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CARICATURE AS A LANGUAGE OF POPULAR CULTURE

I. CARICATURE AS SOCIAL COMMENTARY: BAUDELAIRE'S USE OF POPULAR ART IN PROSE POETRY

Baudelaire's colloquial language or *argot plastique* in the prose poems combines the transitory (types from his times) and the eternal (human emotions and aspiration) to create what he describes over and over in his critical works as *le beau moderne*:

Le beau est fait d'un élément éternel, invariable, dont la quantité est excessivement difficile à déterminer, et d'un élément relatif, circonstanciel, qui sera, si l'on veut, tour à tour ou tout ensemble, l'époque, la mode, la morale, la passion.

Baudelaire's woman figure in *A une passante* is a typical creature of the Second Empire. She bears a striking resemblance to Gavarni's "Lorette", the fleeting woman of the crowd, glimpsed daily on the street. In *Quelques Caricaturistes français*, Baudelaire describes her flitting about:

La Lorette, on l'a déjà dit, n'est pas la fille entretenue, cette chose de l'Empire, condamnée à vivre en tête à tête funèbre général ou banquier. La Lorette est une personne libre. Elle va et elle vient. Elle tient maison ouverte, Elle n'a pas de maître; elle fréquente les artistes et les journalistes. Elle fait ce qu'elle peut pour avoir de l'esprit.

Dorothee and her sister provide a picture of the free agent, Lorette, and "la chose", la fille entretenue. The briefly sketched juxtaposition of their situations and that of the avaricious master completes the image of a consumer society in which beauty is subservient to usefulness:

Le Maître de l'enfant est si avare,
trop avare pour comprendre une autre
beauté que celle des écus.

Baudelaire suggests that the *beau* and *utile*, those bastions of 18th century aesthetics, preclude the appreciation of other forms of

beauty. His point of view changes on this subject frequently throughout the works; however, it should be noted that caricature combines art which speaks over and above form (pure art) and yet serves a purpose. Thus caricature resolves the rampant conflict between advocates of l'art pour l'art and l'art utile. Utility as progress and materialism are Baudelaire's enemies, as he states unequivocally in his *Exposition universelle* 1855:

Il est encore une erreur fort à la mode, de laquelle je veux me garder comme de l'enfer. Je veux parler de l'idée du progrès. Ce fanal obscur, invention du philosophisme actuel, breveté, sans garantie de la Nature out de la Divinité, cette lanterne moderne jette des ténèbres sur tous les objets de la connaissance; la liberté s'évanouit, le chatiment disparaît. Qui veut y voir claire dans l'histoire doit avant tout éteindre ce fanal perfide. Cette idée grotesque, qui a fleuri sur le terrain pourri de la fatuité moderne, a déchargé chacun de son devoir, délivré toute âme de sa responsabilité, dégagé la volonté de tous les liens que lui imposait l'amour du beau: Et les races amoindries, si cette navrante folie dure longtemps, s'endormiront sur l'oreiller de la fatalité dans le sommeil radoteur de la décrépitude. Cette infatuation est le diagnostic d'une décadence déjà trop visible.

His declaration here that to see clear one must look behind the euphoria inspired by "progress" and penetrate to the moral core of the times explains his admiration of Rethel's ability—and courage—to see beyond the surface gloss of the Revolution of 1848:

Ce que je trouve de vraiment original dans le poème, c'est qu'il se produisit dans un instant ou presque toute l'humanité s'était engouée avec bonne foi des sottises de la révolution.

It follows that Baudelaire, too, would try to open his eyes to what others chose to ignore and turn this vision to a purpose.

In prose poems which treat the poor, persecuted and elderly, Baudelaire creates a drama of the underworld narrated in argot plastique. His term is even more appropriate under these circumstances, for argot was the cant of beggars and thieves, originally. By creating a gallery of its underdogs, Baudelaire depicts the arrogance and consumer materialism of the Second Empire (Clark, *The Absolute Bourgeois*, 120—123). The fact that this underworld exists and is revealed through poetry, a medium traditionally reserved for high and lofty subjects, comments upon the Second Empire and its values.

Certain models, victims of society because of the occupation they practice, project meaning for Baudelaire. In *Le Vin du chiffonnier*, he exaggerates the characteristic gesture and activity of the chiffonnier, comparing him to a poet racking his brain:

On voit un chiffonnier qui vient, hochant la tête,
Butant, et se cognant aux murs comme un poète,
Et, sans prendre souci des mouchards, ses sujets,
Epanche tout son coeur en glorieux projets.

Chiffonnier and poet melt into one, enchanted by the imaginary, somewhat subversive in nature, as the noun, *mouchard*, suggests. Argot here is functioning in its most traditional role, excluding outsiders from understanding why or how in these circumstances the chiffonnier-poet could have "glorieux projets". The picture is one of self-deprecation. The ridiculous stance of chiffonnier and poet is molded from the futility of the gesture and the incongruity of mixing the most materialistic and belittling of jobs (rag-picking) with the elevated (poetic creation). The contrast of theme (anti-creation) and form (creation incarnate) have an ironic ring.

The poem *Le Vieux Saltimbanque* depends on contrast, a device we have already seen, to startle the reader and make him feel ill at ease: just the reaction of Baudelaire. In the middle of the prose poem, Baudelaire introduces his subject, a misfit amid merry surroundings:

Au bout, à l'extrême bout de la rangée de baraques, comme si, honteux, il s'était exilé lui-même de toutes ces splendeurs, je vis un pauvre saltimbanque, voûté, caduc, décrépît, une ruine d'homme, adossé contre un des poteaux de sa cahute; une cahute plus misérable que celle du sauvage le plus abruti, et dont deux bouts de chandelles, coulants et fumants, éclairaient trop bien encore la détresse.

Introducing the clown after a lengthy description of the bustling fair, Baudelaire illustrates in a caricatural use of *argot plastique* that this pariah is out of the mainstream. The sign of the clown inspires the realization of a truth similar to that of *Une Charogne*:

Et, m'en retournant, obsédé par cette vision, je cherchai à analyser ma soudaine douleur, et je me dis: Je viens de voir l'image du vieil homme de lettres qui a survécu à la génération dont il fut le brillant amuseur; du vieux poète sans amis, sans famille, sans enfants, dégradé par sa misère et par l'ingratitude publique, et dans la baraque de qui le monde oublieux ne veut plus entrer!

A discard of society, the *saltimbanque* is not much more than a living carcass. (Variations of this caricature of the artist appear in *Le Flacon*, *L'Albatros*, and *Un Voyage à Cythère*). The figure of the clown shares many features of Daumier's buffoons, who, as T. J. Clark points out, represent both artist and worker. By the fact that they are outcasts of the Second Empire system, Daumier's clowns are elevated to the symbol of hero in his lithographs (Clark, *The Absolute Bourgeois*, 119—123). The persecution of the clown, whose livelihood was threatened by restrictions on travel and tariffs, did not go unnoticed by Baudelaire. His identification with the clown stems from the misunderstanding which both he and this group suffered, and their rejection by the glittering society of the Second Empire. It is a sign of the times that the clown-poet is the victim of injustice which has arisen as a result of shifting values. At the same time, by turning for a model to a low

class of society alternately viewed as visionary ("voyant") and demented, he frees himself of bourgeois society's restrictions and transcends his situation. Unlike other poets, Baudelaire does not turn his back on controversial subjects.

In depicting a wide range of citizens Baudelaire moves beyond a condemnation of his society (and the authorities who govern it) to the realization of a desire he expresses in *Mon Coeur mis à nu*:

Concevoir un canevas pour une bouffonnerie lyrique ou féerique, pour une pantomime, et traduire cela en un roman sérieux. Noyer le tout dans une atmosphère des grands jours. Que ce soit quelque chose de berçant, et même serein dans la passion. Régions de la Poésie pure.

Baudelaire's use of words related to art (canevas), comic (bouffonnerie, pantomime), and poetry (lyrique, poésie) point toward the idea of poetic caricature: the comic which delivers a message of timeless value. Baudelaire's use of the word *roman* is equally interesting, for in *Quelques Caricaturistes français* he credits Daumier with moving graphic caricature from the realm of historic caricature to that of artistic caricature with the creation of Robert Macaire:

La caricature, des lors, prit une allure nouvelle, elle ne fut plus spécialement politique. Elle fut la satire générale des citoyens. Elle entra dans le domaine du roman.

In moving from the political figure to the citizen as model, Daumier changed the nature of caricature from cruel mockery to include sympathy and warmth, thus broadening the scope of caricature and paving the way for the hybridization of popular art forms such as caricature in the new genre of prose poetry.

Baudelaire's satire of the shortcomings of his times does not stop with the depiction of occupational victims of modern society. It includes those afflicted with physical, emotional, and financial handicaps which separate them from the thriving bourgeois of the Second Empire. Poems such as *Les Aveugles*, *Les Sept Vieillards*, *Les Petites Vieilles* and many more accentuate the moral texture of humanity. In these underlings Baudelaire discerns the continuity of certain issues.

The searching look of unseeing eyes is just as futile as the ragman's fantasies, and yet, it is this gesture which Baudelaire chooses to characterize *Les Aveugles*:

Contemple-les, mon âme; ils sont vraiment affreux! Pareils aux mannequins; vaguement ridicules; Terribles, singuliers comme les somnambules! Dardant on ne sait où leurs globes ténébreux.

Baudelaire exaggerates the importance of the eyes first by describing the men's hideous appearance. The blackly comical nature of this description arises from the fact that the eyes are functionless. Baudelaire uses mechanical words to characterize the movement of the blind:

mannequins, somnambules. The adjectives, ridicules, and terribles duplicate in sound the automaton's movement. The eye-balls, which ironically see nothing, assume a life of their own as they dart around. The focal point of the caricature, the eyes dominate the silhouette of these blind men:

Leurs yeux, d'où la divine étincelle est partie,
Comme s'ils regardaient au loin, restent levés
Au ciel; on ne les voit jamais vers les pavés
Pencher rêveusement leur tête apesantie.

The blind present a spectacle which parallels that of the clown, with one difference. The blind are victims of nature first, victims of society second:

Ils traversent ainsi le noir illimité
De frère du silence éternel, O cité!
Pendant qu'autour de nous tu chantes, ris et beugles.

Eprise du plaisir jusqu'à l'atrocité,
Vois! je me traîne aussi! mais, plus qu'eux hébété,
Je dis; Que cherchent-ils au Ciel, tous ces aveugles?

The contrast between the blind and others is harsh. Their stance is so convincing that it projects meaning. Elsewhere Baudelaire associates this gesture with the visionary:

Les hommes...
Promenant sur le ciel des yeux apesantis
Par le morne regret des chimères absents.

and with the poet:

Vers le ciel...
sur son cou convulsif tendant sa tête avide
Comme s'il adressait des reproches à Dieu!

all are afflicted with the same uncertainty and search for some higher understanding. The implication is that they should open their eyes and see what is really around them. And that is what Baudelaire did. Caricature provides him a form in which to frame what he saw and a means to connote his sympathy for his models. Because his approach is comical, he is able to broach subjects others do not, and turn them to his purpose. "La nature ne fait que des monstres" he states in *Notes nouvelles sur Edgar Poe*, thus the analogues in these poems mere present different aspects of the same human condition: le goût de l'infini.

Les Sept Vieillards, portrays the city's elderly. Baudelaire depicts the first vieillard in four stanzas. The replica is a mere sketch: "Son pareil le suivait: barbe, oeil, dos, bâton, loques". Each copy is then encompassed in the lines:

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

In contemplating a *vieillard*, or rather seven of them, Baudelaire suggests the stream of humanity constantly presenting new bodies for the grave. Repetition, a figure in his *argot plastique* which we saw in *Le Beau Navire*, here represents continuity of fate. The *vieillards'* rigidity, their hobbling, and the repetition of the vision all contribute to the poem's comic effect. The final stanza links the movement of the *vieillard* to the poet's imagination in a picturesque self-caricature:

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

that the visual image of his being in the form of a ship was real to him is clear from the sketch which accompanies the poem.

Les Petites Vieilles expands the age motif, but inspires a different reaction. Here Baudelaire does not seek escape from the absurdity of existence, but rather, accepts it as evidence of man's fragility. As in *Les Sept Vieillards*, a variety of mechanical aspects enliven the poem:

Ils trottent, tout pareils a des marionnettes;
Se traînent, comme font des animaux blessés,
Ou dansent, sans vouloir danser, pauvres sonnettes,
Où se pend un Démon sans pitié! Tout cassés...

Baudelaire visualizes their past: "Je vis vos jours perdus" reminding us of the fantasy he constructed upon seeing Dorothee. The ravages of time have transformed the old women:

Vous qui fûtes la grace et qui fûtes la gloire,
Nul ne vous reconnaît!...

As we will all be, these old ladies are caricatures of their youth, a theme presented from another angle in *Le Désespoir de la vieille*:

La petite vieille ratatinée se sentit toute réjouie en voyant ce joli enfant à qui chacun faisait fête, à qui tout le monde voulait plaire; ce joli être, si fragile comme elle, la petite vieille, et comme elle aussi, sans dents et sans cheveux.

Et elle s'approcha de lui, voulant lui faire des risettes et des mines agréables.

Mais l'enfant épouvanté se débattait sous les caresses de la bonne femme décrépite, et remplissait la maison de ses glapissements.

Alors la bonne vieille se retira dans sa solitude éternelle et elle pleurait dans un coin, se disant: — "Ah! pour nous, malheureuses, vieilles femelles, l'âge est passé de plaire, même aux innocents; et nous faisons horreur aux petits enfants que nous voulons aimer!"

Directly juxtaposing child with aged, and moving the old woman back into a corner, Baudelaire exaggerates the passage of time (which has destroyed the woman's beauty) and achieves a more intense caricatural effect than in the two other poems on this theme. That "progress", that modern deity, cannot save these victims from their human fate is Baudelaire's ironic message and condemnation of his times.

In portraying society's outcasts, Baudelaire focuses upon their characteristic gestures, the vocabulary of his *argot plastique*, to highlight the incongruity between the affluent and dazzling Second Empire — *en beau*, although morally decrepit — and these awkward misfits. His decision to portray the Second Empire in caricature, applies to poetry a concept he discusses in *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*:

L'idée que l'homme se fait du beau s'imprime dans tout son ajustement, chiffonne ou raidit son habit, arrondit ou aligne son geste, et même pénètre subtilement à la longue, les traits de son visage. L'homme finit par ressembler à ce qu'il voudrait être. Ces gravures peuvent être traduits en beau ou en laid; en laid elles deviennent des caricatures; en beau, des statues antiques.

This passage gives caricature a prominent place in Baudelaire's theory of relative beauty. The models are there, it is a matter of individual interpretation which caricatures or idealizes them. While ridiculing poetic traditions, and the Second Empire, Baudelaire's perception favors the former.

II. CARICATURE AND THE PETITS POÈMES EN PROSE: ADAPTATION OF POPULAR LANGUAGE IN PROSE POETRY

Most critics assert there is little or no architecture to *Petits poèmes en prose*. And yet, in his dedication letter to Arsène Houssaye, which accompanied the group of prose poems published in 1862, Baudelaire addresses the question of architecture:

Mon cher ami, je vous envoie un petit ouvrage, dont on ne pourrait pas dire, sans injustice, qu'il n'a ni queue ni tête, puisque tout, au contraire, y est à la fois tête et queue, alternativement et réciproquement.

The letter to Houssaye reveals, again, that architecture is important to Baudelaire; but his idea of architecture is hardly that of horizontal and vertical planes (often translated into literature through linear sequence or cause and effect). *Petits Poèmes en prose* defies the conventional notion of unity. The dedication to the prose poems reveals an ironic Baudelaire caricaturing the very idea of structure in the poetic collection. In a playful image he introduces the serpent's movement to denote the alternate and reciprocal interplay or parts within the work, and to imply

that the aesthetic of caricature, eerily present yet unexplained in *Les Fleurs du mal*, is no less important here. His remarks are directed against critics who would chase their own tails in a futile effort to identify morsels rather than grasping the message of the collection as a whole. The component parts of *Petits poèmes en prose* are independant:

Hachez-la en nombreux fragments, et vous verrez que chacun peut exister à part. Dans l'espérance que quelques-uns de ces tronçons sertont assez vivants pour vous plaire et vous amuser, j'ose vous dédier le serpent tout entier.

His letter is an invitation to do what Philippon invited the magistrates to do at this controversial *Poire* hearing: to glide from one prose poem to the next and vice versa in an effort to understand the elusive birth of the symbol. Architecture is organic like *argot plastique* itself.

Baudelaire gives other indications, too, that there is, in his mind, an architecture. The list of "poèmes à faire" for *Petits poèmes en prose* and *Le Spleen de Paris* (separate lists although repeating many of the same poems and actually referring to the same collection of prose poems) include three division headings: "Choses parisiennes", "Oneirocritie", "Symboles et moralites". Only on the list for *Petits poèmes* are the poems actually grouped by divisions, however. The same headings are found in the margin of *Le Spleen de Paris* list, with two minor variations: "Rêves" for "Oneirocritie" and a new heading "Autres classes à trouver". These headings indicate the skeleton of an architecture or at least the intention on Baudelaire's part to bury it. There is a hint of interchangeability between sections since several poems change from early ("Choses parisiennes") on the first list, to late (probably, "Symboles et moralites" had the second list been clearly categorized; *Le Vieux Athée*, for example, is Nr 1 out of 54 on list I; Nr 70 out of 112 on list II.) It is precisely the absence of categories on the second list which reveals, I believe, the direction of Baudelaire's architectural configurations away from a strict form. The categories, which he holds silently before himself on the second list, correspond to the process we saw in *La Belle Dorothée* as a metaphor for decoding a caricature. Observation of the concrete, "Choses parisiennes", is followed by reflection, "Rêves"; and grasp of the true situation with its ensuing symbolic and moral importance. Picture and caption are complete.

Within certain prose poems, Baudelaire gives a further idea of what he meant by architecture. One such clue is in the short prose poem, *La Soupe et les nuages*:

Ma petite folle bien aimée me donnait à diné, et par la fenêtre ouverte de la salle à manger je contemplais les mouvantes architectures que Dieu fait avec les vapeurs, les merveilleuses constructions de l'impalpable.

The mouvantes architectures defy the usual concept of

architecture as a fixed form, and apply perfectly to prose poems such as *Les Foules*, *Le Port*, *Les Projets*, *La Chambre double*, etc. It is through movement that the abstract — l'impalpable — may be captured. I believe that the paradoxical architecture of *La Soupe et les nuages* is that of the *Petits poèmes en prose*, an architecture imposed "pour s'adapter aux mouvements lyriques de l'âme, aux ondulations de la rêverie, aux sobresauts de la conscience", and which is at the source of the enigmatic poem, *L'Etranger* with which he opens the *Petits poèmes*. Baudelaire did not limit this concept to individual prose poems; perhaps accidentally, he made it the basis of the collection's structure.

The moving architecture under which Baudelaire conceived the *Petits poèmes en prose* accounts, in part, for the difficulty he had in deciding upon a title for the work; these titles included: *Poèmes nocturnes*, *Poèmes en prose*, *Le Promeneur solitaire*, *Le Rôdeur parisien*, *La Lueur et la fumée*, *Le Spleen de Paris*, *Petits poèmes en prose*. The absence of divisions to guide the reader within the work present a strange contrast to the *Fleurs du mal* whose headings served to a certain degree to contain the disturbing effect of their content. And yet, Baudelaire intended the two collections to be complementary. Banville and Asselineau must have been aware of the intimate relationship between the two works when, in preparing the edition of 1869, they place the *Epilogue* written in verse at the end of the *Petits poèmes en prose*. Most critics consider this an error of placement, since it could have just as easily followed *Tableaux parisiens*. Their decision may have not been erroneous. The return to verse echoes in part, the structure of *Le Printemps* by Agrippa d'Aubigné, the author whom Baudelaire cited at the head of the 1857 edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal*. D'Aubigné's lyric works incorporated 100 sonnets in a section entitled *L'Hecatombe à Diane*, offered to placate the woman and goddess, Diane. D'Aubigné inserted 22 stanzas and 52 odes following the sonnets. Returning to traditional poetry, D'Aubigné closes the collection with a single sonnet, drawing together the parts of the collection and confirming his belief in the Ideal. Had it been Baudelaire who closed *Petits poèmes en prose* with the *Epilogue*, it would have sewn the two collections together. But it was his friend's doing, not his.

The two works are intimately related, however, and Baudelaire leaves no doubt of their association (*Corr.*, V, 222; VI, 47). In his correspondence he states that *Petits poèmes en prose* are a pendant to *Les Fleurs du Mal*. His choice of the word, pendant, establishes their alternate and reciprocal relationship, for it indicates that *Petits poèmes en prose* is a continuation of *Les Fleurs du Mal* and also that it presents a complementary tableau—an alternate reading for—the work in verse. The complementary nature of the two works is more than that of re-worked poems in prose, parallel themes, or equivalent technical devices. *Petits poèmes en prose* presents an experimental counterpart for the

poetic caricature of *Les Fleurs du Mal*. Baudelaire incorporates the theory of physiognomic interpretation and reveals its unreliability in poems such as *Les Veuves* and *La Corde*. He encourages the expansive intoxication in *Enivrez-vous*. Evil in the form of the satanic is central to *Les Dons des fées* which emphasizes orgueil, as well as in *Les Tentations*, *Le Jour généreux*, and *Perte d'auréole*. *Le Thyrse* braids together the philosophy of movement. Distortion of scenes is crucial in poems like *La Femme sauvage et la petite maîtresse*, *Crépuscule du soir*, and *Les Yeux des pauvres*. The distortion of the mind, dreaming, forms the basis of *La Chambre double*. Baudelaire presents the ideal (*Les Foulées*, *L'Horloge*, *Une Hémisphère dans une chevelure*) and the ugly side of human nature (*Le Gâteau*, *La Fausse Monnaie*). The consolation and deception which illusion inspires is at the heart of *Laquelle est la vraie*, *Les Fenêtres*, and *Les Projets*. Reiterating his preference for "underworld" figures—those which others would not put into literature for themselves—a preference as early as the *Salon de 1846* which he repeated in *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, he includes in *Mademoiselle Bistouri*:

Quelles bizarreries ne trouve-t-on pas dans une grande ville, quand on sait se promener et regarder? La vie fourmille de monstres innocents. (I, 534)

These points represent the key elements of caricature. But the *Petits poèmes en prose* is not just an explication of *Les Fleurs du Mal* and its poetic caricature.

Parallel to the way in which Baudelaire caricatured basic poetic traditions, in the *Petits poèmes en prose* he reverses the conventional concept of poetic architecture, by making his prose poems a large-scale critique of his more traditional collection, *Les Fleurs du Mal*. It is for this reason, among others, that to search for a linear architecture in the prose poems is futile. Together the two collections present complementary tableaux, illustrating in poetic terms Aloysius Bertrand's idea of art:

L'art a toujours deux faces antithétiques, médaille dont, part exemple, un côté accuserait la ressemblance de Paul Rembrandt et le revers celle de Jacques Caollot. — Rembrandt est le philosophe à barbe blanche qui s'encolimaçonne en son réduit, qui absorbe sa pensée dans la méditation et dans la prière, qui ferme les yeux pour se recueillir, qui s'entretient avec des esprits de beauté, de science, de sagesse et d'amour, et qui se consume à pénétrer les mystérieux symboles de la nature. — Callot, au contraire, est le lansquenet fanfaron et grivois qui se pavane sur la place, qui fait du bruit dans la taverne, qui carresse les filles de bohémiens, qui ne jure que par sa rapière et par son escopette, et qui n'a d'autre inquiétude que de cirer sa moustache. (Bertrand, *Gaspard de la Nuit: fantaisies à la manière de Rembrandt et de Callot*, Paris 1972, 63).

Bertrand gives two alternatives: Rembrandt and Callot. Translated into conventional terms they correspond to the ideal and the ugly. What

Bertrand does not analyze is their reciprocal relationship. That was taken up by Baudelaire and his explanation took the form of poetic caricature.

Caricature gives the ugly meaning, in Baudelaire's case the same meaning, as the ideal. Krestovsky was correct though not complete in her assumption:

La Beauté et la Laideur sont-elles des phénomènes distincts? Pour Baudelaire, elles ne sont que deux faces d'une même figure, dont la nature métaphysique est absolument identique. (Lydie Krestovsky, *Esthétique de Baudelaire*, [in.] *Le Problème spirituel de la beauté et de la laideur*, (Paris, 1948, 127)

She failed to draw the line between ugliness and caricature. The caricature does not simply depict, it carries a message, generally in the form of a caption. Making his verse and prose works complementary *tableaux*, Baudelaire presents the traditional, the revolutionary and, at the same time, happens upon an architectural configuration which combines the complexities of caricature (physiognomy, distortion, comic, concentration of effect, and dramaticity). By the fact that these elements may be combined in any formula, he transmits the caricature's ability to entertain multiple views at the same time. Poetic caricature provides Baudelaire a means of expressing his contradictory feelings and perceptions, particularly those concerning the conflict of poetry and prose.

In his letter to Houssaye, Baudelaire confessed that he had created something new, accidentally:

Sitôt que j'eus commencé le travail, je m'aperçu que non seulement je restais bien loin de mon mystérieux et brillant modèle, mais encore je faisais quelque chose (si cela peut s'appeler quelque chose) de singulièrement différent...

Bertrand, his model, organized *Gaspard de la Nuit* to present a series of prose equivalents for different artists' styles: each series neatly categorized. Baudelaire did not do this. Instead, he presented *tableaux* in which he painted reactions, disillusion: and he did not categorize them. In an earlier letter to Houssaye, in December, 1861, Baudelaire had phrased his comment on the prose poems unequivocally, crediting himself with having created "quelque chose de nouveau, comme sensation et comme expression" (*Corr.*, IV, 33) The underlined expression should ring a bell and it does. Here is the affirmation of the *du nouveau* which closed *Les Fleurs du Mal* on a note of quest. *Le Voyage* appropriated as both tail and head of that collection, is, too, the introduction, the prospectus, of the *Petits poèmes en prose*. The italics used for *nouveau*, suggest that they were intended to transform the end of the work into a pun. Baudelaire's concern for typography—a visual counterpart for tone of voice as well as the "picture" of the poem—is visible throughout the *Petits poèmes en prose*. Baudelaire used italics as

a typographic indicator of his sense of humor. He does not want anyone to miss his intended pun. In his dedication letter to Houssay he had stated an objective of the collection as the desire to amuse Houssaye. His comic was intentional. The humor which is highlighted by italics is often cruel, for example, as the gallant marksman aims at a poupee doll on the firing range and sneers at his companion: "Observez cette poupée, la-bas, a droite, qui porte le nez en l'air et qui a la mine si hautaine. Eh bien: cher ange, je me figure que c'est vous". At other times it is simple word play, expressing a tone of amused compassion and irony:

Que de fois j'ai contemplé, souriant et attendri, tous ces philosophes à quatre pattes, esclaves complaisants, soumis ou dévoués, que le dictionnaire républicain pourrait aussi bien qualifier d'officieux, si la république, trop occupée, du bonheur des hommes, avait le temps de ménager l'honneur des chiens!

Employing a familiar expression in a literal rather than figurative sense he creates a comical effect of assumed naivete:

Moi, dont on dit tant de mal, je suis quelquefois bon diable, pour me servir d'une de vos locutions vulgaires.

Who is speaking, Who else but Satan. Bernard recognized Baudelaire's use of italics to express humor, but pursued the subject no further:

Le ton d'ironie glacée tient un part de sa vertu de la banalité, de la transparence que Baudelaire impose volontairement à son style, relevant seulement la platitude habituelle des termes par quelque expression chargée, ça et là, et généralement, soulignée. (Bernard, 127).

Baudelaire used italics in this way even in his dedicatory letter to Houssaye, in which he expressed his distress at having surpassed his original goal:

[...] je faisais quelque chose de singulièrement différent, accident dont tout autre que moi s'enorgueillerait sans doute, mais qui ne peut qu'humilier profondément un esprit qui regarde comme le plus grand honneur du poète d'accomplir juste ce qu'il a projeté de faire.

Underlined, *juste* plays upon the French meaning (precisely) and the English (only). The tone which arises from this double play is self-deprecatory, the tentative justification of the schoolboy who did not do the right assignment, but rather something much more imaginative.

Baudelaire surpassed Aloysius Bertrand by going beyond representation to caricature in the modern sense. He played the collection of prose off the work in verse, alternately and reciprocally, through theme, technical devices, and tone. The result was the expansion of the concept of the traditional collection and of the mood to express his times. Baudelaire conceived of these two forms as equally capable of expressing the movements of the poetic spirit. Within the framework of caricature and its comic, Baudelaire found a means of expressing the contradictory fee-

lings which generate his poetry: love, hate; aggression, fear; admiration and compassion. Combining them in varying ways within individual poems, and entire works, he freed poetry from the restrictions imposed by the conventional separation of serious and comic. It was the privileging of the imagination, through poetic caricature as a language of popular culture which set him apart from prevailing artistic attitudes and at the same time initiated the release of modern poetry from the bondage of convention.

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STRESZCZENIE

W swych poematach prozą Baudelaire posługiwał się codziennym językiem mówionym (argot plastique), osiągając znakomite efekty w kształtowaniu charakterystycznych typów właściwych dla swoich czasów oraz przedstawianiu ludzkich uczuć i pragnień jako treści ponadczasowych, wiecznych, co uważał za istotę „nowoczesnego piękna” („le beau moderne”), jak sam to określił.

Jednym z bardzo ważnych sposobów stosowania tego swoistego środka artystycznego bawiącego i interpretującego było świadome posługiwanie się kategorią ironii. Był to zabieg doskonale przemyślany i poetycko zrealizowany, wysoce upoetyczniający gwarę wprowadzoną do języka poetyckiego. Baudelaire'owski ton ironii znakomicie łagodził naturalną banalność języka i wzbogacał o walory charakterystyczne dla języka poety. Ton ten likwidował częstą płaskość języka ludowego, a przy tym niejednokrotnie podkreślał walory emocjonalne tam, gdzie poecie chodziło o wyraźne zmiany nastrojów.

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