kief". When the effects wear off, there is lethargy and lassitude, and disorientation, and one is faced with the task of pulling oneself together:

C'est la punition méritée de la prodigalité impie avec laquelle vous avez fait une si grande dépense de fluide nerveux. Vous avez jeté votre personnalité aux quatre vents du ciel, et maintenant vous avez de la peine à la rassembler et à la concentrer.<sup>(13)</sup>

Baudelaire is in fact already saying that far from being a means of expanding the personality and finding unity in it, hashish is a destructive force because of the injudicious way in which it is being used for this purpose.

He also states that the effects will not be the same for all users, for all men:

(12) Ibid., p.335

(13) Du Vin et du Hachish, p.341. Clara Malraux makes a similar observation about the disappearance of the personality under the influence of hashish. "Mon passé m'avait été arraché, ma personnalité même, je patouillais dans l'indéterminé" Le bruit de nos pas. II. Nos Vingt ans, Paris. 1966. p.265. See pp.262-68



Je ne dis pas que le hachish produise sur tous  
les hommes tous les effets que je viens de décrire.<sup>(14)</sup>

But he is already determined what his outlook will be, from what angle he will be making his report:

Le vin exalte la volonté, le hachish l'annihile.  
Le vin est un support physique, le hachish est une  
arme pour le suicide. Le vin rend bon et sociable.  
Le hachish est isolant..L'un est laborieux pour  
ainsi dire, l'autre est essentiellement paresseux.  
... Enfin le vin est pour le peuple qui travaille  
et qui mérite d'en boire. Le hachish appartient  
à la classe des joies solitaires; il est fait pour  
les misérables oisifs. Le vin est utile, il produit  
des résultats fructifians. Le hachish est inutile  
et dangereux.<sup>(15)</sup>

The comparison which Baudelaire makes emphasises the detrimental effects of hashish while not mentioning any of the ill effects of wine. This suggests that while the effects of wine are generally moderate, the least application of hallucinatory drugs will adversely affect the personality because of their intensity. It suggests also that wine does not nullify will-power in the same way that hashish does, for under the influence of hashish man's personality is totally beyond his control. Hashish takes the individual out of reach of the physical world for a while and yet firmly binds him to it by intensifying his emotions of that moment. Yet it makes him withdraw into himself, whereas wine makes him want to share his pleasurable feelings, makes him reach out towards others for a while. Wine is unreservedly something good and joyful and brings people together.

The quotation sets the tone for Baudelaire's attitude not only towards hashish but also opium and other hallucinatory drugs. While

(14) Du Vin et du Hachish, V. p.341

(15) Ibid., VI, p.342-43. Cf. also "le vin trouble les facultés mentales tandis que l'opium y introduit l'ordre suprême et l'harmonie."  
Un Mangeur d'Opium, p.411. suggesting that opium has some superiority over wine for all its faults.



he recognises that some people feel the need for artificial stimulants as an aid to gaining poetic vision, he insists that it is a need felt by less fertile minds. In praise of Delacroix's work Baudelaire wrote:

C'est le rêve! - la vision produite par une intense méditation, ou dans les cerveaux moins fertiles, par un excitant artificiel.<sup>(16)</sup>

Hashish does for a while give man that harmony of being for which he is seeking:

La troisième phase... c'est le bonheur absolu... C'est une béatitude calme et immobile... Toute contradiction est devenue unité.<sup>(17)</sup>

As J.-S. Chaussivert points out<sup>(18)</sup>, Baudelaire attributes a corrective function to hashish in this respect by showing that hallucination intensifies the awareness of this harmony.

Il ne faut croire que tous ces phénomènes se produisent dans l'esprit pêle-mêle, avec l'accent criard de la réalité et le désordre de la vie extérieure. L'oeil intérieur transforme tout et donne à chaque chose le complément de beauté qui lui manque(...) L'harmonie, le balancement des lignes, eurythmie dans les mouvements, apparaissent au rêveur comme des nécessités.<sup>(19)</sup>

Baudelaire says further that for a while hashish even relieves man of the feeling that he is a discordant note in an otherwise harmonious universe and allows him to see himself as he would like to be:

Et si notre fanatique manque de beauté personnelle, ne croyez pas qu'il souffre longtemps de l'aveu auquel il est contraint, ni qu'il se regarde comme une note

(16) Salon de 1859, p.1052. For Baudelaire, Delacroix is the best exponent of poetic vision in his age.

(17) Du Vin et du Hashish, p.340

(18) "Le sens haschischin de l'Invitation au voyage.", AUMLA No. 45, May, 1976, p.28-29.

(19) Le Poème du Haschisch, p.377

discordante dans le monde d'harmonie et de beauté improvisé par son imagination. Les sophismes du haschisch sont nombreux et admirables, tendant à l'optimisme, et l'un des principaux, le plus efficace, est celui qui transforme le désir en réalité.<sup>(20)</sup>

However, while the desire for expanding his personality is witness to man's greatness, Baudelaire maintains that the individual must reach perfection and fulfillment through his own efforts. At the end of Le Poème du Haschisch, he says:

... admettons un instant que l'haschisch donne, ou du moins augmente le génie, ... il est de la nature du haschisch de diminuer la volonté, et qu'ainsi il accorde d'un côté ce qu'il retire de l'autre, c'est-à-dire l'imagination sans la faculté d'en profiter.<sup>(21)</sup>

In other words, in weakening man's will, artificial stimulants prevent man from finding what he is looking for, since he is unable to benefit from the experiences of a heightened imagination under these circumstances.

From his standpoint on drugs, Baudelaire can be regarded as a moralist. He relates several anecdotes concerning those who have taken drugs and the effects they have reported.<sup>(22)</sup> He takes a definite stand on the issue - that drugs are harmful and pernicious - and this attitude governs the language and tone of his discussions. The after effects of absorption he has called.

... la punition méritée de la prodigalité impie...<sup>(23)</sup>

He follows this attitude through the first part of Le Poème du Haschisch by maintaining a similar tone:

(20) Ibid., p.377-8

(21) Le Poème du Haschisch, p.386

(22) Oeuvres Complètes, p.359, 363, 366-70

(23) Du Vin et du Haschisch, p.341

Parmi les drogues les plus propres à créer ce que je nomme l'Idéal artificiel, ... celles dont l'emploi est le plus commode et le plus sous la main, sont le haschisch et l'opium. L'analyse des effets mystérieux et des jouissances morbides que peuvent engendrer ces drogues, des châtiments inévitables qui résultent de leur usage prolongé, et enfin l'immoralité même impliquée dans cette poursuite d'un faux idéal, constitue le sujet de cette étude.<sup>(24)</sup>

We should remember here Baudelaire's interpretation of morality and immorality. Since morality is determined by the good effects on the personality, immorality must imply detrimental or harmful effects. Further on in this work he refers to opium as "un séducteur paisible" and hashish as "un démon désordonné".<sup>(25)</sup> Once again we are reminded that these stimulants work contrary to man's striving for harmony and unity by undermining and even shattering his achievements.

Baudelaire had earlier considered hashish as a lazy way of achieving the effects of inspiration, but even then he points to the dreaded "morning after":

Mais le lendemain! le terrible lendemain! tous les organes relâchés, fatigués, les nerfs détendus, les titillantes envies de pleurer, l'impossibilité de s'appliquer à un travail suivi, vous enseignent cruellement que vous avez joué un jeu défendu... La volonté surtout est attaquée, de toutes les facultés la plus précieuse.<sup>(26)</sup>

This same theme appears in Les Fleurs du Mal when Baudelaire refers now and again to artificial stimulants and the degrading effects that vice generally has on man's will-power when it throws him into despair and frustration without allowing him to forget himself completely, and deprives him of the will to combat this frustration effectively:

(24) Le Poème du Haschisch, p.349

(25) Ibid., p.374

(26) Ibid., p.383

Dans quel philtre, dans quel vin, dans quelle tisane,  
 Noierons-nous ce vieil ennemi,  
 Destructeur et gourmand comme la courtisane,  
 Patient comme la fourmi?  
 Dans quel philtre? - dans quel vin? - dans quelle tisane?<sup>(27)</sup>

The idea is developed further in Les Paradis Artificiels until artificial stimulants are condemned outright, as is the person who persists in using them. For instance Baudelaire cites the action of the Egyptian government in banning the sale and traffic of hashish,<sup>(28)</sup> and refers to De Quincey's confessions of an opium eater<sup>(29)</sup>. This work he presents in translation - résumé commentary form at the end of Les Paradis Artificiels. In Le Poème du Haschisch Baudelaire makes an interesting comparison between the state of a drug addict and that of poetic genius, which throws into relief not only the true nature of creative genius but also the extent to which man's will-power is weakened through the absorption of drugs.<sup>(30)</sup> He stresses that though man may become aware of his latent capabilities under the influence of hashish, though his vision of infinity and creativity becomes more lucid, yet in the process his ability to govern his thoughts and actions is gradually drained so that he becomes incapable of benefitting from his lucidity. This highlights aspects of responsibility and irresponsibility in striving towards an ideal. The poet has a true ideal for he is continually seeking to create something from his inspiration through his own efforts. On the other hand the drug-taker has an "ideal artificiel" for he expects

d'emporter le Paradis d'un seul coup,<sup>(31)</sup>

Baudelaire sees the latter attitude not only as morally reprehensible but as totally misguided.<sup>(32)</sup> He is continually at pains to show that the effects of drug-taking are a weakening of will-power and a diminution in the spiritual side of man under the influence of an evil. He reinforces this attitude by recording his admiration for one

(27) Les Fleurs du Mal, "L'Irréparable," vv.6-10, p.52

(28) Du Vin et du Hachish, VI, p.342

(29) Le Poème du Haschisch, p.349-350.

(30) Ibid., p.386

(31) Ibid., p.348

(32) Baudelaire insists on the immorality of drug-taking on at least two occasions. P.372 he links haschisch directly with its effects on man's personality, and on P.384, having drawn together his

who has managed to free himself from this influence. Having till now confined himself to the physical effects he goes on:

Mais, ce qui est plus important, je crois, pour l'homme spirituel, c'est de connaître l'action du poison sur la partie spirituelle de l'homme, c'est-à-dire le grossissement, la déformation et l'exagération de ses sentiments habituels et de ses perceptions morales, qui présentent alors, dans une atmosphère exceptionnelle, un véritable phénomène de réfraction.

L'homme qui, s'étant livré longtemps à l'opium ou au haschisch, a pu trouver, affaibli comme il était par l'habitude de son servage, l'énergie nécessaire pour se délivrer, m'apparaît comme un prisonnier évadé. Il m'inspire plus d'admiration que l'homme prudent qui n'a jamais failli, ayant toujours eu soin d'éviter la tentation.<sup>(33)</sup>

In her biography of Baudelaire, Enid Starkie states that he was one of the few writers of his time to realise the danger of degradation for the human personality in the continual absorption of drugs, especially the spiritual degradation through the weakening of the will.<sup>(34)</sup>

This is the important message that Baudelaire gleans from his investigations of hashish and opium, that there is a diminution of will-power leading to the disintegration of any positive aspects of the personality, a phenomenon which is now called "amotivation".<sup>(35)</sup> So Baudelaire shows himself remarkably modern in this conclusion which is now being taken seriously by those concerned with the remedial rehabilitation of drug addicts. The setting up of commissions and councils around the globe, (e.g. New Zealand, U.S.A., Canada, Australia and Finland to name but a few) to investigate the use and abuse of drugs is in itself a witness to the social problem caused by drugs,

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main argument, he says "Il est vraiment superflu, après toutes ces considérations d'insister sur le caractère immoral du haschisch".

(33) *Ibid.*, IV, p.373

(34) ENID STARKIE, *Baudelaire*, Harmondsworth, 1971, p.437

(35) One of the possible adverse psychological reactions to cannabis, of which hashish is concentrated resin, is "long term changes in personality, behaviour or life-style associated with chronic use

a problem which Baudelaire indicated more than a hundred years ago. That Baudelaire realised these things from what he observed in his own personality, and that he recognised and deplored the moral attitude which lead drug-takers to try and find paradise without any spiritual effort on their own part, points to lucidity and insight into such problems. It also strengthens his persistent claims that his task as a poet is to show evil in all its fullness whenever and wherever it is to be found, in order that others might understand its nature. That he should have reached these conclusions is in itself important, but that he insisted on their validity was remarkable against the background of his own times. He combines the determination of a moralist with the foresight of a prophet, for only today are the full implications of such conclusions being appreciated in the medical or social sense, let alone in the moral sense. The problem has come to a head in earlier parts of this century it is true, for example in the twenties in America; but ease of communication and of travel has developed so rapidly since that time, that what were problems isolated or contained in particular areas cannot now be treated as such. Indeed, the problem of drug absorption is now of concern everywhere.

However, it was primarily with morality in view that Baudelaire presented his findings:

Dans tout cela il y a beaucoup de choses qui regardent les médecins. Or, je veux faire un livre non pas de pure physiologie, mais surtout de morale. Je veux prouver que les chercheurs de paradis font leur enfer, le préparent, le creusent avec un succès dont la prévision les épouvanterait peut-être.<sup>(36)</sup>

So we are shown in no uncertain terms that it is dangerous and damning to try and find perfection in artificial stimulants for the results of such attempts are more devastating in the long-term than the effects of ennui. Indeed they can be seen as a direct result of ennui for it was despair and lethargy that gave rise to a search for such a paradise. Baudelaire now dismisses what he has found to be a

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(for example, the so-called AMOTIVATIONAL SYNDROME") (CANNABIS, Canada, 1972, p.67)

(36) Les Paradis Artificiels, "Exorde et Notes", p.463.

fool's paradise, and goes on to investigate those avenues opened up by various forms of vice.

## CHAPTER V

### Revolt and Reorientation

Disappointed with the results of his investigations thus far, Baudelaire next examines the possibilities of release through vice. Having failed to achieve satisfaction, he needs solitude in order to come to terms with himself and his outlook on life. There follows bitter revolt against himself and what he has become, and against the unabating frustration caused by the pursuit of materialism. The rejection of accepted standards in favour of untried concepts leaves him uncertain about everything, but brings with it the renewed hope that death will provide relief. Baudelaire looks at these ideas as a poet and moralist in the "Fleurs du Mal", "Révolte" and "La Mort" sections of Les Fleurs du Mal, and in certain of the *Petits Poèmes en prose*.

The investigations he now makes serve to strengthen the conclusions he has already reached: that excesses in physical pleasures and debauchery lead to weakening of mental powers and ever-increasing frustration. However, through these conclusions the poet sees more clearly that concentration on physical pleasure and the use of artificial means of heightening mental stimulation are really sops to the animal and physical side of man's nature, not inspiration to his spiritual being, and do not help greatly in finding out man's true nature and identity. The poet says to himself:

Ces infortunés qui n'ont ni jeûné, ni prié, et  
qui ont refusé la rédemption par le travail,  
demandent à la noire magie les moyens de s'élever  
d'un seul coup, à l'existence surnaturelle. La  
magie les dupe et elle allume pour eux un faux  
bonheur et une fausse lumière.<sup>(1)</sup>

It is through his own efforts, through mental efforts not physical release, that man will be more likely to attain his ends:

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(1) Le Poème du Haschisch, p.387



... nous, poètes et philosophes, nous avons  
 régénéré notre âme par le travail successif  
 et la contemplation; par l'exercice assidu  
 de la volonté et la noblesse permanente de  
 l'intention, nous avons créé à notre usage un  
 jardin de vraie beauté<sup>(2)</sup>

One recalls here the image in "L'Ennemi" (vv.3-4) of the soul as a garden which has been damaged by storm and is needing cultivation. Baudelaire has now developed the idea so that a well-cultivated soul, like a well-cultivated garden, will be a thing of beauty and therefore of harmony.

Physical debauchery and excesses have until now let the poet see himself as he is, and realise what he could become. Wine and stimulants have allowed him to glimpse that calm security and unity for which he is striving.

J'ai demandé souvent à des vins captieux  
 D'endormir pour un jour la terreur qui me mine;  
 Le vin rend l'oeil plus clair et l'oreille plus fine!

J'ai cherché dans l'amour un sommeil oublieux;  
 Mais l'amour n'est pour moi qu'un matelas d'aiguilles  
 Fait pour donner à boire à ces cruelles filles.<sup>(3)</sup>

Now there comes a subtle development in approach. Baudelaire has reminded us at every opportunity that vice is harmful and vilifying. He portrays the poet as intimately involved in evil and sin, and the consequences are described in the physical terms of a major disaster. In "La Destruction" Baudelaire combines his poet and moralist roles to show man's encounter with evil under the devil's influence. In the first four lines he is continually aware of the devil's power filling his own being but is unable to prevent it, so that he is filled with desires which he knows to be sinful and yet unquenchable:

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(2) Ibid.,  
 (3) Les Fleurs du Mal, "La Fontaine du Sang", vv.9-14, p.109

Sans cesse à mes côtés s'agite le Démon;  
 Il nage autour de moi comme un air impalpable;  
 Il l'avale et les sens qui brûle mon poumon  
 Et l'emplit d'un désir éternel et coupable.<sup>(4)</sup>

Love leaves the poet bored and frustrated and in this mood he turns to artificial stimulants, "les philtres", only to feel his frustration intensified:

Parfois il prend, sachant mon grand amour de l'Art,  
 La forme de la plus séduisante des femmes,  
 Et, sous de spécieux prétextes de cafard,  
 Accoutume ma lèvre à des philtres infâmes.<sup>(5)</sup>

Baudelaire has warned of the dangers of absorbing stimulants when in the wrong mood. He took hashish as a particular example in Du Vin et du Hachish:

... le hachish causant dans l'homme une exaspération de sa personnalité et en même temps un sentiment très vif des circonstances et des milieux, il était convenable de ne se soumettre à son action que dans des milieux et des circonstances favorables... il ne fait que développer outre mesure la personnalité humaine dans les circonstances actuelles où elle est placée.<sup>(6)</sup>

The total effect in this instance is devastating, for the devil has offered love and "philtres" as two temptations:

Il me conduit ainsi, loin du regard de Dieu,  
 Haletant et brisé de fatigue, au milieu  
 Des plaines du l'Ennui, profondes et désertes,  
 Et jette dans mes yeux pleins de confusion  
 Des vêtements souillés, des blessures ouvertes,  
 Et l'appareil sanglant de la Destruction!<sup>(7)</sup>

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(4) Les Fleurs du Mal, "La Destruction", vv.1-4, p.105

(5) Ibid., vv.5-8

(6) Du Vin et du Hachish, p.335

(7) Les Fleurs du Mal, "La Destruction", vv.9-14

The isolating nature of vice, and in particular the solitary pleasure derived from stimulants, are evoked in the "profondes et désertes" plains of ennui. Frustration and disorientation are expressed particularly in "mes yeux pleins de confusion". The blatantly aggressive affront of the Devil who has lured the poet into vice disarms and confuses him. But though the poet recognises that he is going in the wrong direction, that he is being drawn away from his ideal, he is too weak, "haletant et brisé de fatigue", to take any effective action, because the energy he needs for this has been used up in vice.

The images and allegories in the section entitled "Fleurs du Mal" intensify the vision of evil where depraved desires and instincts dominate the higher human instincts.

"Femmes Damnées", originally entitled "Les Lesbiennes", are haunted by "mornes douleurs" and "soifs inassouvies".<sup>(8)</sup> Their evil desires are portrayed by the poet-moralist, who then stands back to lament the futility and sadness of it all. Having detailed quite closely these forms of immorality, for example intoxication (v.16) and masochism (v.17-20), he stands apart to pass judgement on the sisters, realising that he is both attracted and repelled by them:

O vierges, ô démons, ô monstres, ô martyres,

...

Vous que dans votre enfer mon âme a poursuivies,

Pauvres soeurs, je vous aime autant que je vous plains,

Pour vos mornes douleurs, vos soifs inassouvies,

Et les urnes d'amour dont vos grands coeurs sont pleins!<sup>(9)</sup>

He is attracted and repelled also by "Les Deux Bonnes Soeurs". The discord in the soul, and the continual gnawing away at man's substance by the effects of evil are personified by the two sisters. They represent the forces which tear man apart and vie for his will. The antithesis contained in the title and the opening line:

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(8) Les Fleurs du Mal, v.27, p.107-108

(9) Ibid., vv.21,25-28

La Débauche et la Mort sont deux aimables filles, (10)

emphasises the opposing elements found side by side in man, - his aspiration towards good and his proclivity towards vice - for the "deux bonnes soeurs" suggest sisters in a religious order while "Débauche" and "Mort" contradict this idea.

In "Un Voyage à Cythère" the frustration felt by the poet is expressed more fully. The image of a gibbet, and the birds picking at their barely dead victim, double the force of his message that vice destroys the living man and deprives him of spiritual release:

... c'était un gibet à trois branches,

...

De féroces oiseaux perchés sur leur pâture

Détruisant avec rage un pendu déjà mur,

Chacun plantant, comme un outil, son bec impur

Dans tous les coins saignants de cette pourriture;

Les yeux étaient deux trous, et du ventre effondré

Les intestins pesants lui coulaient sur les cuisses,

Et ses bourreaux, gorgés de hideuses délices,

L'avaient à coups de bec absolument châtré. (11)

The gibbet symbolises the guilt and punishment of the poet for his former crimes and the outcome of his relentless chasing after material pleasure and physical gratification. The final lines of the poem:

Ah! Seigneur! donnez-moi la force et le courage

De contempler mon coeur et mon corps sans dégoût. (12)

are a plea that having seen the error of his ways, having at least understood that he was searching for the wrong things in the wrong places, he can now develop the strength to begin the spiritual reorientation which will lead him to the harmony he so badly needs to find. In other words, he has come to terms with his own personality and learnt to distinguish between his needs and his desires.

(10) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Les Deux Bonnes Soeurs", v.1, p.108

(11) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Un Voyage à Cythère", vv.27,29-36, p.112

(12) Ibid., vv.59-60

For this man needs solitude, for he must reflect quietly on himself and his actions. "A une Heure du Matin" shows that Baudelaire recognises this need to analyse himself. He recognises also that this inner contemplation and self-searching is not always pleasant, for it makes man contemptuous and frustrated with himself.

In this "poème en prose" the poet needs solitude and calm for inner contemplation, which are guaranteed by the locked door. He also needs darkness. The importance of these elements is threefold. Firstly, they give a feeling of security, for only the individual will know what he is really like. Secondly they provide a hint that he is going to discover something to be ashamed of. Thirdly they eliminate outside distraction so that the individual's concentration is entirely centred on himself:

Pendant quelques heures nous posséderons le silence, sinon le repos. Enfin! la tyrannie de la face humaine a disparu, je ne souffrirai plus que par moi-même.

Enfin! il m'est donc permis de me délasser dans un bain de ténèbres! D'abord, un double tour à la serrure. Il me semble que ce tour de clef augmentera ma solitude et fortifiera les barricades qui me séparent actuellement du monde. <sup>(13)</sup>

Shutting himself in a locked room also symbolises his imprisonment within a personality which he does not particularly like but from which it is difficult to escape. The very nature of his personality cuts him off from genuine communication with others because his relationship with others is on a false footing.

The poet recognises his inability to deal honestly with others and hopes that his art will help him overcome his handicap. He also recognises the difference between the isolation he feels in the world and the solitude he needs in order to come to terms with himself and the world. The isolation is imposed on him by others, by "la tyrannie de la face humaine", whereas he chooses solitude for himself, seeing it

(13) Petits Poèmes en Prose, (Le Spleen de Paris) "A Une Heure du Matin," p.240.

as "un bain de ténèbres" in which he can take stock of himself and his actions (preparing us for the "rafraîchissantes ténèbres" of "La Fin de la Journée"); for until he takes stock of his actions he cannot improve them.

As he goes over the events of the day the writer stresses constantly the opposite tendencies in the individual, his discontent with himself and others but his desire to redeem himself. He knows only too well the corrupting influence of the material world, and is beginning to understand that the situation will only be ameliorated by spiritual development, i.e. through artistic genius, an implication that material progress can be a destructive force if not counterbalanced by spiritual effort and achievement.

He appeals to his dear ones to support him, to remove the lie and corruption of the world. Finally he appeals to God for poetic inspiration to write a few verses to prove that he is no worse than those whom he despises:

Je voudrais bien me racheter et m'enorgueillir un peu  
dans le silence et la solitude de la nuit. Ames de  
ceux que j'ai aimés, âmes de ceux que j'ai chantés,  
fortifiez-moi, soutenez-moi, éloignez-moi le mensonge  
et les vapeurs corruptrices, du monde; et vous,  
Seigneur mon Dieu! accordez-moi la grâce de produire  
quelques beaux vers qui me prouvent à moi-même que  
je ne suis pas le dernier des hommes, que je ne suis  
pas inférieur à ceux que je méprise.<sup>(14)</sup>

A similar theme is stated in more condensed form in "La Fin de la Journée".<sup>(15)</sup> Here the suggestion is made that life is losing its meaning and becoming distorted. The jerky movements of the importunate dancer beneath the pallid lights reflect man's unreasonable preoccupation with physical needs and desires, and highlight the futile and absurd activity of life:

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(14) Ibid., p.241

(15) Les Fleurs du Mal, "La Fin de la Journée", p.121

Sous une lumière blafarde  
 Court, danse et se tord sans raison  
 La Vie, impudente et criarde. (16)

But darkness brings relief, revealing to the poet the real satisfaction for which he has been looking:

La nuit voluptueuse monte,  
 Apaisant tout, même la faim,  
 Effaçant tout, même la honte, (17)

The profound sense of pleasure is indicated in "voluptueuse". In assuaging his physical needs, darkness relieves him also of shame, and restores his self-respect, "apaisant tout" and "effaçant tout" being the key words here.

The poet's cry of "Enfin!" in line 8 expresses this release which comes as a gloriously overwhelming feeling completely engulfing the individual. The darkness screens the poet from life so that he may rest restored in the "rafraîchissantes ténèbres" with which the poem closes. But this relief comes, as a finale to the revolt of the poet against his inability to deal effectively with the world.

Because of the disappointment and disillusion felt by the poet at the failures he has encountered, he cries out in revolt against life as a whole, against religion and against God. This is a comparatively short-lived outburst, but a very necessary expression through which he can give vent to the spleen and ennui which have built up in his soul, and which need to be forced out before he can start on the road to spiritual progress.

As the poems of "Révolte" imply, the efforts to reject the physical side of man's nature are not made lightly or easily. The combination of physical and mental anguish caused by a concentration of materialism and the tortures undergone to turn toward spiritual matters are summed up in "Le Reniement de Saint Pierre" when the poet addresses Christ thus:

(16). Ibid., vv.1-3

(17) Ibid., v.5-7



Rêvais-tu de ces jours si brillants et si beaux  
 Où tu vins pour remplir l'éternelle promesse,  
 Où tu foulais, monté sur une douce ânesse,  
 Des chemins tout jonchés de fleurs et de rameaux,  
 Où le coeur tout gonflé d'espoir et de vaillance  
 Tu fouettais tous ces vils marchands à tour de bras,  
 Où tu fus maître enfin? Le remords n'a-t-il pas  
 Pénétré dans ton flanc plus avant que la lance?<sup>(18)</sup>

In this section we are made very much aware of man's propensity towards vice, but his spiritual aspirations do not pass unnoticed. "Abel et Caïn" sees these two forces continually vying for power and recognition and the change of emphasis in part II shows how far evil can infect even man's spiritual outlook:

Race d'Abel, voici ta honte:  
 Le fer est vaincu par l'épieu!  
 Race de Caïn, au ciel monte,  
 Et sur la terre jette Dieu!<sup>(19)</sup>

In this section Christ and Satan do not have so much a religious role as serve as symbols of these forces battling for domination in man. Christ represents the spiritual element, the perfect model towards which to strive, while Satan symbolises those physical and animal forces whose overwhelming demands wreak such havoc on man's being. It is therefore no accident that the physical forces and their ravages dominate this section. The painful effects of physical denial in favour of spiritual achievement are stressed in "Le Reniement de Saint Pierre", the tortures suffered by the flesh in order to gain spiritual fulfillment. Perhaps this can be compared in more modern times to the withdrawal symptoms experienced by drug addicts trying to break their habit. But this is a very limited evaluation. The significance of what Baudelaire is saying is much greater. He is showing the complete destruction and disintegration of the personality caused by excess of

(18) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Le Reniement de Saint Pierre", vv.21-28, p.114-115.

(19) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Abel et Caïn", part II, vv.5-8, p.116

any kind, and the increasingly painful effects of physical denial the more debauched man has become before he realises that his spiritual being cannot develop under the conditions he has thus far created.

But he hints that all hope is not lost, that finally the physical world can be overcome:

- Certes, je sortirai, quant à moi, satisfait  
D'un monde où l'action n'est pas la soeur du rêve<sup>(20)</sup>

That even within the most wretched of the physical world there are hopes of paradise:

... O Satan...  
Toi qui, même aux lépreux, aux parias maudits,  
Enseignes par l'amour le goût du Paradis,  
O Satan, prends pitié de ma longue misère!  
O Toi qui de la Mort, ta vieille et forte amante,  
Engendras l'Espérance, - une folle charmante!<sup>(21)</sup>

For Satan as well as being arch-rebel, stands for imperfection and as such engenders aspiration.

Frustration has led to contemplation of different aspects of life as different avenues of escape from the self. Each avenue in its turn has revealed a part of man's personality and identity but each has been rejected as incomplete and unsatisfactory. The realisation that the dimension of his search must change from physical to spiritual does not provide the poet with an answer to his problem, but it does give him the change in attitude through which he can exercise his determination and his will to continue the search. It gives him also the beginnings of a spiritual calm in exchange for the physical and mental anguish which had prevented him from seeing the problem in its true perspective. Now at least he is headed in the right direction. In his role as moralist Baudelaire has emphasised the effects of evil, and suggested the way to dilute its venom. Now he shows that man can undertake his voyage of discovery, which might entail physical death, in order to achieve spiritual harmony. The outcome will remain a mystery, but

(20) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Le Reniement de Saint Pierre", vv.29-30, p.115

(21) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Les Litanies de Satan", vv.10-14, p.117

contains an invitation to the reader to set out on his own voyage of self-discovery under these new terms. The feeling we are given is one of hope and the expectation of some measure of harmony if not complete fulfillment. This is seen in terms of the ultimate physical journey through death to the grave, and the notion of death not only as the harbinger of decay and destruction as seen in "La Charogne", but also as the spiritual purification which man's soul undergoes as it passes beyond the grave into the unknown. This final avenue is left then, the contemplation of death and what might lie beyond the grave:

C'est la Mort qui console, hélas! et qui fait vivre;  
 C'est le but de la vie, et c'est le seul espoir  
 Qui, comme un élixir, nous monte et nous enivre,  
 Et nous donne le coeur de marcher jusqu'au soir;<sup>(22)</sup>

Relief from the frustrations of life comes in the evening when one can view one's actions calmly and objectively. By analogy, release from the cares of the world comes at the moment of death. The futility of life is portrayed in "La Fin de la Journée" as "La Vie" dances under a pallid light, aimlessly and without direction. Death brings that relief for which the body, and therefore the poet is crying out, for it brings calm and composure and peace, and it comes with the dark and cool of the night. Baudelaire here equates night with relief from physical need and mental torture, just as in "A Une Heure du Matin" night and darkness had been the conditions most conducive to the solitude the poet needed to come to terms with his way of life and his own personality.

On a deeper level death represents symbolically the change of outlook from the physical to the spiritual. The experience of death is replaced in this context by the willingness to contemplate the meaning of death and to speculate about life in a spiritual dimension, while yet living in a material environment.

The poet never achieves a complete solution in his search for identity, but in the final resort his message is one of hope rather than of despair. The "froid ténébreux" of "Spleen LXXV" has given

(22) Les Fleurs du Mal, "La Mort des Pauvres," vv.1-4, p.119

way to the "rafraîchissantes ténèbres" of "La Fin de la Journée". He holds on to his belief that man can be free to discover, formulate and work towards his own spiritual salvation, having been made aware of

Le spectacle ennuyeux de l'immortel péché.<sup>(23)</sup>

And having accepted it for what it is, he invokes Death to let the travellers set out, to let them escape a land which "nous ennuie":

Plonger au fond du gouffre, Enfer ou Ciel, au'importe?  
Au fond de l'Inconnu pour trouver du nouveau!<sup>(24)</sup>

For at the very moment of death Baudelaire sweeps away everything imagined or known about what lies beyond the grave, seeing death as a new beginning:

C'est le portique ouvert sur les Cieux inconnus.<sup>(25)</sup>

This is a contrast to the more disillusioned attitude towards death which developed in the section entitled "Spleen et Idéal" and was discussed in Chapter III. It shows a calmer acceptance of the inevitable.

This calm is stressed in "Le Port".<sup>(26)</sup> In this poem Baudelaire depicts the sea as an all-engulfing symbol of unity and harmony the contemplation of which restores man's inner peace, - a contrast to the anguished poet's vision of the sea in "L'Homme et la Mer".

When the weary poet has come to terms with himself he can derive comfort from being near the sea:

Un port est un séjour charmant pour une âme fatiguée  
des luttes de la vie.<sup>(27)</sup>

He sees reflected in the sea the very harmony for which he has been seeking, and uses the knowledge to improve his own idea of harmony:

(23) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Le Voyage", VI, v.5, p.125

(24) Ibid., VIII, vv.7-8, p.127

(25) Les Fleurs du Mal, "La Mort des Pauvres", v.14, p.120

(26) Petits Poèmes en Prose, "Le Port", p.292-93

(27) Ibid.,

Les formes élancées des navires, au gréement compliqué,  
auxquels la houle imprime des oscillations harmonieuses,  
servent à entretenir dans l'âme le goût du rythme et de  
la beauté.<sup>(28)</sup>

The poem ends on a note of calm acceptance for the individual, who realises that each soul will need a different solution to life's problems.

But calm and content do not stay with the poet constantly, the port provided a resting place, but only a resting place. "Séjour" in the opening line prepares us for the idea that the poet is waiting his own turn to move on.

"Anywhere out of this world" moves from the general theme of waiting, to a particular case of one soul who needs to escape but for whom the futility of doing so is obvious.<sup>(29)</sup> Boredom, dissatisfaction and disenchantment with the material world combine to strengthen the poet's eagerness to seek escape. The troubles and petty problems of the world are portrayed in

Cette vie est un hôpital où chaque malade est possédé du  
désir de changer de lit. Celui-ci voudrait souffrir en  
face du poêle, et celui-là croit qu'il guérirait à côté  
de la fenêtre.<sup>(30)</sup>

The need to travel in order to escape frustration and find peace is contrasted with the realisation that such journeying is futile. It is only a stop-gap measure providing temporary relief. As in other poems, the need for cool and rest is equated with night, in particular with the long winter night of the far North, the monotony of which is relieved only by the occasional aurora borealis. The oblique angle of the sun protects the poet from being exposed too long to close scrutiny. But finally he comes to realise that the answer he is seeking will never be found in this world, but needs to be sought elsewhere. And the soul is willing to go on searching

(28) Ibid.,

(29) Petits Poèmes en Prose, p.303-304

(30) Ibid.

N'importe où! N'importe où! pourvu que ce soit hors de  
ce monde. (31)

He is now imploring death to take him away from a life and a world with which he is growing increasingly impatient, for he is still searching for that spiritual peace which will show him he has attained a state of harmony. The vastness of the territory which he might yet have to explore no longer overwhelms him. Instead the main note is eagerness and determination to set out on the journey which awaits. In "Le Voyage" the strands of the poet's life are drawn together, and he reviews his aspirations and striving, seeing the contrast between them and reality:

Faut-il le mettre aux fers, le jeter à la mer,  
Ce matelot ivrogne, inventeur d'Amériques  
Dont le mirage rend le gouffre plus amer?  
  
Tel le vieux vagabond, piétinant dans la boue,  
Rêve, le nez en l'air, de brillants paradis; (32)

Yet he can measure his progress towards his ideal. He remembers how he sought delight and oblivion, trying all that the material world had to offer him. He can now be objective enough to realise that he has failed miserably to achieve harmony:

Le monde, monotone et petit, aujourd'hui,  
Hier, demain, toujours, nous fait voir notre image:  
Une oasis d'horreur dans un désert d'ennui! (33)

Lucidity and realism are here combined to lend weight to the moral judgement levelled against man's pursuit of material considerations. He contrasts this with the glorious hope he sees in death. In the end he is ready to surrender himself to death and lose himself in this experience as the mystic loses himself in God.

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(31) Ibid.

(32) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Le Voyage", ii, vv.18-22, p.123

(33) Ibid., vii, vv.2-4, p.126

O Mort, vieux capitaine, il est temps! Levons l'ancre!  
 Ce pays nous ennuie, ô Mort! Appareillons! (34)

But death remains only a symbol for Baudelaire. His main concern is that man should change the aim of his existence so that spiritual and material ends should balance each other, if true harmony is to be reached. His generation had been caught up in rapid material and industrial developments, mistakenly thinking that true progress was contained in them. They lost sight of the spiritual side of man's nature, and having lost sight of it, were unable to relieve the anguish experienced by the more sensitive among them, nor could they explain it. Baudelaire, by drawing attention to the harm wrought by exaggerated material demands on man, forced people to reconsider their ideals, and to recognise the increased need for spiritual progress which ran parallel to material advance. His particular interpretation of true progress is a necessary element in understanding his concept of harmony and identity in the individual.

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(34) Ibid., viii, vv.1-2, p.127



CHAPTER VI

## Baudelaire's interpretation of progress

The emptiness of materialism is one of the main themes running through Baudelaire's writings. A search for identity and harmony reveals what true progress entails, for man has mistaken material progress for true progress, believing that he must seek material gain and pleasure and hold fast to material values if he is not to be left behind:

La croyance au progrès est une doctrine de paresseux, une doctrine de Belges. C'est l'individu qui compte sur ses voisins pour faire sa besogne.<sup>(1)</sup>

Baudelaire insists that this is not true progress, for not only is progress related to the whole man, it is achieved by each individual rather than by groups:

Il ne peut y avoir de progrès (vrai, c'est-à-dire moral) que dans l'individu et par l'individu lui-même. Mais le monde est fait de gens qui ne peuvent penser qu'en commun, en bandes... Il y a aussi des gens qui ne peuvent s'amuser qu'en troupe. Le vrai héros s'amuse tout seul.<sup>(2)</sup>

Baudelaire will show where true progress lies; but equally important are his revelations of where true progress is not to be found. In "J'aime le souvenir" he shows how the contemporary cult of materialism has led to undue emphasis on self-satisfaction and self-seeking, resulting in decadence, ugliness and vice. As a result of this tendency, the natural expression of mutual feeling has degenerated into immoderate demands from one party, eliciting mechanical responses from the other. Hence the corruption in the modern world:

(1) Mon coeur mis à nu, p.1276

(2) Ibid.

Le Poëte aujourd'hui, quand il veut concevoir  
 Ces natives grandeurs, aux lieux où se font voir  
 La nudité de l'homme et celle de la femme,  
 Sent un froid ténébreux envelopper son âme  
 Devant ce noir tableau plein d'épouvantement.<sup>(3)</sup>

The balance between spiritual and material has been lost, and for harmony within society, and within the individual to be regained, the balance must be redressed. The poet's nostalgia for the past develops into dislike and disgust for the present, and this results in a stark contrast between the golden age and Baudelaire's contemporary materialistic age. The strange note of irony in the last section of the poem,

Nous avons, il est vrai, nations corrompues,  
 Aux peuples anciens des beautés inconnues:  
 Des visages rongés par les chancres du cœur,  
 Et comme qui dirait des beautés de langueur;<sup>(4)</sup>

emphasises the fundamental morality in Baudelaire's attitude, for he does not condemn physical love as the expression of true feeling, nor are man's physical attributes something to be ashamed of:

L'homme, élégant, robuste et fort, avait le droit  
 D'être fier des beautés qui le nommaient leur roi;<sup>(5)</sup>

Indeed these are the classical indications of a man in harmony with himself. His praise of youth suggests that this harmony can be reached again if youth's innocence is not destroyed (vv.37-40). What he condemns is the corruption of these faculties, the abuse which man has willingly tolerated and committed and the immoderation in which he has indulged. He condemns the way in which human feelings have become divorced, as in "Tu mettrais l'univers dans ta ruelle," and in "Duellum". A similar idea is expressed in "La Muse Vénale" where the emptiness of religion is likened to the mechanical ritual of prostitution, as a means to an end, implying a condemnation of the material considerations which corrupt things spiritual.

(3) Les Fleurs du Mal, "J'aime le souvenir de ces époques nues"  
 vv.15-19, p.12

(4) Ibid., vv.29-32

(5) Ibid., vv.11-12, p.11

O muse de mon coeur, amante des palais,  
 Auras-tu, quand Janvier lâchera ses Borées,  
 Durant les noirs ennuis des neigeuses soirées,  
 Un tison pour chauffer tes deux pieds violets?

Ranimeras-tu donc tes épaules marbrées  
 Aux nocturnes rayons qui percent les volets?  
 Sentant ta bourse à sec autant que ton palais,  
 Récolteras-tu l'or des voûtes azurées?

Il te faut, pour gagner ton pain chaque soir,  
 Comme un enfant de chœur, jouer de l'encensoir,  
 Chanter des Te Deum auxquels tu ne crois guère,

Ou, saltimbanque à jeun, étaler tes appas  
 Et ton rire trempé de pleurs qu'on ne voit pas,  
 Pour faire épanouir la rate du vulgaire.<sup>(6)</sup>

Throughout this poem there are undertones depicting the very real anguish which man feels, but which he is unable to pin down to any particular cause as in vv.13-14. Much of the imagery implies lack of feeling and absence of human warmth, for instance "tes deux pieds violets" (v.4). While "violets" might elsewhere recall images of modesty and royalty, it here evokes the cold as do the expressions "neigeuses soirées", "épaules marbrées", and the cold moonlight which shines through the shutters, the "rayons nocturnes" (v.6). The contrast between light and warmth with cold, darkness and emptiness is brought out by these images, and others in the first 2 stanzas.

In the second part of the poem Baudelaire makes two equivalences: he shows the choirboy performing the religious ceremonies without believing in them: he then shows the acrobat simulating gaiety in order to make people laugh. Both these actions are meaningless and automatic for the "actor", but a means of earning a living. So is love for the prostitute. The Te Deum should be an expression of praise for all things living, just as the act of love should be an expression

(6) Les Fleurs du Mal, "La Muse Vénale", p.14-15

of joyous emotion. In the poem, both acts are seen as hollow shams.

The juxtaposition of two other poems in the "Spleen et Idéal" section emphasises the need for harmony both of a physical and of a spiritual kind. "Don Juan aux Enfers" deals with the outcome of immoderate physical appetite, a theme which Baudelaire deals with many times in his writings.<sup>(7)</sup> "Châtiment de l'orgueil" depicts the spiritual chaos which results from vainglorious pride in one's intellectual abilities. The message is the same from both poems, that the wages of sin are death be it physical or spiritual, for in overstepping the bounds of moderation man does untold damage to his being. Inordinate pride and self-esteem are as destructive to man's spiritual well-being as immoderate appetites are to his physical well-being. The idea of punishment in each poem is close to the Old Testament idea of a vengeful god dispensing violent punishment, than to the Christian idea of a god meting out chastisement tempered with loving concern. This is quite in keeping with Baudelaire's view on morality, for he sees the physical prowess and beauty of man in his prime as a source of pride rather than shame, a sign of man in harmony with himself and the world. The prevailing idea in the nineteenth-century Christian church holds man as a prey to the physical temptations into which physical beauty would lead him and therefore encouraged him to look on his physical nature with shame.

In both these poems the equilibrium of the individual is lost and he loses control of his own destiny as a consequence of his actions. The imagery of shadow, darkness, hell and subterranean caves depicted in

Le silence et la nuit s'installèrent en lui,  
Comme dans un caveau dont la clef est perdue.<sup>(8)</sup>

suggests the darkness, loss of vision and inability to distinguish right from wrong which overtakes man when desire, spiritual as well as physical, gains ascendancy over reason. Harmony and control must be

(7) For example: "J'aime le souvenir," p.11-12; "Hymne à la Beauté", vv.17-20, p.23; "Un Voyage à Cythère", vv.41-44, p.112; "Le Voyage" I, vv.11-12, p.122, VI, vv.5-9, p.125

(8) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Le Châtiment de l'Orgueil", vv.20-21, p.20

all-important elements if man is to retain his identity, or regain it once lost. The effect is heightened by the contrast between these lines and the preceding ones.(vv.16-19)

To strengthen his contention that material advancement is not true progress, Baudelaire created two very striking images, one in Les Fleurs du Mal and the other in Petits Poèmes en Prose. In both pieces he makes the basic assumption that material progress has made modern man an exile in the world he knows, so that he is driven out in search of a new ideal, and a new resting place.

In Les Fleurs du Mal, "Bohémiens en Voyage" sees mankind embarked on a journey whose end cannot be known. The emphasis is on physical needs.

La tribu prophétique aux prunelles ardentes  
Hier s'est mise en route, emportant ses petits  
Sur son dos, ou livrant à leurs fiers appétits  
Le trésor toujours prêt des mamelles pendantes.<sup>(9)</sup>

In these opening lines Baudelaire stresses the necessity for the basic needs to be satisfied in order that the future is assured, poetically presented as the young being carried or suckled en route. But the hope expressed in "prunelles ardentes" changes to frustration, disappointment and regret in the face of vague fears and general bewilderment because the Bohémiens do not fully understand why they are migrating or what lies in store:

Les hommes vont à pied sous leurs armes luisantes  
Le long des chariots où les leurs sont blottis,  
Promenant sur le ciel des yeux apesantis  
Par le morne regret des chimères absentes.<sup>(10)</sup>

Coupled with this frustration is the futility of trying to combat new dangers with old, well-timed weapons, for the fabulous Chimera will hardly be overcome by common place arms. Beneath this image Baudelaire is saying that it is futile to try tackling new threats to existence

(9) Les Fleurs du Mal, "Bohémiens en Voyage", vv.1-4, p.17-18

(10) Ibid., vv.5-8

with the concepts man has been used to. He will need to invent new ideas in order to cope with the progress in the world around him.

But the poem is not entirely one of despair, for the Bohemians gain some comfort from the world. It will continue to provide for his basic needs while he is searching for his new ideal, and will continue to console him:

Du fond de son réduit sablonneux, le grillon,  
Les regardant passer, redouble sa chanson;  
Cybèle, qui les aime, augmente ses verdure,

Fait couler le rocher et fleurir le désert  
Devant ces voyageurs, pour lesquels est ouvert  
L'empire familial des ténèbres futures.<sup>(11)</sup>

The image of the Chimera is taken up again in "Chacun sa Chimère" of Petits Poèmes en Prose. It represents a combination of knowledge and fantasy, for while the various parts of the creature are easily recognisable, the animal itself is incongruous and therefore presents an undetermined threat to existence. Similarly material progress is comprehensible in its various parts, but its full implications impossible to gauge.

The common theme shared by the two poems is humanity on the march in search of its destiny, driven by a force more powerful than itself, and travelling in the hope of finding a better existence. The tribe carries its young on its back, a symbol of the future and of hope. The chimaeras on the back of "les hommes courbés"<sup>(12)</sup> suggest the burden of past and present life, the material considerations which drive man relentlessly on in search of something he knows not how to express.

There is a surprising lack of bitterness in both migrations, a detail which suggests man's determination that he is going in the right direction even though he does not know where. It also suggests the driving force that material advance has exerted in the world

(11) Ibid., vv.9-14

(12) Petits Poèmes en Prose, "Chacun sa Chimère", p.235

regardless of man's spiritual needs, together with man's naivety in accepting this state of affairs in so calm a manner.

But as a moralist and poet Baudelaire condemns this material progress. He develops the image of the chimaera to emphasise the oppressive nature of materialism in the nineteenth-century, and the way in which it sapped man's very life-blood, for each chimaera drew sustenance for its own life by fastening onto its host:

Mais la monstrueuse bête n'était pas un poids inerte;  
au contraire, elle enveloppait et opprimait l'homme  
de ses muscles élastiques et puissants; elle s'agrafait  
avec ses deux vastes griffes à la poitrine de sa monture;  
et sa tête fabuleuse surmontait le front de l'homme,  
comme un de ses casques horribles par lesquels les  
anciens guerriers espéraient ajouter à la terreur de  
l'ennemi.<sup>(13)</sup>

For man there are two options open, it seems. He can either give himself over to the pursuit of material progress in the hope that it will bring fulfillment:

... aucun de ces voyageurs n'avait l'air irrité contre  
la bête féroce suspendue à son cou et collée à son dos;  
on eût dit qu'il la considérait comme faisant partie de  
lui-même. Tous ces visages fatigués et sérieux ne  
témoignaient d'aucun désespoir... ils cheminaient avec  
la physiognomie résignée de ceux qui sont condamnés à  
espérer toujours.<sup>(14)</sup>

or he can be bypassed by progress, as are "le grillon" in "Bohémien en Voyage" and the onlooker in "Chacun sa chimère." The processions hold their attention for a while, they both sink back into careless and apparent disinterest as to what is involved in the migration they are witnessing. Baudelaire is here portraying the sensation of man

(13) Ibid., p.236 Cf. also the image of ennui as a viper or leech discussed in Chapter III.

(14) Ibid.



allowing himself to be overtaken and by-passed by dull, oppressive materialism and progress whose significance he fails to understand. Both processions recall a funeral march. The "morne regret" and "les ténèbres futures" of "Bohémiens en Voyage" and "ces visages fatigués et sérieux" and "la physionomie resignée" in "Chacun sa Chimère" combine to suggest that material progress is driving man relentlessly towards spiritual death by stifling his individuality and his originality, and by dominating his will.

True progress must take account of spiritual values in order that man can come to terms with the new material values that are confusing him. He must learn to take less account of his physical desires; he must therefore develop the spiritual concepts necessary for the expression of his anxiety and disorientation vis-à-vis his contemporary world. This involves mental contemplation and a rejection of values and standards which he considered stable. These he must replace with standards he believes to be right, but which he regards as untried because he does not understand the concepts involved in them, although despite his animal nature he believes that they are more worthwhile. Materialism is hollow and cannot of itself constitute progress, for true progress must take into account the needs of the whole man, his spiritual as well as his physical being. It is primarily a matter for each individual, and it lies within the power of each individual to attain progress.<sup>(15)</sup>

The notion of progress for a nation lies in the compound effort of each member of that nation and each one's determination to achieve something positive.

Pour que la loi du progrès existât, il faudrait que chacun voulût la créer; c'est-à-dire que quand tous les individus s'appliqueront à progresser, alors, et seulement alors, l'humanité sera en progrès.<sup>(16)</sup>

It is not therefore the amount of material advance to which a nation

(15) Mon cœur mis à nu, p.1276

(16) Ibid., p.1300

can lay claim that is witness to its progress, but rather the link that is established between destiny and freedom both in the individual and in the nation.<sup>(17)</sup>

Man has tended to confuse mathematical progression with spiritual progress:

Si les denrées sont aujourd'hui de meilleure qualité et à meilleur marché qu'elles n'étaient hier, c'est dans l'ordre matériel un progrès incontestable. Mais où est, je vous prie, la garantie du progrès pour le lendemain? Car les disciples des philosophes de la vapeur et des allumettes chimiques l'entendent ainsi: le progrès ne leur apparaît que sous la forme d'une série indéfinie. Où est cette garantie? Elle n'existe, dis-je, que dans votre crédulité et votre fatuité.<sup>(18)</sup>

But progress as a concept of harmonious development is a unique phenomenon rather than a repetition of events or a series of improvements:

Transportée dans l'ordre de l'imagination, l'idée du progrès (il y a eu des audacieux et des enragés de logique qui ont tenté de le faire) se dresse avec une absurdité gigantesque, une grotesquerie qui monte jusqu'à l'épouvantable. La thèse n'est plus soutenable... Dans l'ordre poétique et artistique, tout révélateur a rarement un précurseur. Toute floraison est spontanée, individuelle.<sup>(19)</sup>

In other words each individual has his own aims, and he has progressed if he has come nearer to reaching those aims. For the poet, man at his spiritual best, this will be a conception of what harmony entails and a knowledge that his true ideal lies in striving to achieve that harmony.

(17) Ibid., p.1300-01 "Cette hypothèse peut servir à expliquer l'identité des deux idées contradictoires, liberté et fatalité. - Non seulement il y aura, dans le cas de progrès, identité entre la liberté et la fatalité, mais cette identité a toujours existé. Cette identité c'est l'histoire, histoire des nations et des individus."

(18) Exposition Universelle de 1855, p.958-59

(19) Ibid., p.959

It is the striving which is all-important, and the fact that there is a goal in view, even if it remains just out of reach. For as Baudelaire implied at the end of Les Fleurs du Mal, even at the point of death man is uncertain where his striving will eventually lead him.<sup>(20)</sup> Man's main emotions are a calm acceptance that death is inevitable whether it be an end or a new beginning, and a burning curiosity to find out what may lie ahead. This acceptance shows how far man has developed during his investigations into his material and physical environments, for in replacing apathy and ennui with hope and determination he has come nearer to the harmony in himself. His spiritual and physical ideals are beginning to work in unison rather than at variance with each other, and it is this unity which man is striving to achieve. He has realised that all those things which the modern, material world has to offer are ephemeral and its values are transient. They need to be complemented by permanent values which lie outside the temporal concepts of man's mortal life-span:

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.<sup>(21)</sup>

Death brings to his spirit a release from the confines of material, earthly existence making him free to explore beyond those limits.

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(20) "Le Voyage" ends on a note of hope and willingness to venture into the unknown. This same note of determination to explore the unknown concludes the prose poem "Anywhere out of this world".

(21) Critique artistique, "Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne", p.1163

## CHAPTER VII

### Conclusion

In his examination of man's search for identity in the modern world, Baudelaire expanded themes which were current in his own day, but expanded them to emphasise man's anguish. He did this as a poet and a moralist.

Further, in some of the conclusions he reaches, he sounds a prophetic note. The evidence for this is based on two issues which are linked in the search for identity and the frustration modern man feels when his search is hampered by material progress which is unaccompanied by parallel spiritual or cultural progress. The roles of prophet and moralist are combined in finding a solution, for this involves finding out more about man's nature as he confronts these problems.

Baudelaire is a moralist in his attitude towards evil and sin. His outlook on the physical and material world makes him reject it in preference for a spiritual world. He believes firmly that man's inheritance of original sin dogs his footsteps from birth to the grave. But where the traditional moralist believes man is either basically good, as did Rousseau, or constantly subject to evil in the form of temptation, as did Pascal, Baudelaire opts for a form of dualism which attempts to explain man's seeming contradictions. He insists that man is simultaneously drawn towards good and evil, towards God and Satan. The religious upbringing which Baudelaire received was thorough enough to make him consider any type of physical excess as fundamentally immoral, and to see salvation as a spiritual phenomenon accomplished through the partial rejection of things carnal, with the incumbent physical suffering and anxiety as a purging force for the soul. Here his personal morality coincides with social morality, for he is adamant that debauchery or any form of physical excess is detrimental to the harmonious development of the personality.

But he did not consider physical desires evil in themselves: they

are evil when they lead man to excess. In this respect he ascribes to the classical Greek and Roman idea of morality as spiritual and physical harmony rather than spiritual fulfillment completely replacing physical fulfillment. This was exemplified in "J'aime le souvenir". Both elements are necessary for balanced maturity, but man having been endowed with will and imagination, achieves harmony in the judicious exercise of these faculties over his other attributes.

Given this basic premiss, Baudelaire's enquiries lead him to conclusions not only relevant in his own day, (though not then accepted or properly understood), but relevant also to our times, for the accelerated expansion of those problems which confronted him has served to bring home the validity of his moral insight into their possible solutions, while his poetic creativity has brought before us vivid tableaux of the effects of man's gullible acceptance and pursuit of materialism.

The two particular examples which have been examined in this area are his attitude to the question of drug addiction, and his views on the true nature of progress. His discussion of these two problems is important in that it reveals his lucid insight into man's nature, and shows a remarkable penetration into the nature of those problems confronting man as material and industrial progress accelerate.

He was one of the few writers of his generation to recognise the danger man runs in indulging in drugtaking, for he points in no uncertain terms to the debilitating effect such indulgence has on the will-power, and consequently on man's personality as a whole. In his own day he condemned the moral outlook which led a person to take drugs in the hope of gaining an easy paradise. The work being done in our own times to rehabilitate drug-addicts illustrates the accuracy of his condemnation.

In his search for identity, Baudelaire analysed the destructive force of ennui and sought to transform it into constructive hope through the realisation that there is more to life than material and physical

gratification. These things have their place in the scheme of things, but modern man has placed an undue emphasis on them which has distorted his outlook so that spiritual values have become forgotten.

The negative emphasis of escape from self which dominates the first half of Les Fleurs du Mal changes into a positive attitude in the desire to pursue harmony, and to help create that harmony through an examination of basic concepts coupled with a willingness to accept or even initiate change if it is needed.

Following these changes in emphasis is man's projected reorientation from a purely material outlook to one which takes account of his spiritual needs. Throughout, there is a concentrated emphasis on the individual's role in the fight against materialism. The Romantic movement had re-introduced the importance of the individual into literature. Baudelaire took up and developed this idea, giving the individual prime importance in controlling his own destiny, and therefore the destiny of mankind as a whole.

The second problem, progress, is partly linked to the first, for both originate in man's search for an identity, a perfection towards which to strive. Many in his time were full of praise for the new industrialisation, trusting in man's ability to harness its forces for the benefit of mankind. Some were anxious to improve the material conditions of those displaced by industrial expansion and mechanisation. Most seemed to think that the answer to man's distress lay in the alleviation of those oppressive physical conditions which beset him, such as poverty and hunger; in fact in material relief and material comfort. Baudelaire was one of the few to realise that man's disorientation in the face of material progress was a spiritual problem, the fact that his spiritual progress had failed to keep pace with the material development around him.

Furthermore, his dignity and self-esteem had suffered a serious blow for his usefulness had been diminished. Reorientation might be achieved when he developed new spiritual concepts and realigned his

mental outlook to suit the physical progress he had made. As well he must look to his own intrinsic worth and find in it a source of pride rather than shame, for he must regain his self-esteem before he can undertake this reorientation and benefit from it.

He realised that true progress and civilisation are spiritual as well as physical phenomena. This realisation helps man to understand the anguish he feels when confronted with material and industrial progress divorced from spiritual concepts. The development of the concepts will help his spiritual growth. But he must be willing to search for them through his own efforts, through his will-power and reason, directed by imagination and aided by sensitivity.

By the twentieth century, others also were appreciating the nature of the problems associated with materialism, and where the solutions to them might lie. Saint-Exupéry and Albert Camus both expressed the need for man to be responsible for his own destiny, and to have an identity towards which to strive. Like Baudelaire, they saw progress as primarily a matter for each individual, but out of this idea developed the concept of solidarity, and of collective responsibility for those things which go wrong in the world. Saint-Exupéry also saw that the solution lies in the development of cultural concepts which bear some relation to industrial and material advances. It remains to be seen whether the proffered solutions will be heeded soon enough to re-establish man's spiritual *raison d'être*, or whether he will be caught too firmly in the grip of materialism to pull himself free.

Man's anguish will gradually disappear if he has positive ideals to strive for rather than negative attitudes to brood on. The revolt which the poet made in his search for identity led him to reject ready made standards which had failed him, and replace them with standards acceptable to him through the fact that he has examined them for himself. Even if he did not understand fully all the implications entailed, he had the spiritual satisfaction of striving towards an ideal. Man does not necessarily find his identity, for in a rapidly changing world identity is well nigh impossible to establish. But now he is striving



towards an end with hope rather than despair to urge him on. It is this positive striving towards a real goal that helps man on the road to maturity. It is irrelevant whether the ends are achieved, for the merit lies in the effort involved.

Baudelaire ended in search for identity by projecting himself into a new dimension, spiritual rather than physical, thus showing that reorientation of one's outlook is possible. He encourages modern man to do the same in the hope of regaining his integral harmony. As a moralist and a prophet, he shows modern man a possible solution to his dilemma which becomes more urgent and more relevant as material progress increases in pace and scope. It is up to each man to interpret that solution as he will, and to adapt it to his own particular needs.

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