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PASCAL'S PENSÉES AND BAUDELAIRE'S LES FLEURS DU MAL
A STUDY OF THE PARALLELS AND DEVELOPMENT
OF THE THEME OF "ENNUI"

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NICHOLAS GASCOIGNE HAMMOND

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ABBREVIATIONS

As the term "ennui" plays the central role of this thesis, henceforth it will not appear between quotation marks, except in specific instances.

B - Pensées, edition of Léon Brunschvicg. Paris, Livre de Poche, 1972.

L - Pensées, edition of Louis Lafuma. Paris, Éditions de Seuil, 1962.

All line numberings of extracts from Baudelaire's Les Fleurs du Mal will be included in brackets after each quotation.

Other than quotations from Les Fleurs du Mal, all quotations of Baudelaire's writings will be taken from his Oeuvres Complètes, 2 volumes, Paris, Pléiade, 1975-1976, and his Correspondance, 2 volumes, Paris, Pléiade, 1973, texts established by Claude Pichois.

Three editions of Les Fleurs du Mal, other than the Pichois edition, will serve as our principal sources in this thesis:

Marcel A. Ruff, editor. Les Fleurs du Mal. Paris, Seuil, 1968.

Antoine Adam, editor. Les Fleurs du Mal. Paris, Garnier Frères, 1961.

Jacques Crépet, Georges Blin, editors. Les Fleurs du Mal. Paris, José Corti, 1942.

Henceforth, these editions will be referred to by the surnames of the respective editors.

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INTRODUCTION

Upon first reading the writings of both Pascal and Baudelaire, one cannot help being struck by a sensation of awe at the penetrating insight into the human condition possessed by both writers. A further exploration of the realms of Pascalian and Baudelairian thought considerably strengthens this initial reaction into a recognition that both authors were men of equal moral and spiritual intensity. Despite their outward differences, both sought to attain a deep understanding of human nature, but without attempting to offer any excuses on behalf of man. Furthermore, the two writers employ an identical term to describe the condition of humanity: "ennui". Although the word exists in the writings of contemporaries of both Pascal and Baudelaire, no other author makes such full, unique and significant use of ennui.

As this thesis will hopefully prove, Baudelaire was indeed directly and positively influenced by Pascal. However, it is not our intention to concentrate upon such an influence; rather, we wish to indicate the parallels and development of the theme of ennui, so central to each man's outlook, in their respective writings. Evidently, it would be beyond the boundaries of this thesis if we were to try to analyse closely the entire creative output of Pascal and Baudelaire; and so, although their other works will act as points of reference, the two books which are generally regarded as their masterpieces will be used as the basis of research: the unfinished Christian "Apologie" which was

projected by Pascal, now known as the Pensées (1670), and Baudelaire's Les Fleurs du Mal (1857 and 1861).

But this study would be incomplete without a brief analysis of the history of the theme of ennui before, between and after the times of our two authors. We have thus endeavoured to discuss the history of this term at the beginning of each chapter and in the conclusion, so as to deepen our appreciation of the powerful impetus which both Pascal and Baudelaire brought to the literary impact made by ennui.

Maurice Chapelan, one of the relatively few critics to have made an extensive comparison between Baudelaire and Pascal, has pointed out the apparent initial differences which can be discerned between the two writers:

¹Chacun d'eux accuse une personnalité si violente, et, dans ses grandes lignes, si opposée, semble-t-il, qu'à ceux qu'une réflexion soutenue effraie il paraîtra téméraire qu'on ose confondre le savant et l'artiste, l'ascète et le dandy, le disciple de Jansenius et le poète satanique.

However, as Chapelan later elaborates, these first impressions are both superficial and deceptive. Through this study of ennui, we hope to illustrate not only the affinities of Pascal and Baudelaire, but also their considerable importance in the history of French literature as a whole.

The second chapter, devoted to the role of ennui in Les Fleurs du Mal, is of necessity appreciably longer than the

first one, because, while, in Pascal's dialectic, ennui performs an important function, Baudelaire incorporates the term into the very structural symmetry of his poetry. Moreover, once the significance of ennui in the Pensées has been brought out, the second chapter will be devoted to an analysis which will compare and contrast Baudelaire's use of this notion with that of the seventeenth-century moralist, thus expanding its range of focus. In this way, we have chosen to keep two main chapters, with various sub-sections, in order to maintain the balance of argument between the two central subjects of this study, namely Pascal and Baudelaire.

NOTE: INTRODUCTION

- 1 Maurice Chapelan, "Baudelaire et Pascal", Revue de France, (1 November 1933), p. 77.

CHAPTER I: PASCAL AND ENNUI

1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Before analysing the importance of the theme of ennui in Pascal's Pensées, it will be helpful to have a clear understanding of the meaning and the role of this term in history prior to Pascal's day.

The fact that there exists no ready equivalent of ennui in English testifies to the difficulties of its definition. Most dictionaries simply define it as "boredom", thereby omitting completely its metaphysical implications. And yet, so diverse are its meanings that those dictionaries which have attempted a fuller definition of ennui have only succeeded in obscuring its significance in literature.

The editors of Le Petit Robert, in an effort to clarify the issue, cite various sources ranging from Racine to Sartre. However, when Sartre, that celebrated exponent of existentialist ennui, is quoted in order to support the meaning of ennui as "having financial worries",¹ it is clear that no dictionary can successfully interpret the concept in a short space. Thus, in the course of the next two chapters, we hope to elucidate the meaning of this abstract term through our study of Pascal, Baudelaire and the theme of ennui, as well as through a historical outline of its development in literature up to the time of Baudelaire.

Clearly, no shortened history of this vast concept can be more than simply adequate, but our concern is not for the

role of ennui in French literature as a whole; rather, it is the intention of this study to explore its fundamental importance and development from Pascal's initial concept to the ennui of Les Fleurs du Mal.

A number of essays and books have been written on the subject of ennui,² all of which demonstrate the difficulties of interpreting this elusive term. W. Jankélévitch, for instance, ventures to categorize ennui as "protéiforme", "uniforme", "multiforme", "informe" and "difforme", thus illustrating its complexities.³ However, the same author in an earlier book, L'Alternative, sums up its implications in a succinct way which is appropriate to both Pascal and Baudelaire, given their shared love of contradiction and paradox :

⁴L'ennui, maladie de luxe, est la conséquence paradoxale, équivoque, contradictoire, d'une situation qui devrait nous apporter du bonheur, mais ne le peut pas, et qui pourrait nous rendre malheureux, mais ne le doit pas.

The Latin etymology of ennui can also give us a deeper insight into its meaning, for Pascal, like Baudelaire, retains part of the original sense of "in odio esse", to be hateful, which amounts to a disgust and hatred for existence.

But let us first consider the history of the term before the time of Pascal.⁵ Lucretius, who lived between 99 BC and 55 BC, is one of the first Ancient Roman writers in whose work we find the theme of ennui: it is interesting to note

many similarities in this author's attitudes to those of Pascal; in Book III of his famous De Natura Rerum, he describes such a state:

Si possent homines, proinde ac sentire videntur
podus inesse animo quod se gravitate fatiget, e
quibus id fiat causis quoque noscere et unde
tanta mali tamquam moles in pectore constet, haut
ita vitam agerent, ut nunc plerumque videmus quid
sibi quisque velit nescire et quaerere semper
commutare locum quasi onus deponere possit. Exit
saepe foras magnis ex aedibus ille, esse domi
quem pertaesumst, subitoque revertit, quippe
foris nilo melius sentiat esse...hoc se quisque
modo fugit, at quam scilicet, ut fit, effugere
haut potis est, ingratis haeret et odit propterea,
morbi quia causam non tenet aeger; quam bene si
videat, iam rebus quisque relictis naturam primum
studeat cognoscere rerum.

(Men feel plainly enough within their minds, a heavy burden, whose weight depresses them. If only they perceived with equal clearness the causes of this depression, the origin of this lump of evil within their breasts, they would not lead such a life as we now see all too commonly--no one knowing what he really wants and everyone for ever trying to get away from where he is, as though mere locomotion could throw off the load. Often the owner of some stately mansion, bored stiff by staying at home, takes his departure, only to return as speedily when he feels himself no better off out of doors... In so doing the individual is really running away from himself. Since he remains reluctantly wedded to the self whom he cannot of course escape, he grows to hate him, because he is a sick man ignorant of the cause of his malady. If he did but see this, he would cast other thoughts aside and devote himself first to studying the nature of the universe...)

We have cited this long passage, for it is remarkable how these words anticipate Pascalian ennui and "divertissement", as we shall see later in this chapter.

During the time of the Caesars, the Roman emperor Nero (37AD-68AD) encapsulates much of the concept of ennui; indeed, he was regarded as a symbolic hero during the Romantic era in French literature. Even Baudelaire refers to him in part of Le Spleen de Paris:

⁷il ne connaissait d'ennemi dangereux que
l'Ennui...Il y a des jeunes Nérons qui étouffent
dans les limites trop étroites...

Nero's tutor, the Stoic philosopher and dramatist, Seneca (2BC-65AD), writes of a state similar to ennui, such as in his letter 24 to Lucilius, where he speaks of "fastidium", "supervacuum" and even "nausea". His rigorous asceticism, as well as his recognition of solitude as being inseparable from man's inner state of ennui, correspond closely to Pascal's life and philosophy.

We return to Baudelaire to find him, in Fusées, recalling writers who portrayed ennui or "taedium vitae":

⁸Le portrait de Sérène par Sénèque, celui de
Stagyre par saint Jean Chrysotôme.
L'"acedia", maladie des moines.
Le "Taedium vitae".

This "acedia" to which Baudelaire refers is another variation on ennui, and is portrayed as "une lassitude de l'âme, une misère profonde qui ne trouve pas de remède humain".⁹

We find other Roman writers, such as Marcus Aurelius (121-180), equally well known as a Stoic philosopher, whose

conception of ennui, and especially his sense of disenchanting scepticism at the harshness of existence, appealed also to Renan and other nineteenth-century writers. Indeed, Renan (1823-1892) devoted his work, Marc-Aurèle ou la fin du monde antique, to the study of the philosophy of that age. But, let us now examine the theme of ennui in French literature.

It is only in the twelfth century that the word "ennui" first appears in the French language. However, as Madeleine Bouchez has noted,¹⁰ the term was not considered a major preoccupation in French literature from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, nor did its definition correspond to the "fastidium" and "taedium" of Seneca. It appears occasionally in the "Rondeaux" of Charles d'Orléans (1394-1465), usually with the meaning of a tiresome melancholy, such as in Rondeau XLIX:

Quant je voy ce que ne veuil mie,
Et n'ay ce dont suis desirant,
Pensant ce qui m'est desplaisant,
Est ce merveille s'il m'anuye? (1-4)

Often, ennui was associated not with an indetermined sense of spiritual emptiness but rather with the anguish felt at a particular and defined misfortune; for example, towards the end of the sixteenth century, Monluc in his Commentaires writes of the "ennuy" which he felt at the death of his son. However, one poet of this same century who appears to assign a slight metaphysical sense to ennui is Maurice Scève (1500-1560), in his great work, Délie. While speaking of the

anguish of his love, he compares his ennui to the agony of condemning himself to Hades ("Ortie"), as we see in stanza CLXI: "Couvert d'ennuy je me vouldre en l'Ortie".

Montaigne is the first author to utilise ennui in a more modern sense. Indeed, as is well known, Pascal derived much of his inspiration from this great essayist, and it is likely that he developed Montaigne's initial concept of ennui. However, the underlying tragedy within ennui, so original to Pascal, is lacking in Montaigne's works. Montaigne writes, for example, in his Essais, "Si ce livre me fasche, j'en prends un autre; et ne m'y adonne qu'aux heures où l'ennui de rien faire commence à me saisir".¹¹ The Pléiade edition of his Oeuvres Complètes defines ennui in its glossary as "accablement", and this rendering is probably more accurate for Montaigne than any metaphysical definition. Yet, in the same chapter of his Essais (II,8), Montaigne speaks of his "numeur mélanc olique...produite par le chagrin et la solitude",¹² which seems to anticipate Pascal's definition of man's ennui in a state of wretchedness without God.

However, while Montaigne was the first to modernize the conception of ennui, Pascal was undoubtedly the first to "radicaliser"¹³ it. For Pascal, the basic contrast in his Apology lies between "La Misère de l'Homme sans Dieu", of which ennui is an integral part, and "La Félicité de l'Homme avec Dieu". For Baudelaire, Spleen, which consists of an

enlarged perception of ennui,¹⁴ is contrasted with "Idéal" in Les Fleurs du Mal. This structural symmetry in the works of both authors will form a thematic base to this and the next chapter.

2 FLUX AND CHANGE

Pascal's analysis of the wretchedness of man without God is too penetrating, too intense and too real to constitute a mere theoretical study. Undoubtedly, the spiritual anguish communicated in these pages stems from the record of his personal experience. Thus, it can be assumed that his examination of ennui offers a personal testimony rather than the impressions of an objective observer.

Indeed, for some years before what has become known as his second conversion, Pascal led the worldly life of a "mondain". Although he could hardly be termed a sceptic or even an unbeliever, this period was a time of severe spiritual questioning for him; and, as his sister Jacqueline recorded, he experienced a state very similar to the ennui which is described in the Pensées: "un grand mépris du monde et un dégoût presque insupportable de toutes les personnes qui en sont".¹⁵ The likelihood that ennui was integral to his own experience can be further supported by a short work, once attributed to his sister Jacqueline, but now generally accepted as having been written by Pascal himself: Sur La Conversion du Pécheur. It is a remarkably concise piece of

writing, which reveals an outstanding knowledge of the human psyche: in it, Pascal traces the soul's gradual development from a state of repose, through one of ennui or "néant", through to a process of self-abasement, and finally the approaching communion with God. Its firm structure and profundity of thought equal the best of Pascal's writings. Indeed, it is all the more important, for it already represents a perfectly condensed Apology of the Christian faith. This passage also enriches the concept of ennui, for the "néant" is regarded as an essential stage in the progression towards absolute faith. Thus, instead of being viewed as entirely negative, ennui becomes a necessary and even positive part of the Christian Apology. Just as the perception of "la félicité de l'homme avec Dieu" remains incomplete without "la misère de l'homme sans Dieu", so too is spiritual fulfilment insufficient without experience of ennui. This positive function of ennui will be analysed again at a later stage.

First, let us examine the passage on ennui in Sur la Conversion du Pécheur:

¹⁶De là vient qu'elle (l'âme) commence à considérer comme un néant tout ce qui doit retourner dans le néant, le ciel, la terre, son esprit, son corps, ses parents, ses amis, ses ennemis, les biens, la pauvreté, la disgrâce, la prospérité, l'honneur, l'ignominie, l'estime, le mépris, l'autorité, l'indigence, la santé, la maladie et la vie même; enfin tout ce qui doit moins durer que son âme est incapable de satisfaire le dessein de cette âme qui recherche sérieusement à s'établir dans une félicité aussi durable qu'elle-même.

Obviously, the terms, "néant" and "ennui", seem to be closely related, but a distinction must be established between them: while "néant" expresses the physical state of emotiness and nothingness, ennui conveys the sense of that void; thus, "néant" presents an objective situation, and ennui a subjective experience.

The extract quoted above demonstrates the all-engulfing nature of ennui: this consciousness of total suffocation is intensified by Pascal's skilful use of antithesis. In the face of ennui, not only do our minds, but also our bodies, become nothing, not only wealth but poverty, not only health but sickness. The long catalogue of antitheses accumulates, thus heightening the sense of ennui, until Pascal brings the list to a terrifying climax with "et la vie même". Not even life itself can escape the "néant": the soul is unsatisfied with anything transitory. Pascal's means of persuasion are forceful.

J.H. Broome, in an excellent analysis of Sur La Conversion du Pécheur, writes of its structure:

¹⁷One of the striking characteristics of this text, in which 'immobility' gives place to 'mobility', is that the development conveys quite clearly the idea of wave-motion which can be found occasionally in the Pensées, and follows a rhythm in which there are successive 'crests' of enlightenment, and 'troughs' represented by emotional responses. The whole passage shows, in fact, the 'itus et reditus' or ebb-and-flow effect which is related both to the pattern of Pascalian dialectic and the progression by degrees which was first encountered in the context of his work in physics.

The concept of flux and reflux in the Pensées is important, for not only does it reflect Pascal the physicist and the dialectician, it also gives us a new insight into the nature of man as seen by Pascal.

In many of his scientific works, Pascal makes use of the technique of fluctuation or argument 'by degrees'.¹⁸ In order to free himself from errors and to present his work coherently, he gradually reduces the plausibility of a proposition by returning to it by degrees. Thus, in his "Récit de la grande expérience de l'équilibre des liqueurs", he moves from the assertion that "la nature...ne pouvait souffrir...le vide" to the suggestion that "la nature abhorre le vide", and, having rejected that proposition, concludes that "ce n'est pas l'horreur du vide...qui cause la suspension du vif-argent dans l'expérience ordinaire, mais bien la pesanteur et pression de l'air". As Broome has indicated, this scientific argumentation creates a dialectical process in itself. Indeed, this concept of progression by degrees becomes modified to such an extent that in a piece of writing such as Pascal's letter to M. Ripeyre de Clermont²⁰ there appear clear indications of the dialectical structure, 'thesis', 'antithesis' and 'synthesis'.

It is interesting that Pascal should affirm, "La théologie est une science" (B115, L65), for, in his projected Christian Apology, he uses similar scientific techniques of

'ebb-and-flow' to support his theological argument. The very structural basis of the Pensées demonstrates this method: he meets the "libertin" or worldly unbeliever on his own ground in a godless world ('thesis'), shows him the inadequacies of such a life ('antithesis') and then proposes the spiritual Christian solution ('synthesis').

We have developed this theory of fluctuation, because it is also fundamental to the theme of ennui. As already revealed in Sur La Conversion du Pécheur, ennui forms an integral part of the dialectical 'flow'. This view clarifies Pascal's assertion that "Notre nature est dans le mouvement; le repos entier est la mort" (B129,L641), for ennui is closely related to man's inner restlessness, as will be seen later in our analysis of Pascal's treatment of ennui and "divertissement".

Pascal expressly uses his imagery of flux and reflux in a meditation on the subject of ennui:

L'éloquence continue ennueie.
Les princes et rois jouent quelquefois. Ils ne sont pas toujours sur leurs trônes. Ils s'y ennuient. La grandeur a besoin d'être quittée pour être sentie. La continuité dégoûte en tout. Le froid est agréable pour se chauffer. La nature agit par progrès. 'Itus et reditus', elle passe et revient, puis va plus loin, puis deux fois moins, puis plus que jamais, etc. AAa. Le flux se fait ainsi aAaaAa, le soleil semble marcher ainsi. (B355,L771)

This passage shows us an excellent example of Pascal's evocative concision: through the use of imagery pertaining to

both man and nature, he gives a varied portrait of ennui, of man's inner restlessness. Moreover, the statement that "l'éloquence continue nous ennuie" not only underlies man's constant need for change, but also demonstrates Pascal's intuitive feeling for style and communication; he recognizes that not even continuous eloquence can hold our attention; indeed, he remains conscious of the need for diversity of style. His own work contains several examples of such flexibility; thus, it comes as no surprise that he is one of the most readable prose writers of his time. Pascal's preoccupation with style is especially apparent in the section classified by Brunschwig as "Pensées sur l'Esprit et sur le Style" (Bl-59). His sensitivity to the needs of his reader (the "libertin") for changeability necessitates his art of persuasion: he must win the libertine's attention and sympathy before proceeding with his defence of the spiritual order of reality, of Christianity.

But, who is this "libertin"? Can he be at all receptive to the argumentation of a Christian? André Dodin, in his Preface to the Seuil edition of the Pensées,²¹ discusses the diversity of "mondains" in Pascal's day, including Atheists, Deists, Sceptics ("pyrrhoniens"), Stoics and Epicureans. Jean Steinmann has provided an excellent description of Pascal's view of the "libertin", for he emphasizes the artfulness of the atheist in concealing his inner state of ennui and yet in being receptive to other points of view:

²²Aussi Pascal imagine-t-il son athée, son personnage comme un parfait homme du monde, aimant rire, converser, plaisanter, fréquentant les salons où il sait faire goûter son esprit vif et brillant... Artiste, habile à cacher son tourment sous un voile d'humour, joueur, sans passions...Intelligent surtout, goûtant le régal d'une langue délectable et imprégnée de poésie jusqu'à la moelle. Capable d'émotion et de conviction. Prêt à suivre qui connaît l'art de persuader...Un bel homme vraiment, droit, fort de sa lucidité, courageux, douteur quand il le faut, croyant s'il le doit, jamais dupe surtout de lui-même, jamais esclave de l'opinion, libre au contraire, mais d'une liberté capable de se plier devant la grandeur de Dieu si on la lui présente comme elle doit l'être, d'une manière digne d'elle et de lui.

In addition to their readability, perhaps the prestige of Pascal's Pensées can be attributed to the fact that the small group of "libertins" whom he was addressing in the seventeenth century has been enlarged over the past three centuries, with the increase in world literacy, greater sophistication in education and increasing religious scepticism. However, even without these considerations, as A.J. Krailsheimer elaborates, "beneath the specific examples drawn from a limited social range, Pascal so accurately discerns the essential man that the limitations are transcended".²³

3. LA CONDITION DE L'HOMME

Let us now turn to Pascal's actual treatment of ennui in the Pensées. In writing about ennui, Pascal does not wish to discuss the faults of some of his own friends, such as Méré

and Miton; rather, he attempts to probe the depths of the human condition itself, for therein lies the foundation of man's wretchedness without God. As he puts it, "Condition de l'homme: inconstance, ennui, inquiétude" (B127,L24).

Pascal's linking of "inconstance" and "inquiétude" with ennui is not fortuitous, for such conditions are closely inter-connected. The theme of inconstancy plays a particularly important part in the Pensées;²⁴ furthermore, Pascal believes it to be a basic characteristic of human nature which cannot be eradicated; it is a state imposed upon man. Ennui is the psychological reaction to that very state of inconstancy and restlessness. Pascal likens the inconstancy and complexities of man to a strange and fantastic organ:

Inconstance. On croit toucher des orgues ordinaires en touchant l'homme. Ce sont des orgues, à la vérité, mais bizarres, changeantes, variables, dont les tuyaux ne se suivent pas par degrés conjoints. Ceux qui ne savent toucher que les ordinaires ne feraient pas d'accords sur celles-là. Il faut savoir où sont les touches.
(B111,L55)

"Inquiétude" is an extension of both ennui and "inconstance", for it is a presence within man's state of ennui and in his varying attempts to forget that ennui. Man cannot escape the wretchedness of his condition. Louis A. Mackenzie, in an article which places rather too much emphasis on a psycho-analytical approach, nevertheless offers an interesting interpretation of "inquiétude": he links it to a Freudian

state of anxiety which is marked by "indefiniteness and incompleteness"²⁵ and is little more than a circular state of entrapment; he further explains this "inquiétude" with a quotation taken from the Pensées:

Nous souhaitons la vérité et ne trouvons en nous qu'incertitude.
Nous recherchons le bonheur et ne trouvons que misère et mort.
Nous sommes incapables de ne pas souhaiter la vérité et le bonheur et sommes incapables ni de certitude ni de bonheur. (B437,L401)

It thus becomes evident that ennui is no superficial weakness but that it forms the basis of man's "misère". Pascal has indeed changed the course of the history of ennui. As Madeleine Bouchez asserts, "L'ennui est pour Pascal le signe de l'homme, le témoignage d'une nature blessée qui garde la nostalgie de l'absolu".²⁶ Significantly, this "nostalgie de l'absolu" anticipates the "Idéal" of Baudelaire, since the nineteenth-century poet will develop the concept of both ennui and "idéal" in Les Fleurs du Mal.

For Pascal, ennui derives from man's obsessive consciousness of his own aimlessness and emptiness, and is closely linked to the theme of vanity:

Ennui- Rien n'est si insupportable à l'homme que d'être dans un plein repos, sans passions, sans affaire, sans divertissement, sans application. Il sent alors son néant, son abandon, son insuffisance, sa dépendance, son impuissance, son vide. Incontinent il sortira du fond de son âme l'ennui, la noirceur, la tristesse, le chagrin, le dépit, le désespoir. (B131,L622)

This meditation is central to the theme of ennui, for not only does Pascal enlarge our understanding of the concept (by

associating ennui with other emotional states such as "la noirceur", "le chagrin" and "le désespoir"), but he also introduces the essential theme of "divertissement". In our study of ennui thus far, we have concentrated on only one of its aspects - its passive side, where factors such as inconstancy make up an abiding part of its very nature. The theme of "divertissement" represents an active component of ennui, for it demonstrates man's attempts to escape from his state through other, ultimately vain, pursuits, which in effect plunge him even further into that same condition of ennui.

4. LE DIVERTISSEMENT

Les Puissances Trompeuses

Before analysing certain meditations which are devoted to the theme of "divertissement", it is important to understand the principal causes of this aversion to the truth, as recorded by Pascal - namely, three deceiving powers known as "puissances trompeuses": Imagination, Custom and "Amour-Propre". They are directly linked to ennui, because, through them, man constantly endeavours to forget his true condition. Although they constitute major components of the dialectic of Pascal, only a summary is needed for the purpose of our analysis.

The first of these "puissances" is Imagination, "cette maîtresse d'erreur et de fausseté" (B82,L44). Pascal argues

that imagination invades our perceptions and prevents us from discerning the reality of life: thus, it includes the modern meaning of illusion as well as of self-delusion or self-deception ("la mauvaise foi" of Sartre). Such is its power that it "dispose de tout; elle fait la beauté, la justice et le bonheur, qui est le tout du monde" (B82,L44). As with "divertissement", imagination encourages the pursuit of false happiness.

The power of Custom is so great, claims Pascal, that it overcomes not only reason but human nature itself: "La coutume est une seconde nature, qui détruit la première" (B93,L126). This custom includes the pressure of society and habit, but also emanates from our very selves.

The third and most powerful "puissance trompeuse" is "Amour-Propre" or self-interest: the modern meaning of the term is often that of a justified feeling of self-esteem; but, in Pascal's day, it signified essentially a deep love of the self or profound egoism. Pascal explains the Jansenist doctrine of man before the Fall in relation to "amour-propre": man was created to love God, but the "chute originelle" masked his view of God; and so, instead, he turned this love upon himself. Thus, this self-interest leads to deception and self-deception and to an "aversion pour la vérité" (B100,L978). It grows and develops to the extent of mutual deception:

nous haïssons la vérité, on nous la cache; nous voulons être flattés, on nous flatte; nous aimons à être trompés, on nous trompe (B100,L978).

B139/L136

Pascal has devoted one extensive meditation to the study of "divertissement" (B139,L136), which clarifies ennui and puts it into a new perspective. Man's search for happiness is shown to be both futile and absurd; indeed, happiness becomes a thin disguise for unhappiness, in that man pretends to believe that he is seeking happiness through "divertissement". As W. Jankélévitch elaborates, "dans l'ennui, c'est le bonheur qui fabrique le malheur comme un fruit trop mûr et presque pourri".²⁷

Pascal opens his meditation with observations on "les diverses agitations des hommes", once again recalling the restlessness and inconstancy of man. Then follows the famous section, "j'ai découvert que tout le malheur des hommes vient d'une seule chose, qui est de ne savoir pas demeurer en repos, dans une chambre". Baudelaire was so impressed by these words that, in Le Spleen de Paris, he showed his acute perception of Pascal's conception of ennui, "divertissement" and the false search for happiness; as we shall discover, this was to have a profound effect on his own writings. Baudelaire affirms in the prose-poem entitled "La Solitude":

²⁸'Presque tous nos malheurs nous viennent de n'avoir pas su rester dans notre chambre', dit un autre sage, Pascal, je crois, rappelant ainsi

dans la cellule du recueillement tous ces affolés
qui cherchent le bonheur dans le mouvement et
dans une prostitution que je pourrais appeler
'fraternitaire', si je voulais parler la belle
langue de mon siècle.

The title of the poem, "La Solitude", also conveys a greater awareness of Pascal's message: man, when alone and confronting himself, recognizes the fundamental "néant" of his existence and thus seeks distractions in order to forget his wretchedness, for he is unable by himself to remain "en repos"; the Christian solution which Pascal will offer us is already implied here.

In the same meditation (B139,L136), having indicated the cause of this "malheur", Pascal's rigorous logic leads him to discover the reason for it:

j'ai trouvé qu'il y en a une bien effective, qui
consiste dans le malheur naturel de notre
condition faible et mortelle, et si misérable,
que rien ne peut nous consoler, lorsque nous y
pensons de près.

Again, Pascal stresses that this ennui forms a part of our very condition and is not external to us. It is this innate sentiment of apparent pessimism which promoted Voltaire in letter 25 of his Lettres Philosophiques to accuse Pascal of "montrer l'homme sous un jour odieux". However, as we shall find, Voltaire thinks of Pascal as a "misanthrope" without considering the whole structure of Pascal's projected Apology, moving from "misère" to "félicité", from "la nature...corrompue" to "un réparateur" (B60,L6).

Pascal continues by emphasizing that no man on his own can escape his condition, not even a king. This picture made a particularly penetrating satirical comment of his own day, when Louis XIV was to command utmost control and authority, for Pascal is challenging that very power by underlining every man's fallibility, however exalted his rank may be. B142/L137 is a variation on this theme: "un roi sans divertissement est un homme plein de misères".

Thus, man chooses to forget himself through sports and games; they do not bring him happiness in themselves, but they serve temporarily to block the reality of his ennui. No sooner is one diversion exhausted than man seeks another. As Pascal adds, with a wry irony, "Raison pourquoi on aime mieux la chasse que la prise" (B139,L136). It follows that to be alone amounts to the worst kind of punishment for man: "de là vient que la prison est un supplice si horrible; de là vient que le plaisir de la solitude est une chose incompréhensible".

Furthermore, these very diversions make us forget not only ourselves but the inevitability of death; this theme will recur in our analysis of both Pascalian and Baudelairian ennui. Let us consider another section of B139/L136 which not only introduces the theme of death but also displays vividly Pascal's inborn sense of comedy:

Voilà tout ce que les hommes ont ou inventer pour se rendre heureux. Et ceux qui font sur cela les philosophes, et qui croient que le monde est bien peu raisonnable de passer tout le jour à courir

après un lièvre qu'ils ne voudraient pas avoir acheté, ne connaissent guère notre nature. Ce lièvre ne nous garantirait pas de la vue de la mort et des misères, mais la chasse - qui nous en détourne - nous en garantit.

Pascal uncovers the absurdity of the human condition in a ruthless and uncompromising way, but one which still allows us, with increasing self-knowledge, to laugh at ourselves.

The moralist continues his argument by stating that if man were seeking excitement for the sake of diversion alone, he would be justified in it, but because he is searching for true happiness through diversion, his pursuit becomes vain. Men deceive themselves to such an extent that "Ils croient chercher sincèrement le repos, et ne cherchent en effet que l'agitation". Ironically, it is man's original perfect state before the Fall which makes him feel instinctively that happiness can be attained in restfulness, and it is because of his present state of wretchedness that he is unable to find true happiness. This conception of the two conditions or natures of man contributes to a fundamental core of Jansenist thought. Indeed, Pascal himself examines it in his Ecrits sur la Grâce where he explains that the Jansenists ("Disciples de Saint Augustin")

²⁹ considèrent deux états dans la nature humaine: L'un est celui auquel elle a été créée dans Adam, saine, sans tache, juste et droite, sortant des mains de Dieu, duquel rien ne peut partir que pur, saint et parfait; L'autre est l'état où elle a été réduite par le péché et la révolte du premier homme, et par lequel elle est devenue souillée, abominable et détestable aux yeux de Dieu... Suivant ces deux états si différents, ils forment deux sentiments différents touchant la volonté de Dieu pour le salut des hommes.

It is an interesting point of comparison that Baudelaire himself shows an almost Jansenist attitude toward the notion of Original Sin.³⁰

But, to return to the long meditation on "divertissement", man, as a consequence of his instinctive awareness of these two contradictory natures, is left in a state of confusion, which represents the tragedy of a godless existence, similar to the confusion within the soul of Racine's heroine in Phèdre. Pascal's elegiac style adds tragic emphasis to the passage, and gives an even more implacable and sinister character to ennui; one is also struck by the recurrence of the image of ebb-and-flow which depicts life itself filtering away into trifling pastimes:

Ainsi s'écoule toute la vie. On cherche le repos en combattant quelques obstacles; et si on les a surmontés, le repos devient insupportable par l'ennui qu'il engendre; car, ou l'on pense aux misères qu'on a, ou à celles qui nous menacent. Et quand on se verrait même assez à l'abris de toutes parts, l'ennui, de son autorité privée, ne laisserait pas de sortir au fond du coeur, où il a des racines naturelles, et de remplir l'esprit de son venin.

The awesome powers of ennui, with its "autorité privée", seems to anticipate the immensity of Baudelaire's Ennui in "Spleen II", with the additional significance which Baudelaire lends the concept by assigning it a capital letter:

L'Ennui, fruit de la morne incuriosité,
Prend les proportions de l'immortalité. (17-18)

Perhaps the most remarkable section on "divertissement" and that which most succinctly sums up both the themes of ennui and "divertissement" comes in the following passage of B139/L136:

Ainsi l'homme est si malheureux qu'il s'ennuierait même sans aucune cause d'ennui, par l'état propre de sa complexion; et il est si vain, qu'étant plein de mille causes essentielles d'ennui, la moindre chose, comme un billard et une balle qu'il pousse, suffisent pour le divertir.

From this extract, we recognize some basic facts of human nature which Pascal emphasizes: man's vanity and his sense of "amour-propre" are so inflated that he is willing to indulge in the pettiest diversions to escape his ennui. And yet, since Pascal's arguments are never one-dimensional, "divertissement", like ennui, possesses a positive value: the fact that man is seeking to escape his condition implies that he is searching for a higher ideal; these very "divertissements" anticipate the future synthesis of Pascal's Apology: the necessity of religion. As Pascal writes in the meditation on "Le Mystère de Jésus", using the very voice of Jesus: "Console-toi, tu ne me chercherais pas, si tu ne m'avais trouvé"(B553,L919). Thus, seeking implies finding.

Pascal concludes B139/L136 with variations on the theme of men who appear to elude ennui through diversion but who remain in fact utterly wretched. His final words reveal his disregard for the false values of rank or custom:

Prenez-y garde. Qu'est-ce autre chose d'être surintendant, chancelier, premier président, sinon d'être en une condition où l'on a dès le matin un grand nombre de gens qui viennent de tous côtés pour ne leur laisser pas une heure en la journée où ils puissent penser à eux-mêmes?

Several other investigations into the problem of "divertissement" occur in the Pensées, some of which constitute variations on the central theme, and others which shed a new light upon Pascal's conception of ennui. Let us study some passages from the latter category, particularly those concerning the indifference of man, the inevitability of death and the Wager.

The Indifference of Man

Despite the seeking that is implied within "divertissement", Pascal argues that a form of "repos", which is totally spurious, can be found; diversions have a tranquillizing effect which induce in one a state of ignorance and indifference to the possibility of spiritual salvation:

Avant que d'entrer dans les preuves de la religion chrétienne, je trouve nécessaire de représenter l'injustice des hommes qui vivent dans l'indifférence de chercher la vérité d'une chose qui leur est si importante et qui les touche de si près. (B195, L428)

This indifference is of course related to the idea of death, for it is after death that one's Christian salvation is decided. As Pascal explains, with his logical persuasiveness,

L'immortalité de l'âme est une chose qui nous importe si fort, qui nous touche si profondément, qu'il faut avoir perdu tout sentiment pour être dans l'indifférence de savoir ce qui en est.
(B194,L427)

Pascal's aim is to shake the "libertin" out of this false sense of restfulness which has been created by "divertissement": "Ce repos dans cette ignorance est une chose monstrueuse" (B195,L428).

La Mort

This leads us to the theme of "divertissement" and death, which is central to both Pascal's Apology and Baudelaire's Les Fleurs du Mal. As with ennui, man seeks to forget the inevitability of death through diversion. Pascal paints a bleak picture of the human condition in a godless existence; we are likened to criminals awaiting execution:

Qu'on s'imagine un nombre d'hommes dans les chaînes, et tous condamnés à la mort, dont les uns étant chaque jour égorgés à la vue des autres, ceux qui restent voient leur propre condition dans celle de leurs semblables, et, se regardant les uns et les autres avec douleur et sans espérance, attendent à leur tour. C'est l'image de la condition des hommes. (B199,L434)

To think of death is to think of our own wretchedness; we are automatically plunged into a state of ennui. The more real the prospect of death becomes, the more terrifying appears the fragility of our lives. Life becomes an "écoulement", slipping away from us.³¹ whatever our comfort in life, whatever our status, death comes swiftly and brutally to us all:

Le dernier acte est sanglant, quelque belle que soit la comédie en tout le reste: on jette enfin de la terre sur la tête, et en voilà pour jamais. (B210, L165)

It is a natural progression for man without God to move from this state of ennui to one of terror at the immense "néant" which surrounds him. The prospect of nothingness is overwhelming. Pascal reflects this in the celebrated fragment, "Le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis m'effraie" (B206, L201). This meditation has been the subject of much contention as to the identity of the speaker: is it Pascal himself, or does it form part of the dialogue which Pascal projected for the worldly unbeliever? Some notable critics, such as Paul Valéry, have been mistaken in assuming the voice to be solely that of Pascal; but others are perhaps just as much at fault in attributing these words solely to the voice of the "libertin". Surely the best solution would consider that this passage expresses the sense of anguish experienced by both the unbeliever and the believer who is slowly seeking his way. The reality of the emotions suggest that these were felt by the author himself before his second conversion in 1654. Thus, we discover another positive aspect of ennui and of the "néant". However, Pascal warns of the sense of complacency which "divertissement" can induce: coming to terms with the "silence éternel" signifies progress, but "divertissement" makes us forget these very terrors:

Misère - La seule chose qui nous console de nos misères est le divertissement, et cependant c'est la plus grande de nos misères. Car c'est cela qui nous empêche principalement de songer à nous, et qui nous fait perdre insensiblement. Sans cela, nous serions dans l'ennui, et cet ennui nous pousserait à chercher un moyen plus solide d'en sortir. Mais le divertissement nous amuse, et nous fait arriver insensiblement à la mort.
(B171, L414)

Ennui is seen here as necessary to man, for, negative though it may be in itself, it drives man "à chercher un moyen plus solide d'en sortir". Diversion clouds all the lucidity which man may command concerning his condition.

The Wager

However, in his quest to prove the necessity of a spiritual solution, of religion, Pascal knows that he must make a totally different use of the theme of "divertissement", in order to convince the uncommitted reader: he must meet the unbeliever on his own ground and indulge in a diversion of which his libertine friends (such as le Chevalier de Méré and Miton) were particularly fond - gambling. Thus, Pascal introduces the famous Wager (B233, L418). By using the psychology of "divertissement", he will attempt to sway his reader's scepticism. Yet, he faces the difficult task of keeping the reader's attention while still not diverting him from self-knowledge. Indeed, in a further meditation on "divertissement" (B158, L133), Pascal

explains that men who have been unable to come to terms with their own ignorance, wretchedness and inevitable death resolve, in striving to make themselves happy, not to think of their condition. Pascal risks encouraging his reader to forget the true nature of his condition and to take up "divertissements" instead. However, through arguments derived from the theory of probabilities, he does not allow himself to wander from the central issue: a wager on the existence or non-existence of God.

As Pascal emphasizes, it is impossible to remain neutral in this choice, for whoever is not for God must be against him: "il faut parier; cela n'est pas volontaire, vous êtes embarqué" (B233, L418).

These words seem to anticipate the central Sartrean or existentialist concept of "engagement" (a commitment or involvement) : man cannot choose but to be committed. At this stage it becomes essential to underline the similarities between the ennui in the writings of these two authors, for, despite their patent contrasts, ennui acquires a positive metaphysical value which is fundamental to each man's philosophical outlook. Furthermore, the similarity of their use of the theme underlines the striking modernity of Pascal's thought.

Indeed, for both Pascal and Sartre, ennui is a key to enlightenment. Madeleine Bouchez offers a penetrating analysis of the similarities between these two thinkers:

³²pascal, chrétien, Sartre, athée, voient l'un et l'autre dans l'ennui une sorte de révélateur: perception d'un mystère insoutenable, d'une existence injustifiée, d'une expérience problématique, l'ennui peut ouvrir la voie aux grandes conversions, qu'on se convertisse à un christianisme vécu, comme est invité à le faire le libertin à qui s'adresse l'auteur des Pensées, ou bien à l'engagement politique, qui permet à Sartre de surmonter la "nausée".

Later we shall assess the metaphysical, and even theological value of Baudelaire's writing.

To continue on the subject of the Wager, Pascal argues that man is obliged to choose between the acceptance of God's existence, where he stands to gain eternal happiness, and the denial of God's existence, where all he can hope to gain are ephemeral and mediocre pleasures. As Pascal affirms,

Pesons le gain et la perte, en prenant croix que Dieu est. Estimons ces deux cas: si vous gagnez, vous gagnez tout; si vous perdez, vous ne perdez rien. Gagez donc qu'il est, sans hésiter.
(B233,L418)

In this matter of the Wager, Pascal has been diversely criticized for allegedly questionable logic in conducting his reasoning. Indeed, it would be absurd to assume that such a mathematical game can prove the existence of God: at best, it may only help to lead the agnostic to a greater acceptance of the spiritual option and hence of the Christian doctrine. On the other hand, the wager has too often been considered in isolation without being situated in the context of Pascal's projected Apology: on its own, one may object to it as a

flawed argument, but as a component of the whole (or, as much of the whole that Pascal was able to leave before his untimely death), it plays an integral and essential part in his defence of Christianity. After the famous Wager fragment, but still part of the section which Brunschwig classified as "De la nécessité du Pari", Pascal admits in fact that he cannot give faith to his worldly reader; however, he nevertheless urges the "libertin" to give up diversion for conversion:

Or, c'est à vous à commencer. Si je pouvais, je vous donnerais la foi; je ne puis le faire, ni partant éprouver la vérité de ce que vous dites. Mais vous pouvez bien quitter les plaisirs, et éprouver si ce que je dis est vrai. (B240, L816)

Furthermore, we must consider the Wager as a transition to the more orthodox proofs drawn from the Bible; for this gamble is not adequate in itself as a religious proof for the Apology which Pascal envisaged.

Despite the apparent weaknesses of the Wager, Pascal's skilful use of dialectical reasoning distinguishes it, in particular with his redirection of the "puissances trompeuses". As this study has shown, Imagination, Custom and "Amour-Propre" are instrumental in diverting man from the truth, and are in fact the very bases of "divertissement". Yet, Pascal will appeal to these same "puissances" and will reorientate them towards more positive values. Imagination, instead of distorting the truth, can lead the unbeliever to a

higher level of inspiration and thus to a greater willingness to listen and to believe. Custom appeals to the "automate", to the self-generating device active in man: for example, through the observance of ritual in religious worship, one is able to reach a certain beneficial stage of belief:

33 Suivez la manière par où ils (committed Christians) ont commencé: c'est en faisant tout comme s'ils croyaient, en prenant de l'eau bénite, en faisant dire des messes etc. Naturellement même cela vous fera croire et vous abêtera. (B233,L413)

Furthermore, custom makes man accept the religion that has belonged to his forefathers (B252,L821). Pascal even affirms that "Il y a trois moyens de croire: la raison, la coutume, l'inspiration" (B245,L808). In this approach, one must keep one's reason open to proofs of Christianity, which are confirmed by custom, and then humble one's self-regard sufficiently to accept "l'inspiration".

Self-regard or self-interest ("Amour-Propre") constitutes the third and most powerful "puissance" to which Pascal appeals. As he argues so strongly (B194,L427), it is within our self-interest to be concerned about "l'immortalité de l'âme"; in addition to this reason, the principal of self-interest must force us to wager for God, because it is in our own interests to find the chance to gain immortality.

5. THE CHRISTIAN SOLUTION

We have thus reached an important stage in the projected Apology of Pascal. Ennui can be regarded neither as negative nor as positive, for indeed, this state epitomizes the very paradoxical of man which Pascal wishes to delineate. He exposes the dangers of too negative or too positive a conception of man's condition in the Entretien avec M de Saci, which was recorded in 1555 by Fontaine, the secretary of Pascal's confessor, M. de Saci. Pascal quotes at length two thinkers, Epictetus and Montaigne, whom he studied in depth during his "worldly" period: indeed, even after his conversion, he recognized their greatness and the sphere of their influence. While Epictetus advocates the positive philosophy of the Stoics (in which the strengths of man are accentuated), Montaigne represents the more negative philosophy of the Sceptics (in which man's weaknesses are emphasized). Pascal claims that their prime error results from an assumption that man's state has remained the same since creation: the one founds his philosophy on "orgueil", the other on "paresse":

³⁴C'est donc de ces lumières imparfaites qu'il arrive que l'un, connaissant le devoir de l'homme et ignorant son impuissance, se perd dans la présomption, et que l'autre, connaissant l'impuissance et non le devoir, il s'abat dans la lâcheté.

Pascal develops this concept further in his Pensées: as was

shown in his Ecrits sur la Grâce, the Jansenist view of human nature considers two states of man, the one before the Fall, the other after the Fall. In the well-known meditation on the "pyrrhoniens", or sceptics (B434,L131), where Pascal speaks of the utterly contradictory nature of man, the fundamental concept of Original Sin appears again:

Chose étonnante, cependant, que le mystère le plus éloigné de notre connaissance, qui est celui de la transmission du péché, soit une chose sans laquelle nous ne pouvons avoir aucune connaissance de nous-mêmes! (B434,L131)

It becomes for Pascal "un mystère", because the very state which confirms our wretchedness provides also the key to self-knowledge: this state is identical to the role of ennui in the Apology, and can be likened to the "gouffre" in Baudelaire's Les Fleurs du Mal, as we shall discover:

Certainement rien ne nous heurte plus rudement que cette doctrine; et cependant sans ce mystère, le plus incompréhensible de tous, nous sommes incompréhensibles à nous-mêmes. Le noeud de notre condition prend ses replis et ses tours dans cet abîme; de sorte que l'homme est plus inconcevable sans ce mystère que ce mystère n'est inconcevable à l'homme. (B434,L131)

Thus, the definition of ennui can be expanded to include a sense of "mystère surnaturel", because this very mystery leads man to an affirmation of God's existence. Indeed, Pascal urges his reader to listen to God: "Ecoutez Dieu" (B434,L131).

This transition leads Pascal to discuss another sphere of "mystère"- the problem of the hidden God, "Dieu caché" (taken from the prophet Isaiah's concept of "Deus absconditus"). Instead of accepting what the worldly unbeliever could regard as a possible weakness in his Apology, he transforms this potentially negative aspect into a positive proof of Christianity. As he wrote in a letter to Mlle de Roannez, "Si Dieu se découvrait continuellement aux hommes, il n'y aurait point de mérite à le croire; et s'il ne se découvrait jamais, il y aurait peu de foi".³⁵ Indeed, he goes so far as to say that God wished to make himself hidden: "Que Dieu s'est voulu cacher - s'il n'y avait qu'une religion, Dieu y serait bien manifeste" (B585,L242).

The theme of "mystère" is closely related to the fragment entitled "Le Mystère de Jésus" (B553,L919). A further stage towards the acceptance of and spiritual access to God is through Jesus acting as mediator, and, in this deeply-felt meditation on the agony of Jesus on the Mount of Olives, ennui and "mystère" assume a greater significance. The latter half of the meditation assumes the form of a dialogue between Pascal and Jesus, thus revealing an intimacy in Pascal's style which is both moving and persuasive. His constant reference to passages in the Bible supplements the earlier stage of his dialectic, where he had concentrated on the proofs furnished by the Bible, such as prophecies and attested miracles.

Pascal's dramatic and lyrical account of Jesus spending his final hours in the garden while his disciples are asleep attains an inner tragedy which is integral to Pascal's Apology and is essential to our concept of ennui as a stage between man's state of wretchedness accompanied by moral evil and his potential spiritual salvation. Jesus, taking upon himself the burden of those human beings who are asleep, undergoes the same awareness of "gouffre", of ennui as does man in a godless universe: the spiritual state of Jesus who endures "cette peine et cet abandon dans l'horreur de la nuit" (B553,L919) is strikingly similar to "le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis" (B206,L201): finding himself in this state of limbo before he leaves the earth, he contemplates the void of "ce délaissement universel" (B553,L919) and experiences all its terrors. In brutal contrast to the image of those sleeping disciples, the insomnia of Jesus is expanded into a symbol of universal affliction: "Jésus sera en agonie jusqu'à la fin du monde; il ne faut pas dormir pendant ce temps-là" (B553,L919).

However, Jesus, in facing this agony, is effecting man's spiritual salvation:

Jésus pendant que ses disciples dormaient a opéré leur salut. Il l'a fait à chacun des justes pendant qu'ils dormaient, et dans le néant avant leur naissance, et dans les péchés depuis leur naissance. (B553,L919)

And so, Pascal asserts that Jesus not only experiences this anguish, but that he also overcomes it and takes the next

step towards "la félicité", spiritual happiness. In this experience, he serves as the supreme example and symbol for mankind. It is of fundamental significance that Pascal next depicts "Jésus dans l'ennui", for ennui is part of that path of discovery. The following words show Jesus, who, in taking account of his sleeping friends and of his vigilant enemies (what an effective and terrifying contrast!), "se remet tout entier à son Père".

This development both clarifies and deepens Jesus' affirmation in the same meditation: "Console-toi, tu ne me chercherais pas, si tu ne m'avais trouvé". The fact of spiritual seeking, like the fact of accepting one's state of ennui, implies a progression towards God's salvation.

In concluding this first chapter, it would seem appropriate to quote the example of one who has experienced these very stages, from a state of ennui, to the affirmation of God, and finally to the ultimate possession of God,³⁶ namely Pascal himself. The famous "Mémorial", which documented his second conversion on the 23rd November 1654, best expresses the profundity of this experience. Indeed, the fact that a parchment recording this "Mémorial" was discovered after his death sewn into his clothing testifies to the supreme significance which Pascal attached to it. It constitutes an effective contrast to the imagery of perpetual fluctuation and change which marks so many of the Pensées, for here one meets a profound awareness of stability and of certainty:

Certitude. Certitude. Sentiment. Joie. Paix.

Yet, it may appear almost paradoxical that the style of this fragment lacks the firm structure of the Pensées, for it presents the joyous and spontaneous emotions of a man who has finally overcome all arrogance and fear to submit himself totally before God. Nor does the "Mémorial" represent the end of a journey: Pascal's use of the past, present and future tenses indicates a past which he has renounced, a present which he accepts and a future towards which he will strive. Indeed, in the structure of the Pensées, Pascal does not conclude his Apology after man's possession of God; he progresses to the proofs of Christianity, and indicates that on this earth the journey towards spiritual salvation is never completed.

For Pascal, life on earth is but a transient test for man: "Eternellement en joie pour un jour d'exercice sur la terre". And ennui forms an integral part of that worldly "exercice".

NOTES: CHAPTER I

- 1 "Avoir des ennuis d'argent. 'Tu ne crains pas qu'on te fasse des ennuis' (Sartre)". Le Robert (Paris: Robert, 1981), p. 648.
- 2 See bibliography list of Madeleine Bouchez, L'Ennui (Paris: Bordas, 1971), pp. 205-6.
- 3 W. Jankélévitch, L'Aventure, l'Ennui, le Sérieux (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1963), as cited in L'Ennui, p. 7.
- 4 W. Jankélévitch, L'Alternative (Paris: F. Alcan, 1938), p. 126.
- 5 M. Bouchez's book, L'Ennui, has served as my principal guide in this brief history.
- 6 Lucretius, De Rerum Natura, edited by J.H. Warburton (London: Macmillan, 1939), Book III, lines 1053-1072. Translation, On the Nature of the Universe, by R.E. Latham (Bungay: Penguin, 1951).
- 7 Baudelaire, Oeuvres Complètes I (Paris: Pléiade, 1975), p. 320.
- 8 Ibid., p. 656.
- 9 M. Bouchez, p. 33.
- 10 For a fuller discussion of this, see Bouchez, p. 36.
- 11 Montaigne, Oeuvres Complètes (Paris: Pléiade, 1962), II, 8, p. 370.
- 12 Ibid., p. 364.
- 13 Antoine de Garauderie, La Valeur de l'ennui (Paris: Ed. du Cerf, 1968), p. 115.

- 14 We shall elaborate on this point in the following chapter.
- 15 Jacqueline Pascal, letter of 8 December 1654, quoted in Pascal, L'Oeuvre (Paris: Pléiade, 1936), p. 323.
- 16 Pascal, L'Oeuvre, pp. 324-5.
- 17 J.H. Broome, Pascal (London: Edward Arnold, 1965), p. 198.
- 18 This is the term used by Broome.
- 19 Pascal, L'Oeuvre, pp. 166-177.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 177. In this letter, Pascal discusses the history of progress in science and questions why certain discoveries were not made earlier.
- 21 Pascal, Pensées (Paris: Seuil, 1962), pp. 7-22.
- 22 Jean Steinmann, Pascal (Paris: Cerf, 1954), pp. 282-3.
- 23 A.J. Krailsheimer, Studies in Self-Interest (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 128.
- 24 Cf. B110-B116.
- 25 Louis A. Mackenzie Jr, "To the Brink: The Dialectic of Anxiety in the Pensées", Yale French Studies 66 (1984), p. 62.
- 26 M. Bouchez, p. 40.
- 27 W. Jankélévitch, L'Alternative, p. 126.
- 28 Baudelaire, Oeuvres Complètes I, p. 314.
- 29 Pascal, L'Oeuvre, p. 726.

- 30 This aspect will be discussed in the section on Baudelaire.
- 31 Cf. B212/L757 and B213/L152.
- 32 M. Bouchez, p. 22.
- 33 "abêtira" must be taken in the sense of returning to one's roots, without taking into account formal instruction.
- 34 Pascal, L'Oeuvre, p. 355.
- 35 Ibid., letter IV, October 1656, p. 287.
- 36 "affirmation" and "possession" are the terms used by Jean Mesnard in his excellent book, Pascal (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1965).

CHAPTER II: BAUDELAIRE AND ENNUI

1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

While Pascal was the first to radicalize the concept of ennui, Baudelaire was undoubtedly the first to revolutionize it: for him, it became a symbol of modern urban civilisation. Indeed, in the history of ennui, Baudelaire's writings appear as "la plaque tournante".¹ His entire poetic output, particularly Les Fleurs du Mal, is dominated by an opposition between Ennui, or Spleen, and "Idéal". The sequence of poems begins and ends with a vision of Ennui; it creates a presence which haunts his innermost being. However, despite the profound development of this concept between the generation of Pascal and that of Baudelaire, the aim of this study seeks to discover an underlying unity to the term in both the Pensées and Les Fleurs du Mal. W. Jankélévitch asserts that "les soucis changent, mais le fond de l'ennui, dans l'ensemble reste immuable".² But first, an outline of the history of the term between the times of the two authors would help one to attain a more precise definition of Baudelairian ennui.

Ennui is a term and idea which recurs frequently in the seventeenth century, notably in the works of the two great classical dramatists, Molière and Racine. Although it does not play as fundamental a role as in Pascal's projected Apology, ennui is nonetheless an integral part of the potential tragic structure of Molière's comedies as it is of

the innate tragic structure of Racine's dramas. Indeed, the theatre of Molière encapsulates several of Pascal's central preoccupations: their vision of human nature is essentially the same; only their resolutions differ, with Pascal finding a spiritual solution in Christianity, and Molière an aesthetic and philosophical release in the comic framework of his plays.

The title character in Don Juan, until recently one of Molière's more neglected works, epitomizes the Pascalian "libertin", who strives to escape the ennui of his condition through various forms of "divertissements". As his servant Sganarelle wryly remarks, "Don Juan...n'aime guère à demeurer en place".³ Baudelaire himself uses the image of Don Juan in the poem, "Don Juan aux Enfers", where, even as he descends into Hell, the protagonist remains blind to the fundamental ennui of his condition:

Mais le calme héros, courbé sur sa rapière,
Regardait le sillage et ne daignait rien voir.
(19-20)

The title of the following poem in the cycle of "Spleen et Idéal", "Châtiment de l'Orgueil", reveals that both poems deal with the dangers of overweening pride. Significantly, "orgueil" relates closely to the concept of ennui in both Pascal and Baudelaire. In a penetrating study, Robert McBride underlines this correlation in the writings of Pascal:

⁴Beneath the actions of men there lurk the apparently opposing motivations of 'orgueil' and 'ennui'. 'Orgueil' stimulates man to seek the

unfamiliar situation, and 'ennui' persuades him to accept the 'status quo'. They are different in the actions to which they give rise, but both fulfil complementary needs in man's nature: one satisfies his need for regularity and custom ('dépendance') and the other his need to change his surroundings ('désir d'indépendance'), and thus represents variations on the theme of 'inconstance' and 'le mouvement perpétuel'.

In Molière's theatre, the salon of Célimène (Le Misanthrope) embodies the ennui of life in refined society as well as man's need for petty diversions: in the dénouement, when Alceste invites Célimène to join him in his "désert", she declines, explaining that "La solitude effraye une âme de vingt ans".⁶ As Pascal said it of man, she is unable to remain "en repos, dans une chambre" (B139, L136), and to face the ennui of her existence.

Molière, however, makes a different use of the actual term "ennui". In the same play, ennui assumes the meaning of "chagrin d'amour" during the famous sonnet scene:

⁷L'espoir, il est vrai, nous soulage,
Et nous perce un temps notre ennui.

Fuller use of the term is made in Racine's theatre. Here it is often taken to convey a sense of despair, as in Andromaque, where Hermione, the youthful princess, abandoned by Pyrrhus, the king of Epirus, to whom she is betrothed, mourns her love for him:

⁸Et je le plains encore! Et, pour comble d'ennui,
mon cœur, mon lâche cœur s'intéresse pour lui!

However, in Bérénice, the definition of ennui appears to come closer to the Pascalian conception of "misère" or

wretchedness. Alluding to Titus' indecision and restlessness, Bérénice asks him,

⁹Rien ne peut-il charmer l'ennui qui vous dévore?

Twenty years later, a similar meaning of ennui, with even more emphasis on the awareness of emptiness and inaction, appears in Les Caractères of La Bruyère:

¹⁰L'ennui est entré dans le monde par la paresse; elle a beaucoup de part dans la recherche que font les hommes des plaisirs, du jeu, de la société.

This transition leads into the eighteenth century, and the age of the "rationalist" philosophers. On the surface, ennui would seem to have no part to play in this age of reason, but, on the contrary, it constitutes a fundamental component of the thought of this period. "De fait", writes Marcel Ruff, "l'ennui et le dégoût de la vie suintent tout le long du XVIIIe siècle".¹¹

Robert Mauzi has published an interesting article on "Les Maladies de l'âme au XVIIIe siècle",¹² which will serve as our principal guide in this survey of ennui in the eighteenth century. Mauzi explains that

¹³Pascal avait déjà vu que l'homme ne se divertissait que pour ignorer artificiellement la vérité sur sa condition. Mais, parce que cette condition gardait malgré tout un sens, on ne pouvait la confondre avec l'existence pure. Celle-ci est la grande découverte de la conscience moderne. Il est bien peu d'âmes, au XVIIIe siècle, qui ne l'aient faite.

In 1714, André François Boureau Deslandes composed L'art de ne point s'ennuyer, the title of which suggests that there existed enough eighteenth-century sufferers from ennui to warrant the publication of such a treatise.¹⁴ Indeed, in the preface to his work, Deslandes insists that "Tous les hommes sont sujets à s'ennuyer". Various passages display an almost Pascalian style, and probably Deslandes derived much of his inspiration from Pascal's conception of ennui: Pascal himself could have written the following reflection:

J'ai remarqué que ceux qui aiment le plaisir sans aucun divertissement tombent dans un chagrin mortel lorsqu'ils se trouvent seuls.

Deslandes proposes the solution to ennui in the very title of his final chapter, "Plus on sent, moins on s'ennuie", which seems to anticipate the future sensibilities of the romantic era. Yet, ironically, the opposite appears to have been the case, for a title such as "Plus on sent, plus on s'ennuie" would be more appropriate to such nineteenth-century writers as Chateaubriand and Musset.

Even Voltaire, the most celebrated adversary of Pascal, holds a conception of ennui which remains closer to that of the seventeenth-century "misanthrope" than he would have cared to acknowledge. Ennui forms a thematic base to his most famous 'conte', Candide, written in 1759. Martin, the pessimist, one of the few characters to display a sound common sense, concludes realistically and lucidly that

"l'homme était né pour vivre dans les convulsions de l'inquiétude, ou dans la léthargie de l'ennui".¹⁵ We are reminded of Pascal's association of "inquiétude" with ennui (B127,L24). Earlier in Voltaire's tale, this sense of ennui, which is experienced as a feeling of lethargy and a void, is supported by the characterisation of Pococurante, the Venitian nobleman, who, despite his great wealth, suffers from "le plus mortel ennui".¹⁶ Is this state not reminiscent of Pascal's view that "un roi sans divertissements est un homme plein de misères" (B142,L137)? Significantly, Voltaire concludes Candide with the maxim that

¹⁷le travail éloigne de nous trois grands maux,
l'ennui, le vice et le besoin,

for it anticipates a central Baudelairian concept which the poet expresses in "Hygiène" (Journaux Intimes),

¹⁸A chaque minute nous sommes écrasés par l'idée et par la sensation du temps. Et il n'y a que deux moyens pour échapper à ce cauchemar, - pour l'oublier: le Plaisir et le Travail. Le Plaisir nous use. Le Travail nous fortifie. Choisissons.

Diderot is another prominent thinker of the eighteenth century to reflect on ennui. In a letter addressed to Sophie Volland on the 28th October 1760, he explains his personal predicament:

¹⁹J'ai des idées noires, de la tristesse et de l'ennui: je me trouve mal partout, je ne veux rien, je ne saurais vouloir, je cherche à m'amuser et à m'occuper, inutilement;...je ne saurais rester en place, il faut que j'aille sans savoir où... il y a des jours où je hais la

lumière, d'autres fois elle me rassure, et si j'entraîrais subitement dans les ténèbres, je croirais tomber dans un gouffre.

Interestingly, the term, "gouffre", is one which we shall often encounter when we analyse Baudelaire's conception of ennui, particularly in connection with Pascal.

Among eighteenth-century "philosophes", Jean-Jacques Rousseau is one of the few writers whom we would expect to yield to or indulge in different forms of ennui. Indeed, his awareness of ennui prefigures the romantic conception, where it usually signifies a state of deep despair:

²⁰Cette éternité de bonheur ne fut qu'un instant de ma vie. Le temps a repris sa lenteur dans les mouvements de mon désespoir, et l'ennui mesure par longues années le reste infortuné de mes jours.

However, after Pascal, Rousseau is the first to point out the possibility of man's greatness within ennui. In a letter written in 1770 to Mme Berthier, he declares that

²¹Ce vide interne dont vous vous plaignez ne se fait sentir qu'aux cœurs faits pour être remplis; les cœurs étroits ne sentent jamais le vide parce qu'ils sont toujours pleins de rien.

Evidently, however, the majority of eighteenth-century writers interpret ennui as "le vide", and in this respect they differ from Pascal, because they ignore the metaphysical implications of this concept. In fact, Baudelaire would seem to be the only writer in the two centuries which followed

Pascal to explore the concept of ennui with an insight as profound and as spiritual as that of the author of the Pensées.

Images of ennui abound in the works of several other minor writers of the eighteenth century. Mme du Deffand illustrates the perfect incarnation of ennui, especially in her voluminous correspondence. Her life was truly dominated by a sense of frustration and disenchantment: as she wrote to Henry Walpole on the 17th March 1776,

²²Ce qui s'oppose à mon bonheur, c'est un ennui qui ressemble au ver solitaire qui consomme tout ce qui pourrait me rendre heureuse.

This powerful sense of ennui as an all-consuming passion is similar to the future feelings of Baudelaire. Mauzi quotes another author by the name of Feucher, who wrote in 1786,

²³Que l'ennui cependant est insupportable! Quelle langueur il répand dans notre âme! Comme il nous mine et nous tue! Qu'il dégoûte de la vie! C'est la maladie la plus terrible et la plus générale.

Yet another writer, Maupertuis, whom Mauzi cites in a later work,²⁴ writes of ennui and "divertissement" in a way which resembles Pascal's. Furthermore, his various attempts to forget his state concur with some of those which Baudelaire will evoke in Les Fleurs du Mal. When discussing Maupertuis, Mauzi states that the eighteenth-century author celebrates

²⁵d'un ton morne le "mal de vivre" et reprend le leitmotiv pascalien, qui veut que l'homme s'étourdisse pour esquiver l'insoutenable angoisse de n'être que lui-même. Il renchérit

même sur le pessimisme de Pascal, en instillant au divertissement des qualités perverses, en le voulant aussi érelaté que possible. Il préconise l'usage des stupéfiants, des "liqueurs spiritueuses", de "la fumée des feuilles d'une plante qui aide l'homme à supporter sa condition, en l'oubliant".

Thus, ennui cannot be considered merely as a superficial aspect of eighteenth-century society: it forms an integral part of the very nature of man. Nevertheless, the eighteenth-century conception of this condition lacks the profundity and the tragic intensity of a Pascal or a Baudelaire.

The advent of the nineteenth century heralds the beginnings of romanticism, that age where "il s'agit de la solitude, de l'amour, de la malédiction, de l'ennui, du tragique, de l'appel au surhumain".²⁶ Ennui becomes an essential factor in the "mal du siècle" which Baudelaire was to inherit.

Chateaubriand represents the ultimate symbol of ennui at the beginning of the nineteenth century; indeed, it is significant that he derived much of his inspiration from Pascal, in his attempt to reconstruct the ideals of Christianity through Le Génie du Christianisme, as several Pascalian preoccupations reappear in his works. For this study of ennui, we shall concentrate on Chateaubriand's short "novel", René, first published in 1802: not only does the central figure epitomize the romantic conception of ennui, but Chateaubriand himself also incorporated the work into the

apologetics of Le Génie du Christianisme, because he, like Pascal, regarded man's state of ennui as proof of the existence of God.

René is undoubtedly a tale with a moral purpose. In it, Chateaubriand wishes to depict the wretchedness of modern man. As a young man, René seeks to forget his melancholic state through numerous distractions; but these very diversions prove to him his actual solitude. He realizes that he possesses "des goûts inconstants",²⁷ which recall the state of "inconstance" (Bl11, L55) which Pascal describes. Indeed, René explains that "La solitude absolue, le spectacle de la nature, me plongèrent bientôt dans un état presque impossible à décrire".²⁸ René's life forms a sharp contrast to that of his sister who retires to a convent: in fact, his whole life becomes an expression of ennui:

²⁹Hélas! j'étais seul, seul sur la terre! Une langueur secrète s'emparait de mon corps. Ce dégoût de la vie que j'avais ressenti dès mon enfance revenait avec une force nouvelle. Bientôt mon coeur ne fournit plus d'aliment à ma pensée, et je ne m'apercevais de mon existence que par un profond sentiment d'ennui.

Chateaubriand's conception of ennui was to have a profound effect on several writers of the nineteenth century, notably Baudelaire, who wrote in a letter dated 19th February 1858,

³⁰Chaque écrivain est plus ou moins marqué par sa faculté principale. Chateaubriand a chanté la gloire douloureuse de la mélancolie et de l'ennui.

Like Pascal, Chateaubriand offers a Christian solution to the wretchedness of the human condition. But, in reality, their dialects are totally opposed. Chateaubriand concentrates on the positive aspects of the imagination and of the "coeur", without taking into account the role of reason which is so fundamental to Pascal. Also, while Pascal strives to establish the essential and profound truth of Christianity, Chateaubriand attempts to define aesthetically its moral beauty and poetic value. It becomes thus evident that the nineteenth-century writer's apologetic argument bases itself on specious and ultimately profane grounds. He epitomizes the era of romanticism, as his often-quoted evaluation of Pascal shows:

³¹Il s'est fait chrétien en enrageant, il est mort à la peine. Je l'aime ainsi; je l'aime tombant à genoux, se cachant les yeux et criant: 'Je crois'.

However, the concept of ennui, especially in the nineteenth century, is not confined to France alone. It plays a central role in the works of such authors as Byron and Leopardi; but its universality will not be explored in this outline, which is devoted specifically to the development of French thought, with particular reference to Pascal and Baudelaire.

Ennui constitutes an important part in the creative output of Alfred de Musset: in his comedy, Fantasio, the

ennui of Fantasio and Spark seems to anticipate that of Vladimir and Estragon in Beckett's En Attendant Godot. The theme of ennui in Musset's drama, Lorenzaccio, has also been compared to the Theatre of the Absurd. Yet, seldom do we find the sense of inner despair and suffocation which Baudelaire lends to the word. Indeed, Musset always maintains faith in love. As Perdican affirms in Musset's comedy, On ne badine pas avec l'amour,

32 J'ai souffert souvent, je me suis trompé
quelquefois, mais j'ai aimé. C'est moi qui ai
vécu, et non pas un être factice créé par mon
orgueil et mon ennui.

It is revealing to observe that these are the very words which George Sand used in a letter which she wrote to Musset on the 12th May 1834.

A contemporary of Musset, Alfred de Vigny, lends a deeper and more metaphysical definition to ennui: according to his view, it transcends the simple "mal du siècle" and becomes "la maladie de la vie". His Journal d'un Poète, in which he demonstrates a lucid understanding of Pascal's thought, refers frequently to ennui: for example, in 1834, he wrote,

33 L'ennui est la grande maladie de la vie; on ne
cesse de maudire sa brièveté, et toujours elle
est trop longue, puisqu'on ne sait qu'en faire.

In an article entitled "Romantisme et Existence Contemporaine",³⁴ Armand Hoog gives a comprehensive catalogue

of nineteenth-century writers, which contains examples of their "caagrins". In the list, we find the names of Maine de Biran, Hugo, Sainte Beuve, Gautier, Lamartine, Nerval and Berlioz. Significantly, words such as "noires profondeurs", "désir vague" and "dégoût" recur; these are the sensations which sum up the romantic conception of ennui, to which Baudelaire was heir.

But, as we move away from romanticism, we discover that ennui remains as strong a concept as before. Stendhal presents it as a leitmotiv in most of his works. In Le Rouge et le Noir, Julien Sorel finds himself in the salon of "l'hôtel de la Mole", where he concludes that:

³⁵Il y avait trop de fierté et trop d'ennui au fond du caractère des maîtres de la maison; ils étaient trop accoutumés à outrager pour se désennuyer, pour qu'ils pussent espérer de vrais amis. Mais, excepté les jours de pluie, et dans les moments d'ennui féroce, qui étaient rares, on les trouvait toujours d'une politesse parfaite.

Ennui has become entrenched within the way of life of the nineteenth century. Pierre Barberis explains this "mal du siècle" as "le premier témoignage morale de la crise de la société bourgeoise".³⁶ Indeed, from the time of Pascal's "libertin", ennui seems to be the spiritual malady of the upper classes. Following the rise of the bourgeoisie after the revolution, this ennui will spread from the aristocracy to the middle classes.

Madeleine Bouchez quotes 1857 as a focal year in the history of ennui.³⁷ It was in 1857 that Lamartine composed

his last great poem, "La Vigne et la Maison", in which he expressed his overwhelming sense of weariness and ennui. In that year also, Musset, to whom ennui was synonymous with being, died. But, above all, 1857 marks the date of the first publication of Flaubert's Madame Bovary and Baudelaire's Les Fleurs du Mal. The days of fiction and poetry inspired by natural landscape, as celebrated by Hugo and Lamartine, have slowly disappeared. Instead, there now emerges a literature which is markedly urban and dominated by a Baudelairian "soleen de Paris". In the development of ennui, a new phase has begun.

Flaubert's great novel captures this sense of ennui in its central character, Emma Bovary. Married to a staid country doctor, Emma desperately seeks to escape the mediocrity of her condition through diversions such as her encounters and tawdry affairs with Rodolphe and Léon; but, instead of transcending her condition, she plunges even further into mediocrity and ennui. Her history offers a bleak view of human existence.

This setting of ennui in its historical context throws light on the profound anguish felt by Baudelaire. Ennui becomes for him a symbol of existence itself. No longer is it a theme within Les Fleurs du Mal; it becomes instead the very essence of that work. Benjamin Fondane, in an excellent study on Baudelaire, insists that Baudelairian ennui is in no way connected to its previous meaning of tedium and

listlessness; by contrast, this past outlook constitutes a superficial interpretation, which concentrates more on aesthetics than on spirituality. As Fondane remarks,

38 Il est clair que l'ennui de Baudelaire n'est pas un ennui personnel, mais l'ennui dans la civilisation et peut-être l'ennui dans le cosmos: c'est pourquoi il prend, chez lui, des proportions aussi immenses que significatives. On a beau chercher où se loge l'ennui il n'est nulle part dans l'existant; et pourtant, à l'instant où il se produit, il couvre, il épuise l'existant et de telle sorte que l'on pourrait prétendre à bon droit que l'existant s'est évanoui et que l'ennui seul existe. Qu'est-il? le sentiment qu'a l'inexistant de son existence ou plutôt le sentiment qu'a l'existence qu'elle n'existe pas?

It is this cosmological uncertainty and inconstancy (which closely resembles Pascal's vision of a godless universe) that pervades the Soleen of Les Fleurs du Mal. Furthermore, the spiritual aspect of the term assumes a fundamental significance, which both equals and surpasses its metaphysical implications in Pascal's Pensées.

Fondane goes on to suggest that "la 'métaphysique' de l'ennui cède tout à coup le pas, se reconnaît incompétente et passe la main à une 'théologie' de l'ennui"³⁹. At a later stage, we shall explore this very sense of ennui as a "theology", with its direct link to the Jansenist conception of Original Sin.

However, before we analyse Baudelaire's perception of ennui in Les Fleurs du Mal, two aspects invite clarification: firstly, the proof of Baudelaire's knowledge of Pascal and

his writings, because the similarities between the two authors cannot simply be regarded as coincidental; and secondly, an understanding of Baudelaire's "religion", which is necessary before one examines the spiritual and even Christian implications of ennui in his poetry.

2 BAUDELAIRE AND PASCAL: DIRECT PARALLELS

In Les Fleurs du Mal, only one direct reference to Pascal exists, in the sonnet entitled "Le Gouffre" (written in 1862, towards the end of his short life):

Pascal avait son gouffre, avec lui se mouvant.

This poem, which will provide a key point of reference in this chapter, displays Baudelaire's innate understanding of Pascal's "gouffre", that terrifying sense of void in the vastness of the cosmos.⁴⁰ Baudelaire's perception of the term "gouffre" is of such importance that the word reappears with significant frequency throughout Les Fleurs du Mal. Several of his other writings, such as his prose-poems (Le Spleen de Paris) and Journaux Intimes, are dominated by this "gouffre", which corresponds closely to ennui.

In the last chapter, Baudelaire's reference to Pascal in "La Solitude", a prose-poem from Le Spleen de Paris⁴¹, has already been mentioned. In it, Baudelaire displays a clear understanding of "divertissement" and ennui through his paraphrase of the opening section of B139/L136. This

fruitless search for happiness through movement is, according to Baudelaire, akin to "prostitution", a term which, as Pierre Citron explains, assumes added significance for Baudelaire:

42 la prostitution dans Paris ne s'arrête pas pour Baudelaire aux prostituées; elle déborde sur l'idée d'ensemble qu'il se fait de ses rapports avec la ville...: toute une part du sens qu'il a de la foule parisienne engage bien plus profondément l'être de Baudelaire: ses rapports avec elle deviennent actifs, la poésie étant mêlée indissolublement aux moyens de vivre - c'est-à-dire, sur le plan spirituel comme sur le plan humain, de se perdre ou de se sauver. Il ne s'agit plus de voir, mais de pénétrer. Est prostitué aux yeux du poète, le plus souvent sans le savoir, tout être dont le mystère est offert aux autres.

However, still, Baudelaire, like Pascal, scorns man's inability to be alone, and implies that solitude is essential for self-knowledge, an attitude which refutes the belief expressed to him that "la solitude est mauvaise pour l'homme".⁴³ Elsewhere, in Mon Coeur Mis à Nu, Baudelaire also likens lack of solitude to "prostitution". While Pascal claims that man must be alone to recognize his wretchedness, Baudelaire asserts that the man of genius must be solitary, in order perhaps to understand himself better. In their different ways, the opinions of the Christian moralist and the worldly moralist converge:

⁴⁴Goût invincible de la prostitution dans le cœur de l'homme, d'où naît son horreur de la solitude.- Il veut être deux. L'homme de génie veut être un, donc solitaire...

Baudelaire directly alludes to Pascal in three other texts. The first allusion occurs in the chapter, "Religion, Histoire, Fantaisie" from Salon de 1859, in which he refers to the Pascalian meditation on Imagination (B82,L44):

⁴⁵Pascal dit que les toges, la pourpre et les panaches ont été très-heureusement inventés pour imposer au vulgaire, pour marquer d'une étiquette ce qui est vraiment respectable.

Suggestively, Baudelaire entitled the previous chapter of Salon de 1859, "Le Gouvernement de l'Imagination", as this concurs with Pascal's reiteration of the vital need to control one's Imagination, "cette maîtresse d'erreur et de fausseté" (B82,L44), as the seventeenth-century moralist calls it in an earlier section of the same meditation to which Baudelaire refers. However, it would be misleading to oversimplify this similarity, as Baudelaire's essential conception of imagination as "la reine des facultés"⁴⁶ differs fundamentally from that of Pascal.

In Salon de 1859, Baudelaire undoubtedly recalls the fragment where Pascal ironically evokes those magistrates who inspire respect and awe with "leurs robes rouges, leurs hermines, dont ils s'emmailotent en chats fourrés..." (B82,L44). Despite their differences, Baudelaire clearly

grasps the negative effect of this "ouissance trompeuse" which is intimately connected to Pascalian ennui and "divertissement". Both Pascal and Baudelaire display an ability to reach beyond the mask of external appearance and to investigate the inner reality of man's deeper nature.

The second text comes from a study devoted to Victor Hugo:

⁴⁷Que Pascal, enflammé par l'ascétisme, s'obstine désormais à vivre entre quatre murs nus avec des chaises de paille... c'est bien, c'est beau et grand.

This reflection not only confirms Baudelaire's familiarity with the life, personality and writings of Pascal, but also underlines a basic difference between the two writers, which Baudelaire himself recognizes and which needs to be stated. As Maurice Chapelain explains, "l'un vécut en ascète, l'autre en sensualiste".⁴⁷ This dissimilarity can be deduced from Baudelaire's reaction to Pascal's asceticism, when he uses the words, "bien", "beau" and "grand". And yet, despite this essential difference, both suffered deeply from illness and both were rigorous to the point of fanaticism in their thirst for the absolute. Indeed, paradoxically, the aesthetic sensualist ultimately suffered more than the ascetic, for Pascal, after his second conversion, achieved a spiritual peace which Baudelaire was never to find.

The final passage in which Baudelaire mentions Pascal is particularly meaningful, because, when the symbolist poet

registers the fundamental importance of "Pascal et sa foudroyante conversion",⁴⁹ he appears to be well aware of the Christian solution to "la misère de l'homme sans Dieu".

Thus, although the number of references to Pascal remains small in comparison with the frequency of allusions to nineteenth-century writers such as Poe and Hugo, there is no doubt that Baudelaire was closely acquainted with Pascal's character and writings.

If we turn at this stage to an investigation of Baudelaire's "religion", it will be tempting to point out direct thematic parallels between Pascal and Baudelaire. Many of these, however, will emerge naturally from our study of Baudelaire and the theme of ennui.

3 THE "RELIGION" OF BAUDELAIRE

Evidently, Baudelaire's writings convey a sense of intense spirituality; thus, it is fitting for us to discuss what has been called the "religion" of Baudelaire. Nothing in Les Fleurs du Mal remains exterior to the spiritual universe. Indeed, concepts such as Beauty, Love, Evil, Revolt and Death become religions in themselves. We have mentioned already the "theology" of ennui; it too assumes a fundamental role in the poet's overall "religion". However, the abundance of metaphysical implications inevitably leads to misconceptions about his "religion"; too many critics have attempted to

assign to him a doctrine which does not take into account the writer himself. Nevertheless, all these influences taken together form part of Baudelaire's personality; as the poet himself writes, in Mon Coeur Mis à Nu, "Dès mon enfance, tendance à la mysticité. Mes Conversations avec Dieu".⁵⁰

Manicheism

Three major trends of thought appear to have influenced Baudelaire: Manicheism, Gnosticism and Christianity. In the third century, the prophet Manès (215-276) founded the sect which became known as Manicheism, derived from the dualism of Persian religion and a contamination of the early Christian doctrine. In it, Satan becomes God's equal, and all matter is assimilated under Evil. Creation becomes the work of Satan. Baudelaire captures this dualism in much of his work, most notably in the very structure of Les Fleurs du Mal.

Commenting in 1861 on Richard Wagner's Tannhäuser, Baudelaire discovers in the music this duality between Satan and God. And yet, remarkably, within this Manichean thought, he incorporates a Pascalian logic:

⁵¹Tout cerveau bien conformé porte en lui deux infinis, le ciel et l'enfer, et dans toute image de l'un de ces infinis il reconnaît subitement la moitié de lui-même.

Does this observation not recall the celebrated fragment of "les deux infinis" from the Pensées?

Car enfin qu'est-ce que l'homme dans la nature?
Un néant à l'égard de l'infini, un tout à l'égard
du néant, un milieu entre rien et tout.
(B72,L199)

But, in the Manichean doctrine, the Christian dogmas of the Incarnation and Redemption seem impossible, because communication between mind and matter is inconceivable; and indeed, in Les Fleurs du Mal, no explicit reference to Redemption appears. In this respect, Baudelaire could pass for Manichean.

The fundamental importance of a figure like Satan also reinforces the opinion that at least the later poems of Les Fleurs du Mal follow an inspiration that is essentially Manichean. He is called "Satan Trismégiste",⁵² three times great; furthermore, his actions appear to be logical and well-suited to this world:

53- Emblèmes nets, tableau parfait
D'une fortune irrémédiable,
Qui donne à penser que le Diable
Fait toujours bien tout ce qu'il fait.

Many commentaries have been written concerning the alleged Satanism of Baudelaire. However, the dualism which pervades his work fits a Manichean doctrine rather than a Satanist one.

The penultimate section of Les Fleurs du Mal, devoted to Revolt, confirms the Manichean tendencies of the mature Baudelaire. Here the poet becomes the champion of the rebel. He claims that Adam and Eve were justified in wanting to

discover human knowledge and enjoyment. He thus believes that God was guilty for denying man eternity and the absolute which is his right. Baudelaire then cries for revenge, taking from Catholic dogma three figures which in their different ways will symbolize his struggle: Christ, Cain and Satan, as they appear in "Le Reniement de Saint Pierre", "Abel et Caïn" and "Les Litanies de Satan".

By placing Christ at the head of this Revolt, Baudelaire accentuates his own audacity and defiance. He cannot share Christ's acceptance of suffering in the name of Humanity; and so, Peter's denial of Jesus becomes perfectly warranted:

- Certes, je sortirai, quant à moi, satisfait
D'un monde où l'action n'est pas la sœur du rêve;
Puisse-je user du glaive et oërir par le glaive!
Saint Pierre a renié Jésus...il a bien fait! (29-32)

Yet, this revolt appears to be merely superimposed upon the inner tenderness of the poem. As Antoine Adam has pointed out,⁵⁴ it is not so much God that Baudelaire rejects as the Ideal; he discovers that "action" (the Soleen or ennui of existence) is in no way related to "rêve" (the Ideal).

"Abel et Caïn" formulates another expression to this Revolt. Abel, who submits to the human condition, is favoured by God. For Baudelaire, Cain becomes the hero, the revolutionary who will not accept submission: he will bear

the pain of existence and "sur la terre jette Dieu!" (32). we find again the rejection of an Ideal, rather than an inner Satanism.

Baudelaire then turns to the ultimate hero who will not yield before God, Satan. "Trahi par le sort et privé de louanges",⁵⁵ Satan attains a form of divinity as the guide of men and as the leader of revolt. Furthermore, as Robert Vivier writes in his perceptive study on Baudelaire,

⁵⁶Sans doute, Satan n'accorde pas cet absolu que Dieu a refusé. Mais le poète ne le lui demande pas. Satan n'est pas un maître: ce n'est qu'un chef de révolte.

Satan becomes a new God of human aspirations, with no conditions attached, as it were, to whom the poet will offer his prayer of "Gloire et louange".⁵⁷

However, Manicheism is evidently not the ultimate solution envisaged by the poet. Significantly, Baudelaire rejects Revolt and moves on to the final section - "La Mort". Thus, rather than regarding Baudelaire as a Manichean, we should merely recognize that his poetry displays certain Manichean tendencies.

Gnosticism

However, another belief which encompasses a similar duality between Christianity and "pagan" traditions, and which appears to be more attractive to Baudelaire, is that of Gnosticism. Two major factors contribute to its appeal for the poet. Firstly, the doctrine of Original Sin, so important to Baudelaire, is central to Gnosticism; and secondly, the Gnostics' doctrines are essentially esoteric, a characteristic which appealed to Baudelaire's sense of intellectual aristocracy.

Gnosticism first appeared in the second century AD amongst the early Christians. Jacques Lacarrière has given a succinct definition of this doctrine in his book entitled Les Gnostiques:

⁵⁸La gnose est une connaissance. C'est sur la connaissance et non sur la croyance et sur la foi que les gnostiques entendaient s'appuyer... : connaissance de l'origine des choses, de la nature réelle de la matière et de la chair... Or cette connaissance - née de leurs propres réflexions ou d'enseignements secrets qu'ils disaient tenir de Jésus ou d'ancêtres mythiques - les porte à voir dans toute la création matérielle le produit d'un dieu ennemi de l'homme.

The duality inherent in Gnosticism is close to the dual view of Baudelaire: as he writes in a famous passage of Mon Coeur Mis à Nu,

59 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.

There exists a distinct difference between life before the original imperfection, and life after it; as Lacarrière explains of Gnosticism,

60 le vice qui entache toute la création et qui aliène l'homme dans son âme, son esprit et sa chair le prive de sa conscience nécessaire à son propre salut.

Manifestly, the duality which is present in Les Fleurs du Mal can be incorporated into a Gnostic interpretation of the universe. But, it can hardly be labelled the "religion" of Baudelaire, for, as Lacarrière takes pains to explain, Gnosticism is not a faith but a "connaissance". Also, to recall our earlier assertion, it would be misleading to register Baudelaire under a particular doctrine or dogma, without taking into account his great originality.

Christianity

The third major influence on Baudelaire's writings derives from Christianity. In our study of Baudelairian Ennui and its parallels with the ennui of Pascal, one would feel inclined to categorize the nineteenth-century poet, together with the seventeenth-century moralist, as a Christian; but

that would prove to be a naïve and simplistic argument, especially as so many critics have attempted to demonstrate that the poet of Les Fleurs du Mal is ultimately Christian, an attempt not well founded, as we shall see. Baudelaire's Catholicism is an essential part of him, but it does not embrace, nor does it explain, the whole of his personality.

Baudelaire was never to escape completely from the Jansenist faith of his childhood, and this makes all the more understandable the parallels to be discovered in his work with that of the supreme Jansenist, Pascal. Both writers find their roots in the rigours of this faith. Baudelaire's mother, whom he adored and who exerted a strong influence on his life,⁶¹ took him to the Catholic church as a child. Even at the age of eighteen, he considered himself still as an ardent Christian.

Although Baudelaire soon abandoned all outward signs of Catholicism, it seems that towards the end of his life he began to return to the faith of his childhood. This interest prevailed especially in the letters to his mother from 1861 onwards and in his Journaux Intimes. On 6th May 1861, Baudelaire, writing to her, shows his uncertainty as well as his need for belief in a divine being. This divinity appears to be close to the Christian God in whom his mother placed her faith:

⁶²Je désire de tout mon coeur (avec quelle sincérité, personne ne peut le savoir que moi!) croire qu'un être extérieur et invisible s'intéresse à ma destinée; mais comment faire pour le croire?

Baudelaire commences Fusées with an interesting meditation on God and religion which, although it is not strictly Christian, demonstrates the force of Baudelaire's religious preoccupations. Furthermore, as Louis Aquettant suggests, "c'est l'aveu d'une âme religieuse qui a perdu la foi, qui est peut-être en voie de la retrouver":⁶³

⁶⁴Quand même Dieu n'existerait pas, la Religion serait encore Sainte et Divine.

However, also in Fusées, strong traces of Catholicism are evinced, as, when Baudelaire speaks of "la féminité de l'Eglise, comme raison de son omnipuissance",⁶⁵ he alludes to a central concept of Catholicism which has been visible since the Marian cults of the Middle Ages. Yet, Baudelaire's religion remains essentially personal, despite its Catholic overtones, when he mentions "la sorcellerie des sacrements"⁶⁶ and affirms that

⁶⁷Il y a dans la prière une opération magique. La prière est une des grandes forces de la dynamique intellectuelle. Il y a là comme une récurrence électrique.

As Louis Aquettant explains in his study on Baudelaire, which highlights the weaknesses in the arguments of those critics who strive to interpret Baudelaire solely in terms of his alleged Catholicism,

⁶⁸On ne trouve donc plus chez lui que des survivances de la foi, une croyance mutilée, réduite à quelques points, mais dans cette mesure il est difficile de nier que Baudelaire garde du catholicisme de profondes empreintes, qui vont bien au-delà d'un goût d'artiste pour le latin d'église et les cérémonies liturgiques.

Further evidence of Baudelaire's inclination towards Christianity during the later years of his life, occurs in the remainder of his Journaux Intimes.

Prayer, so important to the Catholic church, contributes a key theme to Baudelaire's mature writings. In Hygiène, he urges himself to "faire tous les matins ma prière à Dieu, réservoir de toute force et de toute justice".⁶⁹ Indeed, many of his meditations on prayer and charity, and their functions, are distinctly Pascalian in tone:

⁷⁰prière: charité, sagesse et force.
Sans la charité, je ne suis qu'une cymbale
retentissante.

Later, in Mon Coeur Mis à Nu, Baudelaire writes "De l'Obsession, de la Possession, de la Prière et de la Foi", and then of the "Dynamique morale de Jésus" where "les sacrements sont les moyens de cette dynamique".⁷¹ These fragments evoke a number of Pascal's meditations on the function of Prayer and Charity.⁷²

Pascal insists upon man's need to humble himself before God and to "s'offrir par les humiliations aux inspirations" (B245,L808). Furthermore, he declares that "il faut n'aimer que Dieu et ne haïr que soi" (B476,L373). Baudelaire also acknowledges the positive Christian function of humiliation:

⁷³- Mes humiliations ont été des grâces de Dieu.
- Ma phase d'égoïsme est-elle finie?

Despite his concern with the superiority of the Dandy, he begins to stress in these later works the need for humility in religion and for a personal faith:

74 Être un grand homme et un saint pour soi-même,
voilà l'unique chose importante.

Like Pascal, who insists that

L'immortalité de l'âme est une chose qui nous
importe si fort, qui nous touche si profondément,
qu'il faut avoir perdu tout sentiment pour être
dans l'indifférence de savoir ce qui en est
(Bl94, L427),

Baudelaire realizes the essential wretchedness of those who do not strive towards a higher being:

75 Presque toute notre vie est employée à des
curiosités niaises. En revanche il y a des choses
qui devraient exciter la curiosité des hommes au
plus haut degré, et qui, à en juger par leur
train de vie ordinaire, ne leur en inspirent
aucune.
Où sont nos amis morts?
Pourquoi sommes-nous ici?
Venons-nous de quelque part?

The Jansenism of Baudelaire's childhood reemerges from these late writings, thus revealing the extent to which his work relates to that of Pascal. In another passage from Mon Coeur Mis à Nu, Baudelaire writes that "Dieu est l'éternel confident dans cette tragédie dont chacun est le héros".⁷⁶ This observation recalls both the tragic and positive elements of Pascal's Jansenist vision: the pessimistic conception of man's inner wretchedness ("la Misère de l'Homme sans Dieu") and the optimistic conclusion offered by

Christianity ("la Félicité de l'Homme avec Dieu"). This satisfies the love of antithesis common to both authors. Our study of ennui in Les Fleurs du Mal (the title of which presents just such a metaphysical contrast), will reveal that Baudelaire's use of paradox underscores his deeper spiritual concerns. In the same meditation, Baudelaire's assertion that each man is the hero of his own tragedy shows not only man's inability to attain happiness on his own, but also (through the word "héros") an inner strength and greatness which meets a central aspect of Pascalian thought: "Pensée fait la grandeur de l'homme" (B346,L759). This antithetical juxtaposition of wretchedness and greatness which pervades the Pensées is echoed throughout Baudelaire's work. Writing in De l'Essence du Rire, he explains that

⁷⁷comme le rire est essentiellement contradictoire, c'est-à-dire qu'il est à la fois signe d'une grandeur infinie et d'une misère infinie, misère infinie relativement à l'Être absolu dont il possède la conception, grandeur infinie relativement aux animaux. C'est du choc perpétuel de ces deux infinis que se dégage le rire.

Baudelaire no doubt refers here to the Pascalian meditation of "les deux infinis" (B72,L199).

A similar sense of the contradictions which exist within human nature is found in another passage by Baudelaire directly reminiscent of Pascal's Pensées. Describing a drugged person in "Le Poème du haschisch" from Paradis Artificiels, Baudelaire declares that "Il a voulu faire l'ange, il est devenu une bête".⁷⁸ Baudelaire certainly

recalls here the section of the Pensées devoted to the double nature of man: "L'homme n'est ni ange ni bête, et le malheur veut que qui veut faire l'ange fait la bête" (B358, L673).

These contrasts cannot be sufficiently stressed, since ennui plays an integral role in the dialectical process of opposition in the works of both Pascal and Baudelaire. While Pascal includes ennui as central to man's conception of his own wretchedness, in contrast to his potential happiness, Baudelaire incorporates ennui into the "Mal" of Les Fleurs du Mal, and, more specifically, into Spleen, which forms part of the dramatic contrast between "Spleen et Idéal".

In the previous chapter, we discussed the importance of Pascal's Wager in the thematic development of ennui and "divertissement". A section of Mon Coeur Mis à Nu, entitled "Calcul en faveur de Dieu", which corresponds strikingly to the famous Wager, is worth examining:

⁷⁹Rien n'existe sans but.
Donc mon existence a un but. Quel but?
Je l'ignore.
Ce n'est donc pas moi qui l'ai marqué.
C'est donc quelqu'un, plus savant que moi.
Il faut donc prier ce quelqu'un de m'éclairer.
C'est le parti le plus sage.

Although these reflections do not attain the significance of the Wager, it is still remarkable in that Baudelaire displays a concision of style and a rigorous logic worthy of the tradition followed by the seventeenth-century philosopher. In addition, we find in this extract further proof of

Baudelaire's religious concerns. In fact, clearly the essential preoccupations of the two authors so resemble each other that both can be equally regarded as moralists. Baudelaire, like Pascal, penetrates the inner being of man's moral nature, as is particularly evident in Les Fleurs du Mal, which henceforth will be the central point of reference. Jean Prévost indicates similarities in method between these two moralists:

80 Si différent que soit Baudelaire de Pascal, il nous arrive souvent d'éprouver, en relisant Les Fleurs du Mal, des impressions esthétiques voisines de celles que nous imposent les Pensées. Chacun dans son domaine, ils fouillent nos sentiments et nos pensées d'un couteau trop tranchant; ils pratiquent dans le vif des tailles étroites et profondes; c'est moins la vie qui les passionne que l'anatomie; ils vont en quelques mots jusqu'à l'os, et ils le dépouillent.

It is this sharpness of observation which makes the writing of both Pascal and Baudelaire so immediate and arresting. Both men feel and suffer through their work, in their personal search for spiritual salvation. Indeed, they represent those who, in Pascal's words, "cherchent en gémissant" (B421, L405).

However, before we consider the theme of ennui in Les Fleurs du Mal, there remains one central concept of Jansenism which is essential to the entire creative output of Baudelaire: the notion of Evil, and in particular, of Original Sin. Our study of Pascal has revealed the two natures of man, as established by Saint Augustine, the one

before the Fall, the second after the Fall. These antithetical states are expanded into the inner structure of Les Fleurs du Mal: the initial state of man's innocence and purity, the "Idéal", is evoked in the image of Flowers in the title; and the subsequent state of corruption and sin, the Spleen or ennui, is captured in the sense of Evil which pervades the whole collection of poems. This dogma of Original Sin, as Hélène Cassou-Yager expresses it, "explique pour Pascal comme pour Baudelaire, l'énigme de notre dualité, faite de misère et de grandeur".⁸¹

All Baudelaire's writings, including his letters, are dominated by this concept of Original Sin; is it not also closely linked to the guilt and remorse which stem from the theme of ennui? Baudelaire's awareness of evil is undoubtedly linked to the rigorous Jansenism which was taught to him during his childhood, manifesting itself in his spiritual concerns; as Marcel Ruff argues,

⁸²il y a lieu de penser que la notion du mal a été introduite dans cette âme enfantine avec sa résonance religieuse, et associée plus ou moins confusément à l'idée d'une faute et d'une corruption originelles.

Baudelaire writes himself in an essay on Delacroix that "l'enfant, en général est, relativement à l'homme en général, beaucoup plus rapproché du péché originel".⁸³ During the course of his life, Baudelaire became increasingly absorbed by his sense of Original Sin: not only did it form part of

his innate pessimism, but also it became the basis of his vision of humanity. As he asserts in a famous section of Mon Coeur Mis à Nu,

⁸⁴ Théorie de la vraie civilisation. Elle n'est pas dans le gaz, ni dans la vapeur, ni dans les tables tournantes, elle est dans la diminution des traces du péché originel.

Baudelaire thus rejects the idea of "progress" of modernity and returns to the roots of the Jansenist creed. In a letter to Alphonse Toussenel on the 21st January 1856, he explains that the heresies of life and existence are

⁸⁵ la conséquence de la grande hérésie moderne, de la doctrine artificielle, substituée à la doctrine naturelle, - je veux dire la suppression de l'idée du péché originel.

Clearly, Baudelaire considered Les Fleurs du Mal as an intensely spiritual document; indeed, the hostility shown to his book by the absurdly self-righteous critics of his time exasperated him. In a letter to his mother, dated 1st April 1861, he draws attention to the Christian foundation of his work and speaks of M. Cardine, a priest who had attacked Les Fleurs du Mal and who had influenced Baudelaire's mother: "il n'a même pas compris que le livre partait d'une idée catholique".⁸⁶ A few years later, on the 18th February 1866, Baudelaire affirms in a letter to his lawyer, Maître Ancelle, the absolute sincerity of his religious intentions in Les Fleurs du Mal: despite its apparent contradictions, the total

work expresses the anguish and torment of the poet's inner being as he becomes also a witness of the human condition:

⁸⁷Faut-il vous dire, à vous qui ne l'avez pas plus deviné que les autres, que dans ce livre atroce, j'ai mis tout mon coeur, toute ma tendresse, toute ma religion (travestie), toute ma haine?

As Baudelaire's Jansenism, and particularly his conception of Original Sin, corresponds closely to the theme of ennui in Les Fleurs du Mal, the Christian aspects of the work will not be discussed here, as they will emerge in the course of our study. However, before an analysis of ennui is attempted, it is advisable to consider one of the final poems included in the third (posthumous) edition of Les Fleurs du Mal (1868), "L'Imprévu", not only because it represents Baudelaire's renewed inclination towards Christianity in the last years of his life (the poem first appeared in 1863), but also because it condenses the poet's religious preoccupations in the whole collection, at the same time adding a new tone to the general outlook.

A note written by Baudelaire himself and accompanying "L'Imprévu", when it appeared in "Les Épaves" in 1866, shows its significance for the poet as a spiritual testament:

⁸⁸Ici, l'auteur des Fleurs du Mal se tourne vers la Vie éternelle. Ça devait finir comme ça. Observons que, comme tous les nouveaux convertis, il se montre très-rigoureux et très-fanatique.

A number of critics, such as Antoine Adam, have, not without apparent justification, been sceptical of this declaration.

Adam argues that the poet "s'y moque des nouveaux convertis et, un oeu, des lecteurs et de lui-même".⁸⁹ This proposition may be true to some extent; but the content of the poem does suggest a sincere move towards a more defined sense of Christianity, although the "rigour" and "fanaticism" to which he refers reveal more the mark of his early Jansenism than that of a newly-converted believer. Furthermore, at the time when he was correcting the proofs of the poem, Baudelaire, in a letter dated 1st January 1863, refused Hippolyte Lejosne an invitation to visit him on the grounds that he might leave in the near future "pour rendre visite au couvent et y faire une retraite".⁹⁰

"L'Imprévu" expresses many of the main concerns of Les Fleurs du Mal. The first four stanzas introduce four figures, each one of whom is notable for his hypocrisy and is predestined as Satan's victim. The first two represent characters drawn from Molière's comedies: Harpagon (from L'Avare), the personification of avarice, and Célimène (from Le Misanthrope), the very incarnation of vanity. The second two personages seem to evoke Baudelaire's personal experience: one, a journalist, is the living embodiment of heartless harshness (who recalls perhaps the merciless short-sighted and narrow-minded critics with whom the poet had to cope); the other, whom Baudelaire claims to know "mieux que tous", is perhaps an evocation of his youth, governed by an overwhelming sense of ennui: in fact, the fourth stanza sums

up the whole "mal du siècle" of the nineteenth century; the spineless "voluptueux" suffers from an ennui which is devoid of the metaphysical implications accorded to it by Pascal and Baudelaire: significantly, this type of "ennuyé" is condemned to descend into Hell, for he has no awareness of the need of a quest, "en gémissant", for spiritual salvation:

Mieux que tous, je connais certain voluptueux
Qui bâille nuit et jour et se lamente et pleure,
Répétant, l'impuissant et le fat: 'Oui, je veux
Être vertueux, dans une heure!'

(13-15)

The fifth stanza acts as a transition to the second movement of the poem. Time ticks on inexorably towards man's damnation, but its message remains unheeded: this theme of "la fuite du temps" is central to Baudelaire's poetry, as it was to Pascal's writings; its close connection to ennui will be discussed later. His claim that "l'homme est aveugle, sourd, fragile" is reminiscent of Pascal's "L'homme n'est donc que déguisement, que mensonge et hypocrisie, et en soi-même et à l'égard des autres" (B100, L973).

The second movement, which lasts until the middle of the eleventh stanza, signals the arrival of Satan; it constitutes the first unforeseen event, which the title had anticipated. The powerful menace of Satan in the poem indicates that Baudelaire's thought is still, to a large extent, Gnostic, if not Manichean: Satan's laugh is "vainqueur". But here, Baudelaire is not celebrating the triumph of evil; rather,

Satan personifies the poet's pessimistic view of the world, for he is "Énorme, et laid comme le monde!" He has decided to take Man down into his palace. Stanza 11 marks the most significant progression of the poem:

'...Car il (le palais) est fait avec l'universel Pêché,
Et contient mon orgueil, ma douleur et ma gloire!
-Cependant, tout en haut de l'univers juché,
Un Ange sonne la victoire.
(41-44)

This description represents the vivid re-enactment of a Miltonic lost paradise being regained: precisely when Satan's supremacy is about to be proclaimed, an Angel hails the victory of God. Original Sin, which pervades the universe has been overcome. The penultimate stanza conveys a concept important to Baudelaire:

'Que béni soit ton fouet,
Seigneur! que la douleur, ô Père, soit bénie!...
(45-46)

Physical and moral suffering brings spiritual healing. Thus, the whole of Les Fleurs du Mal attains a coherence, because this theme is directly related to the first poem of "Spleen et Idéal", "Bénédiction", where the poet exclaims,

'Soyez béni, mon Dieu, qui donnez la souffrance
Comme un divin remède à nos impuretés...'
(57-58)

But, most significantly, this suffering, this "jour d'exercice", as Pascal calls it in his "Mémorial", is not fruitless:

... 'Mon âme dans tes mains n'est pas un vain jouet,
Et ta prudence est infinie'.
(47-48)

Pascal makes a similar use of this positive aspect of suffering in his "Prière pour le bon usage des maladies"; he addresses God in the following terms:

91 J'ai mal usé de ma santé, et vous m'en avez
justement puni: ne souffrez pas que j'use mal de
votre punition. Et puisque la corruption de ma
nature est telle qu'elle rend vos faveurs
pernicieuses, faites, ô mon Dieu! que votre grâce
toute-puissante me rende vos châtements
salutaires.

"L'Imprévu" ends with the sound of the triumphant and joyful trumpet. The final word, "louanges", addressed to God, offers a direct contrast to the words of the rebel in "Les Litanies de Satan": "Gloire et louange à toi, Satan..." (46). The earlier triumph of Spleen has been overcome by the "Idéal".

"L'Imprévu" forms one of the group of later poems which Baudelaire "n'a pas cru devoir faire place dans l'édition définitive des Fleurs du Mal",⁹² as the editor of "Les Épaves" states. Still, if the poem were to be included in Les Fleurs du Mal, its ordering would be fundamentally important, for, if it were considered as an epilogue to the anthology, the Christian solution would be undeniable. However, I tend to agree with Ruff's incorporation of this poem into the section, "Spleen et Idéal", for, rather than the final

testament of a conversion to Christianity, "L'Imprévu" is an expression of "Idéal" in contrast to "Spleen". Thus, although this Christian perspective forms an essential part of Les Fleurs du Mal, it should not be regarded as the ultimate meaning conveyed by the aesthetic whole. But it is perhaps best to follow the editorial ordering adopted by such eminent scholars as Créolet and Blin, Antoine Adam and Claude Pichois, who include "L'Imprévu" in the group of poems called "Les Epaves" at the end of their edition, as Baudelaire had apparently not intended them to belong to Les Fleurs du Mal. For the thematic coherence of Baudelaire's poetic output, the Ruffé edition is essential; for authenticity, it would seem preferable to follow Adam's ordering.

A natural progression for this study is to move from the spiritual aspects of Baudelaire's writings to an evaluation of the theme of ennui in Les Fleurs du mal, since ennui is of deep metaphysical significance to the poet, even more so than to Pascal in his Pensées. Indeed, Ennui attains a symbolic status (as registered by the use of a capital letter), and becomes, as we have mentioned, a theology. To continue with Benjamin Fondane's reasoning (to whom we owe that term, "théologie de l'ennui"),

⁹³Cette théologie...est à faire, elle n'existe pas encore, mais, déjà, elle se pose avec cette simple affirmation que l'ennui...est péché.

Indeed, ennui becomes fully integrated into Baudelaire's

moral conception of existence, beginning with his notion of Original Sin.

Five sections will henceforth be devoted to Baudelaire and the theme of ennui: firstly, the role of ennui in the introductory poem of Les Fleurs du Mal will be discussed; we shall then focus on the particular concepts of Spleen, "gouffre" and "divertissement". The chapter will conclude, in relation to Pascal's Christian solution, with an examination of the possible resolution of ennui as offered by Baudelaire in Les Fleurs du Mal, with particular reference to the final poem, "Le Voyage".

We have already reflected upon the history of and the way in which this state no longer merely conveys Baudelaire's personal feeling, but becomes rather a metaphysical symbol of existence. The novelist and essayist, Paul Bourget, writing less than twenty years after Baudelaire's death, linked the poet's conception of ennui, "le ver secret des existences comblées",⁹⁴ to his innate pessimism. As with Pascal, Baudelaire sees ennui as proof of man's incapacity for happiness: it cultivates his "goût du Néant", culminating in

⁹⁵l'amère et définitive malédiction jetée à l'existence par le vaincu qui sombre dans l'irréparable nihilisme.

however, although Bourget recognizes the spiritual element in Les Fleurs du Mal as well as the cosmic significance of

ennui, he overlooks the metaphysical function of ennui: it is this latter use, especially in relation to its positive role in Pascal's writings, which henceforth will be our central concern.

4 "AU LECTEUR"

This poem, which serves as a Prologue to the collection, is manifestly of unique importance, as it both sets the tone and introduces the themes and main preoccupations of Baudelaire's work. The fundamental role of Ennui in the poem anticipates its central significance to the whole of Les Fleurs du Mal.

The first lines signal an abundance of carefully chosen theological terms which appear in the Prologue. Baudelaire's soiritual orientation is evident from the outset:

La sottise, l'erreur, le péché, la lésine,
Occupent nos esprits et travaillent nos corps,
Et nous alimentons nos aimables remords,...
(1-3)

Thus, from the beginning, there prevails a strong awareness of Original Sin and of the corruption of humanity. Remorse and guilt constitute natural extensions of this wretched state. The voice in the first stanza is that of the moralist, commenting on the sins of man. But, as in the second stanza, the use of "nous" draws poet and reader alike into a shared responsibility and makes penitents of us all.

Jean Prévost observes that "Au Lecteur" "est une confession générale d'une époque et non d'un individu - elle n'en est pas moins personnelle".⁹⁶ Indeed, our collective guilt is one of "supine acquiescence",⁹⁷ as Martin Turnell puts it; in this way, our remorse and repentance become "aimables"(3) and "lâches"(5); we even embark "gaiement"(7) upon this path of moral evil and vice. It represents another form of the Pascalian man's attempt to escape from the ennui of his true nature. Our conception of reality becomes inverted, and we are lulled into a false sense of security by Satan, "Qui berce longuement, notre esprit enchanté"(10). Yet, unknowingly, we are drawn into Hell (stanza 4) and we breathe "la Mort dans nos poumons"(23), a movement which anticipates the last section of Les Fleurs du Mal: the final consciousness of journeying towards Hell and Death in "Au Lecteur" corresponds to the reader's progression through the different stages of the book towards "la Mort". Not only does this give the work a sense of structural coherence, but the placing of Ennui at the end of "Au Lecteur" illustrates its ultimate consequence.

Baudelaire's use of Satan, "ce savant chimiste"(12), provides a vital factor in the moral framework of the poem, as it implies that man's self-deception emanates from evil and not from good: it follows that self-knowledge will lead to some form of positive Divinity. By naming Ennui as the most deadly vice which remains hidden from us ("il ne pousse

ni grands gestes ni grands cris"-34), Baudelaire implies perhaps, as did Pascal in his treatment of ennui, that an understanding of it will lead to self-knowledge and therefore to some form of spiritual fulfilment.

The catalogue of seven kinds of monstrous animals in the eighth stanza could well be a symbolic representation of the Seven Deadly Sins, in the baroque mode: after this terrifying evocation of Evil, Ennui assumes an aspect which becomes even more sinister. Elsewhere, Baudelaire associates wild beasts with his conception of Original Sin: for example, the poet, commenting on a book entitled L'Esprit des Bêtes, to its author, Alphonse Toussenel, declares,

⁹⁸ Votre livre réveille en moi bien des idées dormantes, - et, à propos de péché originel, et de forme moulée sur l'idée, j'ai pensé bien souvent que les bêtes malfaisantes et dégoûtantes n'étaient peut-être que la vivification, corporification, éclosion à la vie matérielle, des mauvaises pensées de l'homme. - Aussi la nature entière participe du péché originel.

Evidently, the repulsive animals of "Au Lecteur" evoke for Baudelaire a vivid representation of Original Sin, all the more so as the poem was published only a few months before he sent his letter of appreciation to Toussenel. As R-B Chérix notes, through the prominence of the theme of sin, or moral evil, in "Au Lecteur", "le livre est donc, dans l'esprit de l'auteur, une prise de conscience du péché qui mène à la perdition".⁹⁹ Chérix further points out an aspect of Baudelaire's style and tone, which recalls the strict Jansenism of Pascal:

¹⁰⁰Le pessimisme du moraliste s'apparente de fait à celui des auteurs mystiques, et la rigueur de sa pensée est conforme à leur ascèse.

Thus we move to the substantial last two stanzas, where the entire content of Les Fleurs du Mal comes under the sign of Ennui and where both poet and reader become equal in the rigorous voyage of existence which is charted through the different sections of the collection:

Il en est un plus laid, plus méchant, plus immonde!
Quoiqu'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! - l'oeil chargé d'un pleur involontaire,
Il rêve d'échafauds en fumant son houka.
Tu le connais, lecteur, ce monstre délicat,
- Hypocrite lecteur, - mon semblable, - mon frère!
(33-40)

In her succinct and otherwise accurate survey of Les Fleurs du Mal, Alison Fairlie possibly over-simplifies the role of Ennui in this poem, by explaining that it "is too close to the bric-à-brac appurtenances of romantic fashion".¹⁰¹ On the contrary, Baudelaire's use of Ennui here heralds his eminence as a symbolist poet as well as his modernity: despite some traditional romantic imagery, his use of these images makes Ennui an original and essential concept in his poetry. It is both all-encompassing and a symbol of nothingness. As Fondane asserts,

¹⁰²poète de la modernité! Personne n'a mieux que Baudelaire exprimé l'angoisse de l'acosmisme, car l'ennui est angoisse et comme l'acosmisme est néant, l'ennui est angoisse du néant.

The final stanza of "Au Lecteur" is particularly revealing: the "pleur involontaire" demonstrates that Ennui stands for an irrevocable symbol of modern civilisation; in dreaming of scaffolds, Ennui foresees the inevitability of premature death, which culminates in the final section of Les Fleurs du Mal; the smoking of a "houka" by Ennui suggests a foretaste of the desecrate forms of "divertissement" which the poet will evoke later in the collection. But probably the most disturbing and arresting image of Ennui derives from "ce monstre délicat". It creates an effective contrast to the howling beasts of the eighth stanza: here another monster is found, isolated, far deadlier and far more powerful, but, paradoxically, "délicat", fastidious; quietly and unobtrusively, it penetrates the inner being of humanity. Thus, we reach the conclusion, with Fondane, that ennui is sin, a new form of moral evil. Separate from the Seven Deadly Sins,

¹⁰³Il n'est plus un 'état d'âme' mais un état de péché, le crime par excellence et qui ne figure pas parmi les péchés théologiques.

At the end, Baudelaire casts an equal responsibility upon himself and the reader, having introduced two closely inter-related themes which will dominate Les Fleurs du Mal: Ennui and "le péché originel".

Clearly, ennui is no peripheral concern for Baudelaire. During his life, he used this term from his youth until his

last years: his letters, especially those to his mother, overflow with expressions such as "ennui horrible", "ennui mortel", "ennui de vivre", "dégout de tout", "horrible sensation d'un isolement absolu" and "soleen", a term which will form a major component of Baudelairian ennui. Already at the age of eighteen, he confides to his mother that "il ne reste rien, rien qu'indolence, maussaderie, ennui".¹⁰⁴ And again, on the 30th December 1857, the year when Les Fleurs du Mal first appeared:

¹⁰⁵Ce que je sens, c'est un immense découragement, une sensation d'isolement insupportable, une peur perpétuelle d'un malheur vague, une défiance complète de mes forces, une absence totale de désirs, une impossibilité de trouver un amusement quelconque.

Towards the end of his life, much of his ennui was associated with a sense of disgust at the greedy materialism of the petty bourgeoisie of his age. As he left France for Belgium in 1864, in order partly to escape from his many debts, it is hardly surprising that he should write, "Je m'ennuie en France, surtout parce que tout le monde y ressemble à Voltaire".¹⁰⁶

5 SPLEEN

In Les Fleurs du Mal, the Prologue leads into the principal and by far the largest section, which is constructed around the tension existing between "Spleen" and "Idéal", between the harsh reality of our condition and the loftiness of our aspirations. It follows, from the prevalence of ennui in "Au Lecteur", that Spleen and Ennui are intimately interconnected, if not identical. But, why does Baudelaire then not entitle this movement, "Ennui et Idéal"? Evidently, Baudelaire intended to convey a difference of meaning.

Maurice Chapelain, in comparing Baudelaire and Pascal, argues that Baudelaire's choice of the word "spleen" is to "mettre l'accent sur un caractère moderne";¹⁰⁷ but, despite that, he reasons,

¹⁰⁸L'ennui de Baudelaire est bien le même que celui de Pascal: l'état morbide de l'âme, seule en présence d'elle-même.

It is true that the word, "spleen", taken from the English, only made its first appearance in the French language around 1745; it was used more frequently amongst writers of the romantic era, with the meaning of deep-rooted melancholy. Undoubtedly, the English origins of the word and its specialised sense appealed to Baudelaire's intellectual elitism. But, rather than choosing the term for its

modernity, Baudelaire applied an original, and consequently modern, connotation to it, as he did to the term "ennui": it is not a personal emotion, but the symbol of a civilisation desperately striving for some spiritual comfort.

Robert Vivier has offered an astute interpretation of the meaning of Spleen:

109 plus amer que la tristesse, plus morne que le désespoir, il est plus aigu que l'ennui dont il offre pour ainsi dire la correspondance positive.

Crépet and Blin develop this elucidation of Spleen as a more positive aspect of Ennui:

110 On a pu opposer le spleen à l'ennui comme le positif au négatif ou encore comme un mal peu durable et bénin à un mal chronique et inquiétable. Le spleen est plus brumeux, l'ennui plus noir. Mais l'étymologie nous avertit plus profondément qu'ennui comporte haine et que spleen est maladie.

Thus, while ennui can be seen as a moral affliction, spleen becomes often the physical expression of that state.

Indeed, ennui by itself is too great a condition of nothingness and spiritual anguish to be contrasted with any other state: Spleen fulfils the role of opposing the "Idéal". It is in many ways an extension, even a sensation, of ennui; as Vivier elaborates,

111 Dénué à la fois de résignation et d'espoirance, le spleen est une sorte de violence immobile.

In the section, "Soleen et Idéal", we shall concern ourselves mainly with those poems dominated by Soleen, which Albert Feuillerat has grouped under the arresting title of "Les Méditations de Baudelaire sous l'Influence de l'Ennui".¹¹² This division comprises the poems from "Tristesses de la Lune" (75) to "L'Horloge" (102), if we adopt the numbering suggested in the 1968 edition of Baudelaire by Marcel Ruff.¹¹³

However, the theme of Soleen is not confined solely to these poems; it also provides a vital tension in the "architecture" of the earlier poems devoted to Art (1-21), and to the different forms of Love (22-74); in these two sections, Baudelaire strives to overcome Spleen. Indeed, seldom does he present one-sided pieces: like Pascal, his art constantly thrives on contrasts and dualities. As he asks in his commentary on La Double Vie by Asselinau,

¹¹⁴Qui parmi nous n'est pas un 'homo duplex'? Je veux parler de ceux dont l'esprit a été dès l'enfance 'touched with pensiveness'; toujours double, action et intention, rêve et réalité; toujours l'un nuisant à l'autre, l'un usurpant la part de l'autre.

Thus, even in the latter part of "Soleen et Idéal", where Baudelaire describes the victory of Soleen, we find evocations of the Ideal.

The Cycle of Art

"Bénédiction" forms an effective introduction to the polarisation of Spleen and "Idéal". Its first two lines mark a transition from the Ennui of "Au Lecteur" to this new movement:

Lorsque, par un décret des puissances suprêmes,
Le Poète apparaît dans ce monde ennuyé...
(1-2).

This very contrast of the Poet and Ennui implies the role he is to play in the unfolding of the drama: he is destined to be persecuted, but is ordained to attempt to eliminate Spleen in his search for the Ideal. The religious imagery strikes one as vivid; indeed, words such as "les desseins éternels"(13), "chemin de la croix"(25) and "pèlerinage"(27) anticipate the spiritual journeying of the Poet through the course of Les Fleurs du Mal. He considers his work as a divine vocation. As Martin Turnell points out, Baudelaire

115 describes two contrasted orders - the human order where the poet is persecuted and the divine order where he hopes to be rewarded - and these in turn correspond to "spleen" and "Idéal", the "horror" and "ecstasy" of life.

A consequence of the poet's vocation is suffering, because of his extreme sensitivity; it becomes part of his fate, and is essential for his salvation, which resembles the role of ennui in Pascal's dialectical reasoning:

- 'Soyez béni, mon Dieu, qui donnez la souffrance
Comme un divin remède à nos impuretés...'
(57-58)

His role as an artist expresses an aspiration towards the Ideal, far removed from the ennui of the common world:

Je sais que vous gardez une place au Poète
Dans les rangs bienheureux des saintes Légions,
Et que vous l'invitez à l'éternelle fête
Des Trônes, des Vertus, des Dominations.
(51-64)

Manifestly, Baudelaire, in searching for his Ideal, is seeking a higher spiritual Being, although his almost arrogant self-confidence here is completely at variance with the humility which we find later in Mon Coeur Mis à Nu.

In this way, the poem, having begun with the torment of Ennui, ends with an evocation of the eternal "Idéal". The brilliant light of the Ideal is contrasted with the stygian gloom of mortality. Speaking of "ce beau diadème", the poet rejoices,

'...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!'
(73-76)

This light and dark imagery is used frequently by Baudelaire, to heighten the contrast between the Ideal and Spleen, as we shall discover in the other poems. Pascal also employed this technique: the following meditation closely associates the image of darkness with the wretchedness and ennui of man's condition:

L'homme ne sait à quel rang se mettre. Il est visiblement égaré et tombé de son vrai lieu sans le pouvoir retrouver. Il le cherche partout avec inquiétude et sans succès dans des ténèbres impénétrables. (B427, L400)

This consciousness of man's restlessness presents another fundamental aspect of both the Pensées and Les Fleurs du Mal.

In the following poem, "L'Albatros", which is an early composition, the poet is compared to a sea-bird which has been brought down and captured by sailors on the deck of a ship, "le navire glissant sur les gouffres amers"(4). This once soaring bird, now an exile, clumsy and powerless, is mocked by the sailors, who represent common men of the world. Spleen prevails: "les gouffres amers" call to mind the "gouffre" of Pascal. Like the albatross, the poet possesses the potential to become part of the Ideal; he is compared to "rois de l'azur"(6) and "prince des nuées"(13), but, instead, is trapped among hostile people who do not understand his vocation. Ironically, the sailors in the poem choose to make fun of the bird, "pour s'amuser"(1); for they seem to delight in the very "divertissements" which, according to Pascal, prevent man from recognizing his true condition: that the poet, or artist, in Baudelaire's view, should be the object of man's ridicule, accentuates the contrast between the poet's Ideal and the overwhelming Spleen of the world.

The third poem, "Élévation", reveals the other pole of that Ideal: the poet soars towards a strong awareness of

spiritual purification. Although the realities of Spleen are present in a phrase such as "ces miasmes morbides"(9), he strives to leave them behind him. The playing off of light against darkness appears here again; furthermore, the contrast between the shadows of ennui and the pure light of spiritual fulfilment would seem to correspond to the movement from ennui to salvation in Pascal's dialectic:

Derrière les ennuis et les vastes chagrins
Qui chargent de leur poids l'existence brumeuse,
Heureux celui qui peut d'une aile vigoureuse
S'élançer vers les champs lumineux et sereins;
(13-16).

However, this aspect constitutes only a general parallel; it is important not to read too religious a meaning into the poem, especially at this early stage in the volume, for "les cieux"(18) are more symbolic of the Ideal than of spiritual enlightenment.

The next poem, "Correspondances", represents another evocation of the Ideal. Indeed, Spleen appears to be temporarily vanquished by a "profonde unité", despite the presence of scents which are "corrompus, riches et triomphants"(11). Still, in 1855, in his commentary on the Exposition Universelle, Baudelaire uses remarkably similar terms to describe a sense of ennui:

¹¹⁶tous les types, toutes les idées, toutes les sensations se confondraient dans une vaste unité, monotone et impersonnelle, immense comme l'ennui et le néant.

However, in this text, Baudelaire intends to condemn interpretations which attempt to encompass the whole universe, a very different concept from that expressed in the poem. Hélène Cassou-Yager gives a subtle interpretation of "Correspondances", which she assimilates to the concept of "esprit de finesse" in Pascal's writings. One particular Pascalian thought underlines a view which is similar to that of Baudelaire: "Toutes choses couvrent quelque mystère; toutes choses sont des voiles qui couvrent Dieu", as he wrote in a letter to Mlle de Roannez.¹¹⁷ Hélène Cassou-Yager elaborates:

¹¹⁸Ce même 'esprit de finesse' qui est à l'origine de la vision mystique de Pascal, est également à la base des 'correspondances' baudelairiennes. Grâce à sa merveilleuse intuition de 'l'analogie universelle', le poète des Fleurs du Mal établira des milliers de rapports et d'équivalences entre toutes choses et percevra la poésie des grands ensembles.

In this way, it is again clear that Baudelaire's preoccupations are essentially spiritual; but "Correspondances" must not be taken as a mystical doctrine; it expresses rather the delight which the poet takes in the relationships between visible forms and man's infinite aspirations, between the senses and the mystery of the world.

"La Voix", which Ruff includes next in his edition, is thematically appropriate to the idea of polarisation between the potential heights which the poet can reach, and grim reality. Again, two distinct orders are found - the human and

the divine: in fact, the poem is constructed on the juxtaposition of opposites, a favourite technique of Pascal. The image of darkness offers us another evocation of the ennui of existence and of "le gouffre":

Derrière les décors
De l'existence immense, au plus noir de l'abîme,
Je vois distinctivement des mondes singuliers.
(16-18)

The "deux voix" of which Baudelaire speaks emphasize the duality of his gnostic vision, as in the well-known passage of his intimate diary, Mon Coeur Mis à Nu, where he detects in man "deux postulations simultanées, l'une vers Dieu, l'autre vers Satan".¹¹⁹

"J'aime le souvenir..." represents a reversal of "Bénédiction", where the opening domination of Soleen is overcome by the Ideal. The Poet is now overwhelmed by a sense of ennui; he

Sent un froid ténébreux envelopper son âme
Devant ce noir tableau plein d'épouvantement.
(18-19)

The first fourteen lines recall the innocent state of man before Original Sin; indeed, the imagery of the nakedness of man and woman and of "fruits ours"(13) provides an obvious reference to Adam and Eve. Nevertheless, the paganism of this poem (which contains mythological figures such as Phoebus and Cybèle) is as strong as its Christian aspect. Indeed,

"J'aime le souvenir..." appears to support the view which Baudelaire expresses in Mon Coeur Mis à Nu that "le paganisme et le christianisme se prouvent réciproquement"¹²⁰ But, for our concerns, the acute awareness of Original Sin is important, with the initial innocence of the garden of Eden, followed by the ennui of man's condition.

The following poem, "Les Phares", consecrates one of the perfect expressions of Baudelaire's poetic art. His personal choice of painters and sculptors brings out a dramatic sense of progression from ecstasy to agony, from the temporary triumph of the "Idéal" to the definitive victory of Spleen. Of the eight artists whom he has selected and arranged in a special order which is not chronological, the final two, Goya, "cauchemar plein de choses inconnues"(25), and Delacroix incarnate ennui. Indeed, ennui forms the centre of the inspiration of the paintings of Delacroix in particular, or more precisely, of Baudelaire's vision and interpretation of his art:

Delacroix, lac de sang hanté des mauvais anges,
Ombragé par un bois de sapins toujours vert,
Où sous un ciel chagrin, des fanfares étranges
Passent, comme un soupir étouffé de Weber;
(29-32)

Delacroix himself, in a letter written to Mme Forget on the 25th August 1854, wrote of the "atteintes de ce terrible ennemi", adding that "avec une certaine tournure d'esprit, il faudrait une énergie inconcevable pour ne pas s'ennuyer".¹²¹

The last three stanzas mark a return towards the Ideal. The poet sees Art as a yearning towards God and towards the Eternal. However, the line, "C'est pour les cœurs mortels un divin opium"(36), seems to hint that even this aspiration of Art could be merely an elevated form of "divertissement", a suggestion which he will develop later in Les Fleurs du Mal. Yet, again, only through suffering can the poet find purification. Furthermore, his is a specific sacred function, as Feuillerat points out in a commentary on "Les Phares":

122 le poète est d'origine céleste, c'est un des hommes, tout au moins, qui ont conservé quelque chose de la pureté d'avant la faute; c'est pourquoi il a le pouvoir de pénétrer le mystère de l'existence dans lequel il trouve la matière de sa poésie. Mais ce monde est hostile et peu fait pour le comprendre, car il est lui-même vicié par le péché originel et envahi par la laideur. La souffrance est donc le lot de tout artiste, mais elle est aussi une récompense et un signe de rédemption.

To develop Feuillerat's thought, this "souffrance" contains a strong consciousness of ennui. As with Pascal, ennui reveals both a sign of man's wretchedness and of his potential redemption. Baudelaire conveys the greatness of man, achieved through Art, in the closing stanza of the poem:

Car c'est vraiment, Seigneur, le meilleur témoignage
Que nous puissions donner de notre dignité
Que cet ardent sanglot qui roule d'âge en âge
Et vient mourir au bord de votre éternité!

In this conclusion, Baudelaire's vision of humanity parallels Pascal's recognition of the power of creative thought:

significantly, both writers use the term "dignité". As Pascal affirms, "Toute notre dignité consiste donc en la pensée" (B347, L200). This aspect is important, because both thinker and poet, as moralists, are not entirely pessimistic about man's natural condition: despite the fundamental ennui which characterises his being, his greatness lies in being able to think and in being able to possess and communicate a spiritual conception of Art.

The next five poems, all sonnets, conform closely to the theme of ennui: indeed, they all evoke the obstacles, created by Spleen, which prevent the attainment of any Ideal. R-B Chérix has listed these hindrances:

¹²³C'est, successivement, la maladie ("La Muse Malade"), l'indigence ("La Muse Vénale"), le sentiment du vide intérieur et le dégoût du travail ("Le Moine Fainéant"), les troubles d'un coeur qui a contracté dès son extrême jeunesse un incurable ennui ("L'Ennemi"), les adversités de la vie enfin, qui se conjurent avec une meurtrissante fatalité contre l'artiste ("Le Guignon").

"La Muse Malade" depicts the opposition between an ancient time of purity and the modern age of "la folie et l'horreur"(4); as we claimed, the physical illness of the Muse is more suited to Spleen than the moral malady of ennui. The combination of Christianity ("ton sang chrétien"-11) and paganism ("Phoebus, et le grand Pan"-14) again appears to indicate the dual vision of Baudelaire's Gnosticism.

It seems that "La Muse Vénale" recalls much of the fascination shown by Baudelaire for Pascal's asceticism: we

remember the passage where Baudelaire speaks of Pascal, "enflammé par l'ascétisme" and then resolved to live rigorously.¹²⁴ while Pascal chooses austerity and solitude in order to recognize his natural ennui, Baudelaire pictures his Muse seeking comfort from "les noirs ennuis des neigeuses soirées"(3) in the warmth of "un tison"(4). However, both writers see ennui as basic to the human condition. Significantly, the poet's Muse, in order to have her daily bread,

sings a "Te Deum" in which she hardly believes (9-11), for this lack of faith implies a need which has not been gratified: there is a sense of yearning on the part of the poet, not for God in particular, but for spiritual fulfilment. The final impression which the poem leaves is one of a feeble attempt to disguise the spleen of existence, a disguise which, in reality, only serves to accentuate that very ennui:

Et ton rire tremoté de pleurs qu'on ne voit pas,
Pour faire épanouir la rate du vulgaire.
(13-14)

The state expressed in "Le Mauvais Moine" is obviously related to

¹²⁵L'acedia', maladie des moines.
Le 'Taedium vitae',

as Baudelaire describes it in Fusées. In this poem, he compares himself to a monk who lacks conviction or true

belief. Its most remarkable aspect comes from the number of vital themes in Les Fleurs du Mal which it anticipates. Not only does the poem underline the wretchedness of an existence dominated by ennui, but its Christian setting expands our conception of ennui, for here it is seen as an overwhelming sense of spiritual nothingness, similar to Pascal's vision of ennui in a godless world. Furthermore, it introduces the theme of Death, which will become a major concept in the final phases of the book.

Chérix writes of three motifs which dominate the next poem, "L'Ennemi": "les souvenirs d'une enfance et d'une adolescence tourmentées, le besoin d'idéal religieux, et le sentiment d'un incurable ennui".¹²⁶ The third aspect will concern us. In "Au Lecteur", Baudelaire shows Ennui to be our principal enemy; Baudelaire alludes perhaps to the same adversary in the title of this poem. But more probably, the true enemy combines "la fuite du temps" and ennui, as both ideas are closely associated in Baudelaire's poetry, as they are in Pascal's writings:

- O douleur! ô douleur! le Temps mange la vie,
Et l'obscur Ennemi qui nous ronge le cœur
Du sang que nous perdons croît et se fortifie!
(12-14)

In "Le Guignon", the nature of time is intensified by the image of Sisyphus courageously but vainly continuing his work forever; this futile struggle also conveys dramatically the

absurdity of existence, first recognized by Pascal and later captured perfectly by Camus in his famous Mythe de Sisyphe (1942). The poet comes to a conclusion which is both terrifying and comforting: "l'Art est long et le Temps est court"(4); he fears that the time needed to bring a work of art to completion and perfection will be lacking; the satisfying part comes from the realization that Art outlives the passing of time. This implication could provide a clue to the possible solution which Baudelaire offers to the artist to vanquish the devastating effects of ennui and time, a point which will be elaborated upon.

The following two sonnets, "La Vie Antérieure" and "Bohémiens en Voyage", appear to evoke an Ideal of the past. However, both their "dénouements" betray a deep consciousness of ennui: in the first piece, the poet concludes that, despite this ideal beauty, he is still aware of "le secret douloureux qui me faisait languir"(14); in the second poem, he anticipates an impending world of Spleen, "l'empire familier des ténèbres futures"(14).

The images of fluidity in "L'Homme et la Mer", as in many other poems of the volume, correspond closely to the imagery of flux and change which constitutes a striking aspect of the originality of the Pensées. Both Pascal and Baudelaire present their readers with the perpetual restlessness and inconstancy of man. But for Baudelaire, the sea assumes an added significance, for it symbolizes a voyage both into the external unknown and into the inner depths of the human soul:

Vous êtes tous les deux ténébreux et discrets:
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!
(9-12)

These lines look forward to the celebrated declaration in "Le Voyage", at the close of the final poem of Les Fleurs du Mal:

Nous nous embarquerons sur la mer des Ténèbres
Avec le coeur joyeux d'un jeune passager.
(125-126)

Yet, in "L'Homme et la Mer", we find no sense of joy: although the theme of death announces "Le Voyage", here we encounter a death dominated by Spleen. The poet intentionally uses the word "gouffre" to convey this ennui: "Et ton esprit n'est pas un gouffre moins amer"(4).

As we saw earlier, the following two poems depict the dangers of "orgueil", a theme which played a capital role in Pascal's projected Apology. Indeed, Baudelaire looks upon the sin of pride as rooted in man's condition after the Fall: in "Châtiment de l'Orgueil", the language becomes deliberately theological, and in both poems Spleen rules. The protagonist of the latter piece, in displaying pride, loses his reason and, perhaps recalling Pascal's "le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis" (B206,L201), Baudelaire writes, "le silence et la nuit s'installèrent en lui"(20).

In the next five poems, Baudelaire constructs his Ideal of Beauty. However, only the last two of these, "Le Masque"

and "Hymne à la Beauté" (of the five just mentioned these were the only two not to appear in the first edition of Les Fleurs du Mal), reveal an inner polarity between "Idéal" and "Spleen".

The title of "Le Masque" already suggests a form of duality: beneath the ideal Beauty of the mask, there lurks the sombre reality of Spleen. Despite the idealized beginning, Spleen gains control and, like "l'obscur Ennemi qui nous ronge le coeur",¹²⁷ a "mal mystérieux ronge"(31) the perfection of this Beauty. Undoubtedly, this strange evil is the Ennui of "Au Lecteur":

- Mais pourquoi pleure-t-elle? Elle, beauté parfaite
Qui mettrait à ses pieds le genre humain, vaincu,
Quel mal mystérieux ronge son flanc d'athlète?

- 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!
(29-36)

This poem reveals the absolute sincerity of the poet: he is able to penetrate the mask of appearances in order to recognize the stark reality of the human condition. In this aspect, he closely relates to Pascal: the mask symbolizes everything which disguises man's true nature, in the same manner as Pascal's "puissances trompeuses". As the seventeenth-century moralist stated,

nous haïssons la vérité, on nous la cache; nous
voulons être flattés, on nous flatte; nous aimons
à être trompés, on nous trompe.(Bl00,L978)

The change of mood in "Le Masque" is both sudden and terrifying, for, as Martin Turnell claims,

128 The poem opened in a mood of complacent dilettantism, but by a series of shocks the spectators are brought back to living problems, to their own predicament.

"Hymne à la Beauté" is marked from the beginning by a conflict within the Ideal of Beauty, for her "regard" is both "infernal et divin"(2). Francis S. Heck goes further, even suggesting that this poem "betrays the poet's negative attitude toward beauty; its role is to minimize the horror and the ennui of life".¹²⁹ The poet wonders whether this Beauty comes from the material abyss of Spleen or the spiritual heights of the Ideal: "Sors-tu du gouffre noir ou descends-tu des astres?"(9). However, after these questions, he realizes that "De Satan ou de Dieu, qu'importe?"(25). The origins of this Beauty are irrelevant to the poet: the essential aspect becomes the Infinite which Beauty opens up for him:

Que tu viennes du ciel ou de l'enfer, qu'importe,
O Beauté! monstre énorme, effrayant, ingénu!
Si ton oeil, ton souris, ton pied, m'ouvrent la porte
D'un Infini que j'aime et n'ai jamais connu?
(21-24)

The sharp contrast between "ciel" and "enfer" forms a vital part of Les Fleurs du Mal: the sentiments of this poem foreshadow in particular the poet's final invocation in "Le Voyage":

Enfer ou Ciel, qu'importe?
Au fond de l'Inconnu pour trouver du nouveau!
(143-144)

The "Infini" of "Hymne à la Beauté" develops into "l'Inconnu" in the final poem of Les Fleurs du Mal, a suggestive development to which we shall return.

Like Baudelaire, Pascal made significant antithetical use of "Ciel" and "Enfer", and he did so by introducing those words in a meditation devoted to the brevity of life, which constitutes a fundamental theme common to both Baudelairian and Pascalian ennui:

Entre nous, et l'enfer ou le ciel, il n'y a que
la vie entre deux, qui est la chose du monde la
plus fragile. (B213, L152)

The Cycle of Love

Having established his conception of Art and Beauty, the poet now turns towards a specific and more personal subject, that of love, through which he hopes to escape from Spleen and to attain some form of "Idéal"; but, as Turnell explains,

¹³⁰it offers no more than a temporary escape and becomes the source of new disasters which finally leave him more hopelessly than before the victim of ennui.

Let us consider those poems where ennui and Spleen play a defined role.

The cycle of poems inspired by sensual love for Jeanne Duval contains many ambiguities in the nature of the poet's feelings: nowhere else does the import of the title, Les Fleurs du Mal, become so clear. Evil and sin are hardly distinguishable from beauty and ecstasy. Our earlier proposition, taken from Fondane, that ennui is "sin" implies that ennui is never absent from the nature of this love, although it may not be an obsessive force on the surface of the poems.

The poem, number 27 in the Ruff edition, reveals a striking extension of the theme of ennui:

Tu mettrais l'univers entier dans ta ruelle,
Femme impure! L'ennui rend ton âme cruelle.
(1-2)

Not only is the poet haunted by a sense of ennui, from which he strives to escape, but he is also affected by the ennui which blights his beloved's existence: her sense of spiritual void adds a cruelty to being which he is powerless to control. Thus, for Baudelaire, the ennui experienced by others can be as overwhelming to him as his own perception of despair. It is likely that he perceives a state of ennui in others which they themselves do not recognize or do not attempt to recognize (like Pascal's "libertins"), and this increases his consciousness of Hell. Indeed, through the bondage of sensual passion, Baudelaire could well declare, like Sartre's character in Huis Clos, that "l'enfer, c'est les Autres".¹³¹

In the following sonnet, "Sed non Satiata", the poet's "ennuis" become intoxicated with the pleasures of physical love, which prove more satisfying than wine and drugs, "divertissements" which we shall meet later:

Je préfère au constance, à l'opium, au nuits,
L'élixir de ta bouche où l'amour se pavane;
Quand vers toi mes désirs partent en caravane,
Tes yeux sont la citerne où boivent mes ennuis.
(5-8)

However, an ambiguity arises here in the image of ennui, because such sensual love may quench (and thus satiate) his ennui, or it may, in feeding it, strengthen it and create the need for more satisfaction, like man's constant need for diversion.

"De Profundis Clamavi" conveys a powerful expression of ennui: indeed, the sonnet was originally called "Spleen", a title which reveals its central preoccupations. Although it was included in the cycle of poems inspired by Jeanne Duval, its essential subject concerns the ennui stemming from the universe:

J'implore ta pitié, Toi, l'unique que j'aime,
Du fond du gouffre obscur où mon cœur est tombé.
C'est un univers morne à l'horizon plombé,
Où nagent dans la nuit l'horreur et le blasphème;
(1-4)

Paradoxically, while ennui and "la fuite du temps" are synonymous, ennui is also related to the slowness of time: as Adam exclaims, "le 'spleen' baudelairien c'est précisément

cet enlèvement dans le temps, c'est l'écoulement monotone et lent de la vie".132

Thus, ennui and Spleen engulf all aspects of time: the present sensation of ennui decelerates the hours and makes life seem interminable; the overall brevity of life causes man to recognize the "néant" of his existence and so plunges him into a deeper state of ennui. But, above all, it is the poet's sensitivity which heightens this sense of "angoisse"; as in "Le Gouffre", where he "Jalouse du néant l'insensibilité"(13), here he longs for the mindlessness of animals so that he can forget his state of Spleen:

Je jalouse le sort des plus vils animaux
Qui peuvent se plonger dans un sommeil stupide,
Tant l'écheveau du temps lentement se dévide!
(12-14)

Baudelaire expresses the same desire for total oblivion in "Le Léthé": he would prefer to "dormir plutôt que vivre"(9) and finds that he can escape from the desolate reality of his condition through the sensuality of his lover:

L'oubli puissant habite sur ta bouche,
Et le Léthé coule dans tes baisers.
(15-16)

The image of the river in Hades, the underworld, bringing forgetfulness, is most effective, for it not only prolongs the impression of fluidity and restlessness which runs through Les Fleurs du Mal, but it also deepens that very ennui from which the poet is escaping: his love, like the

river, may deliver him temporarily, but it is a river of deceit that will eventually reveal its true nature, which is infernal.

In a sonnet like "Duellum", there appears no such forgetfulness. Spleen reigns openly and overpoweringly: "-Ce gouffre, c'est l'enfer, de nos amis peuplé!"(12). The terror of ennui becomes even more intense when he realizes that his image of Hell is filled with his own kind. Furthermore, we discover that, as Fondane puts it, "La cruauté est la fille de l'Ennui".¹³³ We shall come to this inner violence and cruelty in the later Spleen-dominated poems, which symbolize nothing less than "l'apocalypse de l'Ennui".¹³⁴

Another sonnet, "Le Possédé", appears to express the demonic delight which the poet takes in his love; in a moment of temporary frenzy, he exults in this very apocalypse of Ennui:

Dors ou fume à ton gré; sois muette, sois sombre,
Et plonge tout entière au gouffre de l'Ennui;

Je t'aime ainsi!
(3-5)

Yet, this mood does not persist for long, as we discover in "les caveaux d'insondable tristesse"(1) of the following poem, "Un Fantôme". The whole piece is marked by the gravity of Spleen and of the passing of time. The next poem closes the cycle devoted to Jeanne, in which is found "un dernier aveu où la colère, l'orgueil et le regret se mélangent

curieusement".¹³⁵ we are left with a mingled awareness of ennui and the Ideal.

The cycle of spiritual love-poems, inspired by Mme Sabatier, commences with the poet's feeling of disillusionment about love, in "Semoer Eadem"; he begs his new love to allow his "coeur s'enivrer d'un mensonge"(12), the lie which he now believes love to be. Yet, the sorrow expressed by the poet in the first two quatrains of this sonnet is by no means the conventional "douleur" of a disillusioned lover: rather, it conveys a much wider sense of ennui. Certainly, his sadness here recalls the ennui of existence evoked at the end of "Le Masque":

'D'où vous vient, disiez-vous, cette tristesse étrange,
Montant comme la mer sur le roc noir et nu?'
- Quand notre coeur a fait une fois sa vendange,
Vivre est un mal. C'est un secret de tous connu,

Une douleur très-simple et non mystérieuse,
Et, comme votre joie, éclatante pour tous.
Cessez donc de chercher, ô belle curieuse!
Et, bien que votre voix soit doux, taisez-vous!
(1-8)

However, the spirituality of his love for Mme Sabatier lifts him out of this "sentiment du néant". Most of the poems in this cycle aspire towards the Ideal. Yet, certain poems do reflect spleen, one of which is "A Celle qui est trop gaie", the only one from the cycle to be censored and banned, after the publication of the 1857 edition.

Notably, whenever the poet's desires move from the spiritual to the sensual, as in "A Celle qui est trop gaie",

a profound awareness of Spleen and guilt reappears. Also, his recognition of ennui ("atonie" in this poem) generates a feeling of rebelliousness, which perhaps reveals another way of escaping from his condition. After a conventionally detached beginning, the reader is pierced by the sudden declaration, "Je te hais autant que je t'aime!"(16), followed by an evocation of his ennui:

Quelquefois dans un beau jardin
Où je trainais mon atonie,
J'ai senti, comme une ironie,
Le soleil déchirer mon sein;
(17-20)

Nevertheless, immediately after this outburst, Baudelaire returns to the spirituality of his love, in "Réversibilité", not without a sense of remorse and guilt, because the woman whom he loves seems to be completely detached from all forms of suffering, and, in particular, from ennui: as he asks in the first stanza,

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?
(1-5)

Significantly, "ennuis" rhymes with "nuits", and thus reinforces the feeling of shadowy anguish which the poet has experienced. Yet, in contrast, his beloved effects a spiritual catharsis on him, for the poem ends with the word

"lumières", in opposition to the image of darkness which occurs in the first verse. Through her, the poet has orientated himself towards the Ideal.

Like the light of a new day, "l'Aube Spirituelle" symbolizes the Ideal of a new beginning: as Chérix asserts, "C'est le chant du réveil, c'est le message de l'aube et l'annonce de l'idéal".¹³⁶ Despite his innate pessimism, Baudelaire demonstrates a positive attitude towards human nature: "Dans la brute assoupie un ange se réveille"(4), a strong reminiscence of Pascal who, despite his essentially pessimistic view of human nature, can still affirm that

Malgré la vue de toutes nos misères, qui nous touchent, qui nous tiennent à la gorge, nous avons un instinct que nous ne pouvons réprimer, qui nous élève. (B411, L633)

Nevertheless, the duality of "Spleen et Idéal" remains ever-present in "L'Aube Spirituelle". Man, who is "terrassé"(5) while he dreams and suffers for his Ideal, still "s'ouvre et s'enfonce avec l'attirance du gouffre"(7). As Chérix elaborates,

¹³⁷le dualisme humain essentiel, le conflit de l'ange et de la bête, revêt dans ces vers pascaliens une de ses suprêmes expressions. Le poète atteint, comme par un éclair de lucidité, à un des fonds permanents de l'expérience du péché.

The passage to which Chérix refers is no doubt the meditation where Pascal emphasizes that "L'homme n'est ni ange ni bête, et le malheur veut que qui veut faire l'ange fait la

poète" (B358, L678). Baudelaire himself refers to this extract in "Le Poème du haschisch".¹³⁸ Later in the same prose-poem, Baudelaire, with a coherence worthy of Pascal, presents a variation on this dual tension:

139 L'homme a voulu être Dieu, et bientôt le voilà,
en vertu d'une loi morale incontrôlable, tombé
plus bas que sa nature réelle.

This duality perhaps represents the greatest sign of the affinity between these two moralists. "L'Aube Spirituelle" embodies thus the yearning away from wretchedness (Spleen) towards possible salvation ("Idéal").

The final stanza of "Harmonie du Soir" expresses this very movement from dread of ennui to an evocation of the Ideal:

Un coeur tendre, qui hait le néant vaste et noir,
Du passé lumineux recueille tout vestige!
Le soleil s'est noyé dans son sang qui se fige...
Ton souvenir en moi luit comme un ostensor!
(13-15)

Yet, the fact that his idealized image is but a memory foresees the triumph of Spleen at the end of "Spleen et Idéal". Indeed, this memory itself becomes the symbol of ennui in the following poem, "Le Flacon", which concludes the cycle of spiritual love-poems devoted to Mme Sabatier:

Voilà le souvenir enivrant qui voltige
Dans l'air troublé; les yeux se ferment; le Vertige
Saisit l'âme vaincue et la pousse à deux mains
Vers un gouffre obscurci de miasmes humains;
(13-15).

Love becomes for him a poison, which is itself ambiguous: he is infused with the venom of Spleen, mingled with a nostalgic longing for the Ideal:

Cher poison préparé par les anges! liqueur
Qui me ronge, ô la vie et la mort de mon coeur!
(27-28)

This image is transferred into the first poem of the cycle inspired by Marie Daubrun, "Le Poison", where the poet is again overwhelmed by Spleen: his feeling of "vertige", as in "Le Flacon", anticipates "Le Gouffre". He attempts, in vain, to flee from the terror of his condition:

Mes songes viennent en foule
Pour se désaltérer à ces gouffres amers.
(14-15)

But it is only his beloved's "salive qui mord"(17) which "plonge dans l'oubli mon âme sans remord"(18). This restlessness and need for escape mark the whole of Les Fleurs du Mal and reflect a Pascalian vision of the universe. Even the weather, as in "Ciel Brouillé", weighs the poet down with ennui, and his nerves, "agités d'un mal inconnu qui les tord"(3), make a mockery of his drowsed mind. Poems like "Le Beau Navire" and "L'Invitation au Voyage" reinforce this sense of inconstancy, but contain the more positive implication of voyaging towards something better, whether it be spiritual salvation or personal happiness.

"L'Irréparable" introduces yet another aspect of Baudelairian ennui, that of "l'implacable Remords"(5), which

is presented as a "vieil ennemi"(7). In this poem, as in others, Remorse is linked to the poet's conception of Original Sin. Some critics have erroneously striven to depict this composition, like many others, as a Christian document. On the other hand, others, such as Antoine Adam, have endeavoured to prove that this Remorse, like several other themes in Baudelaire's poetry, "n'est pas lié à la conscience religieuse".¹⁴⁰ A more acceptable interpretation is surely that this motif, although not Christian, is an essentially spiritual or metaphysical preoccupation, as in the poet's use of ennui. Indeed, a sense of Sin dominates the whole collection of Les Fleurs du Mal, even more so than it does in Pascal's Pensées, as Jean Steinmann has suggested.¹⁴¹

"L'Irréparable" is filled with images of darkness and death. In the second stanza, the poet communicates his desperate need to drown the enemy, which, in addition to Remorse, is evidently an evocation of ennui. These lines once more anticipate future movements of Les Fleurs du Mal:

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?
(6-10)

This stanza gives also another important clue to Baudelaire's conception of ennui: as with Pascal, it represents no sudden onset of anguish; it portrays rather an inner state of human nature, "patient" and "délicat" (as he defines it in "Au

Lecteur"), out totally destructive. The word, "ronge"(36), which recurs in many of the Spleen-dominated poems, demonizes ennui as a moral disease which gnaws at the very heart of existence.

The following two poems, "Causerie" and "Chant d'Automne", express a melancholy which relates closely to ennui: in the latter poem, Baudelaire uses imagery inspired by the seasons to evoke his increasing sadness, in a way similar to the use he makes of the weather in "Ciel Brouillé" and in the later "Spleen" poems.

"A Une Madone", the final poem in the Marie Daubrun cycle, revives the best tradition of baroque poetry, and constitutes an effective synthesis of religious piety and sensual desire. As Chérix observes of the poet, "son coeur oscille entre la soumission à l'appel de Dieu et la soumission aux appels de la tendresse humaine":¹⁴² this alternation typifies the duality of Baudelaire's vision; in his anguished search for the Ideal, he sways between these two poles, which both reveal equal intensity and sincerity. The Serpent of line 25 has been taken to symbolize Jealousy; out, in addition to this conception, "ce monstre tout gonflé de haine et de crachats"(28) would seem to be a more violent expression of that "monstre délicat", Ennui.

In the final cycle of love poems, which was inspired by Baudelaire's transient relationships with various women, we

find little indication of ennui. Despite a melancholy which marks many of the poems, these compositions make up the poet's final attempts to attain his Ideal. But, the very evidence of a succession of loves illustrates the poet's inability to achieve a constancy which will halt the ultimate invasion and triumph of Ennui.

The Cycle of Spleen

Thus starts the cycle of Spleen poems, where the "Idéal" appears crushed and the monster of Ennui emerges, rampant, to gain control of the body, heart, mind and soul of man. It engulfs space and time, and overwhelms the Infinite. As with Pascal, ennui plays no temporary role for Baudelaire: it forms a fundamental part of his spiritual vision. In "La Chambre Double" from Le Spleen de Paris, for example, he comes to a dreadful realization of the power of ennui:

143 Horreur! je ne souviens! je me souviens! Oui! ce
taudis, ce séjour de l'éternel ennui est bien le
mien.

Ennui, sin and time are inseparable for Baudelaire. Furthermore, ennui expands the sense of inner solitude: Baudelaire refers to the Pascalian meditation on this subject in "La Solitude".¹⁴⁴ Indeed, for both writers, we find that ennui plays the dual role of monster and "l'état morbide de l'âme, seule en présence d'elle-même,"¹⁴⁵ as Chapelain defines it. This paradox corresponds perfectly to the love of

balance and contrast shared by the moralist and the poet alike.

"Tristesses de la Lune", the sonnet which commences the cycle of Spleen, introduces the theme of ennui with a quiet simplicity: indeed, ennui here comes closer to the romantic conception than to the modern meaning which is found in most of the poems. At the beginning, the moon dreams with "plus de paresse"(1); the poet's mood of ennui is one of listlessness. But, in the final tercet, his mind moves towards the darkness of a deeper consciousness of ennui, far away from the light of the Ideal:

Dans le creux de sa main prend cette larme pâle,
Aux reflets irisés comme un fragment d'opale,
Et la met dans son coeur loin des yeux du soleil.
(12-14)

In the following poem, the cats of the title appear to be incarnations of a seductive form of Spleen; they are "puissants et doux"(3) and "cherchent le silence et l'horreur des ténèbres"(6).

"Les Hiboux" seems to represent another variation on the Pascalian meditation on "divertissement", that the wretchedness of man comes from his inability to "demeurer en repos"(R139, L136). The owls of this sonnet, like Gods, watch over life:

Leur attitude au sage enseigne
Qu'il faut en ce monde qu'il craigne
Le tumulte et le mouvement;
L'homme ivre d'une ombre qui passe
Porte toujours le châtement

D'avoir voulu changer de place.
(9-14)

This inner restlessness is closely linked for both Pascal and Baudelaire to ennui and to "divertissement". It follows naturally that the next poem of the cycle should be "La Pipe", which anticipates one relatively light-hearted mode of escape from ennui: in this case, it is the poet himself, "comblé de douleur"⁽⁵⁾, who seeks diversion in order to forget himself. Elsewhere, we find a similar sense of restlessness. Pascal, for instance, recognized that

le sentiment de la fausseté des plaisirs
présents, et l'ignorance de la vanité des
plaisirs absents causent l'inconstance.
(310, L73)

Baudelaire, in his prose poem, "Anywhere Out of the World", writes that

¹⁴⁶Cette 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. Il me semble que je serais toujours bien là où je ne suis pas, et cette question de déménagement en est une que je discute sans cesse avec mon âme.

"La Musique" gives us a glimpse of the "Idéal", despite the omnipresence of "l'immense gouffre". Here, the sense of movement associated with sea-imagery includes a positive aspect, for it implies searching and a voyage towards possible fulfilment. Pascal's observation that "Notre nature est dans le mouvement; le repos entier est la mort"

(B129, L641) refers to the state of man without God; but it is not entirely negative, because, within the realization that rest comes only with death, man is forced to consider the possibility of a life beyond death and to assess his own chance of salvation. Indeed, this Pascalian meditation is particularly suited to the the structure of Les Fleurs du Mal, for the poet progresses through different stages until he faces Death in the dénouement. Thus, in "La Musique", while the movement of the sea indicates a genuine quest, it is

D'autres fois, calme olat, grand miroir
De mon désespoir!
(13-14)

Elsewhere, Baudelaire has written of this positive function of the sea: in Mon Coeur Mis à Nu, for example, he asks,

147 Pourquoi le spectacle de la mer est-il si
infiniment et si éternellement agréable? Parce
que la mer offre à la fois l'idée de l'immensité
et du mouvement.

The placing of poems such as "Sépulture", "Une Gravure Fantastique" and "Le Mort Joyeux" near the beginning of the group suggests both the poet's preoccupation with Death, and its importance in relation to Spleen. As Feuillerat points out concerning the role of death in these poems,

148 Cette note découragée, sans être absolument nouvelle, a pris une telle intensité qu'elle modifie considérablement tout le groupe.

Moreover, the poems which introduced the cycle in the first edition were moved to the middle of the group,

149 sans doute pour suggérer au lecteur que dans l'Ennui il fallait voir la cause essentielle de ces rêveries, comme le cœur d'où elles affluaient.

However, the theme of death at this stage of Les Fleurs du Mal does not bear the crucial significance which we find in the final section: rather, the poet communicates his preoccupation with death and prepares us for the final poems of the collection. Death in a sonnet like "Le Mort Joyeux" evidently plays a less serious role than in the later pieces: Baudelaire is still searching for a way to escape from his ennui. At this stage, death does not represent a spiritual concern for him:

Dans une terre grasse et oleine d'escargots
Je veux creuser moi-même une fosse profonde,
Où je puisse à loisir étaler mes vieux os
Et dormir dans l'oubli comme un requin dans l'onde.
(1-4)

The following two poems, "Le Tonneau de la Haine" and "La Cloche Fêlée", differ significantly from each other, as the first expresses a pure form of Spleen, whereas the second explores the subtleties of ennui.

Manifestly, "La Cloche Fêlée" and the first "Spleen" complement each other structurally and thematically.¹⁵⁰ Indeed, when they were first published, both were entitled "Spleen". "La Cloche Fêlée" opens inside a room, next to a fire, and ends outside in "l'air froid des nuits"(10); "Spleen I" begins out of doors in the cold of the city and concludes beside a damp fire in a room. The setting of both

sonnets is situated in the darkness of winter: the twilight season of autumn, which we observed in the previous poems, is over, and we find ourselves ensconced in the season of full Spleen. In each poem, the loud tolling of a bell signals the relentless passing of time, in stark contrast to the state of the poet's soul, with "sa voix affaiblie"(11), or, in the latter poem, "avec la triste voix d'un fantôme frileux"(3).

The tone at the start of "La Cloche Fêlée" is, ambiguously, both "amer et doux"(1). As the poet recalls his past in the comfort of his room, he hovers between a harsh awareness of Spleen and the vague hope of "l'Idéal". But, while listening to the sound of the bells, he moves from a feeling of certainty into the ultimate desperation of ennui. The cracked bell of the title symbolizes in fact his soul, weak and anticipating death:

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

Semble le râle éoais d'un blessé qu'on oublie
Au bord d'un lac de sang, sous un grand tas de morts,
Et qui meurt, sans bouger, dans d'immenses efforts.
(9-14)

The rhyme of the last words, "immenses efforts", associated with "tas de morts", underlines the futility of the poet's efforts to overcome ennui: his soul is doomed at the hands of this treacherous "monster".

In a study of ennui, it is important at this stage to bear in mind Pascal's conception of the wretchedness of man

without God, because this movement of Les Fleurs du Mal depicts precisely such a state, without the prospect of spiritual redemption. And yet, as in Pascal's portrayal of human nature, the very suffering of human existence implies another, more spiritual universe. As Fondane emphasizes, "l'ordre du profane n'est que l'envers de points en points de la ligne idéale tracée par le monde du sacré".¹⁵¹ Thus, the discovery that *Spleen* lies at the very centre of the tragedy enacted in Les Fleurs du Mal adds to the poet's pessimistic vision of human nature even as it suggests a further search for spiritual fulfilment: for this reason, this cycle, which is devoted to the devastating effects of *Ennui*, does not form the final section of the book, for there still remains the possibility of further voyaging.

Unlike "La Cloche Fêlée", where there appears an initial element of hope, the first "Spleen" opens with no such relief:

Pluviôse, irrité contre la ville entière,
De son urne à grands flots verse un froid ténébreux
Aux pâles habitants du voisin cimetière
Et la mortalité sur les faubourgs brumeux.
(1-4)

Baudelaire makes the setting of *ennui* consciously modern, because he wishes to evoke here an urban civilisation in the bleakness of midwinter ("Pluviôse" is the fifth month of the republican calendar, from the 20th January to the 18th February). This modernity is strikingly significant, since it

underlines the new meaning which the poet applies to ennui. Verlaine, in a prophetic article on Baudelaire, dated 16 November 1865, observed perceptively:

152 La profonde originalité de Charles Baudelaire, c'est, à mon sens, de représenter l'homme moderne... Je n'entends ici que l'homme physique moderne, tel que l'ont fait les raffinements d'une civilisation excessive, l'homme moderne, avec ses sens aiguisés et vibrants, son esprit douloureusement subtil, son cerveau saturé de tabac, son sang brûlé d'alcool...

No longer does the poet aspire towards romantic ideals: instead, his soul is that of an old poet who "erre dans la gouttière"(7).

The sordid city of this poem anticipates the following section entitled "Tableaux Parisiens". In the two tercets, the setting moves from the cold exterior into a shabby inner room, beside a heatless fire: the poet's perception of ennui, which was overpowering in the foggy suburbs, is now transformed into an even more overwhelming sense of claustrophobia. The personification of the bell which "se lamente"(9) and "la pendule enrhumée"(10) compounds this ennui, as even inanimate objects become subject to this curse of modern civilisation. In the final tercet, the disturbing image of the "vieille hydropique" (perhaps a retired clairvoyante) reading the cards suggests utter sterility in love and life, where the Knave of Hearts and the Queen of Spades "Causent sinistrement de leurs amours défunts"(14). Remarkably, this image seems to be echoed by T.S. Eliot in

his great modern English poem which dramatically depicts Ennui, "The Waste Land". Through his image of the Tarot pack in the first part and the "strange synthetic perfumes" of the second section, which perhaps recall the "sales parfums" of line 11, Eliot subtly captures the mood of Baudelairian Spleen. Indeed, he refers directly to Baudelaire in several poems and essays. However, perhaps the most striking thematic parallel in "Spleen I" and "The Waste Land" is that of sterile love. In "A Game of Chess", Eliot appears to dramatize the very conversations which originate from Baudelaire's "amours defunts":

153 'My nerves are bad tonight. Yes, bad. Stay with me.
'Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.
'What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?
'I never know what you are thinking. Think'.
(111-114)

Through Baudelaire's skilful use of personification of both the abstract and the concrete, "Spleen I" conveys a unique and original picture of ennui. Life and death become interchangeable, as do mind and matter. Indeed, as J.D. Hubert puts it, "c'est le monde renversé, conséquence ultime de l'ennui".¹⁵⁴

These inversions and disproportions extend to all spheres. Thus, ennui makes the passage of time seem both eternally slow and terrifyingly swift. "Spleen II" presents the overwhelming consciousness of the interminable length of time: "J'ai plus de souvenirs que si j'avais mille ans"(1).

The poet's mind is compared to a desk which has become cluttered with diverse material objects, representing the past: again, ennui confuses mind with matter. While in "La Cloche Fêlée" his soul is likened to a cracked bell, here it becomes a graveyard on a moonless night:

- Je suis un cimetière abhorré de la lune,
Où comme des remords se traînent de longs vers
Qui s'acharnent toujours sur mes morts les plus chers.
(8-10)

In addition to this evocative image, the word "remords" contributes a sense of culpability to our understanding of sin as an extension of ennui. As the poem progresses, ennui moves from a feeling of over-accumulation within the poet's brain (the combination of mind and matter) to a point where time and space also become interchangeable. In her discussion of the theme of ennui in this poem, Madeleine Bouchez argues that "La durée n'est plus enfermée dans des limites, mais sombre dans une accablante immortalité".¹⁵⁵ This terrifying aspect of ennui is admirably captured in the following lines:

Rien n'égale en longueur les boiteuses journées,
Quand sous les lourds flocons des neigeuses années
L'ennui, fruit de la morne incuriosité,
Prend les proportions de l'immortalité.
(15-18)

Here indeed looms that "apocalypse de l'Ennui" to which Fondane refers.¹⁵⁶ The immortal aspect of ennui is mirrored in the image of "un Sahara brumeux"(21): the desert offers no relief. As we find later in "Le Voyage", when an oasis finally appears, it is but "Une oasis d'horreur dans un

désert d'ennui"(112), which serves only to heighten the poet's anguish.

A further ramification of ennui emerges in the poem: the feeling that nothing new ever occurs. Everything belongs to the past, and merely adds to the heaviness which is so tellingly portrayed through the rhythm of the poetic meter. The image of the old, forgotten Sphinx encapsulates the weight of the past:

Un vieux sphinx ignoré du monde insoucieux,
Oublié sur la carte, et dont l'umeur farouche
Ne chante qu'aux rayons du soleil qui se couche.
(22-24)

Ennui leads to a realization of one's isolation or solitude, a realization which both Pascal and Baudelaire have elaborated elsewhere. What is more, J.H. Hubert explains that

157 le symbole du sphinx résume tout le poème, en incarnant la matière, le mystère et l'humanité. Il sert de métaphore pour le crâne tout en symbolisant l'activité du poète. Le monde reste insoucieux, soit parce qu'il n'a pas de soucis, soit parce qu'il ne s'intéresse pas au poète.

The image of wintry weather, which plays no part in the second "Spleen", reappears in "Spleen III". Baudelaire compares himself to the king of a rainy country who has fallen into a state of ennui. In fact, this theme is strongly reminiscent of Pascal's "un roi sans divertissement est un homme plein de misères" (B142, L137):

Je suis comme le roi d'un pays pluvieux,
Riche, mais impuissant, jeune et pourtant très vieux.
(1-2)

Both Pascal and Baudelaire stress the paradoxical reality that even a king, allegedly the happiest and the most gratified of men, can suffer from ennui. But, while Pascal emphasizes that the lack of diversions can lead a king, like any other person, into a state of wretchedness and ennui, Baudelaire compares himself to a king who, even if he indulges in trivial amusements, can never escape from his unsatisfactory human condition. This regal image, which controls the whole poem, reminds us of the Prince in the prose-poem, "Une Mort Héroïque", "qui ne connaissait d'ennemi dangereux que l'Ennui". Furthermore, we read of "les efforts bizarres qu'il faisait pour fuir ou pour vaincre ce tyran du monde".¹⁵⁸ Baudelaire's use of the imagery related to kings and ennui indicates his own love of paradox. Furthermore, it seems impossible to purge the poet's soul of that ennui:

Le savant qui lui fait de l'or n'a jamais pu
De son être extirper l'élément corrompu.
(13-14)

This thought is evidently linked to Baudelaire's conception of Original Sin: moral evil forms a natural part of the human condition. In a penetrating article, entitled "Baudelaire et l'Alchimie Verbale", Marc Figeldinger writes of these lines:

¹⁵⁹L'alchimiste, captif de la durée et de l'ennui, poursuit sa quête sous le signe de l'impuissance créatrice et n'atteint pas à la pureté spirituelle qu'exige la découverte du Grand Œuvre.

It is worthwhile to compare this vision of hopelessness with part of the unfinished Epilogue which Baudelaire had planned for Les Fleurs du Mal:

160 Car j'ai de chaque chose extrait la quintessence,
Tu m'as donné ta boue et j'en ai fait de l'or.

This positive conclusion provides a vital clue to the possible solution to ennui which is hinted at by Baudelaire.

The final image of the river of forgetfulness in "Spleen III" looks forward again to the poet's later attempts to deliver himself from his condition: here, no sense of escape exists; the river Lethe indicates the drugged feeling of lethargy of his ennui:

Il n'a su réchauffer ce cadavre hébété
Où coule au lieu de sang l'eau verte de Léthé.
(17-18)

The fourth and final "Spleen" marks an appropriate climax, because it seems to present the most crushing expression of ennui of the group. As Antoine Adam remarks,

151 Ce poème développe dans ses trois premières stances l'ennui sans espoir qui forme pour lui l'expérience fondamentale de l'existence. Puis dans les deux dernières éclate, sur ce fonds d'ennui, l'angoisse.

The image of rain, closely related to the poet's mood, is more pervasive in this piece than in any of the three other "Spleen" poems. In the very first lines,

...le ciel bas et lourd pèse comme un couvercle
Sur l'esprit gémissant en proie aux longs ennuis.
(1-2)

The impression of the sky as a "couvercle" finds its ultimate expression of religious terror in "Le Couvercle", which will be studied later. The heavy skies both weigh upon the poet's soul, suffocating him, and threaten rain. But it is not a rain which brings relief: on the contrary, in line 4, night and day are inverted, and a sense of evil prevails: "Il nous verse un jour noir plus triste que les nuits". Moreover, the rain comes to symbolize the imprisonment of his very existence:

...la pluie étalant ses immenses traînées
D'une vaste prison imite les barreaux,
(9-10).

This aspect concurs with the earlier image of a prison, "quand la terre est changée en un cachot humide"(5). Ennui makes man captive to his environment. It presents a bleak, dismal view of human existence, which matches Pascal's vision of man's life without God (indeed, he uses the term, "Un homme dans un cachot"- B200/L163 - to describe man's predicament); both writers employ strikingly similar imagery:

Qu'on s'imagine un nombre d'hommes dans les chaînes, et tous condamnés à la mort, dont les uns étant chaque jour égorgés à la vue des autres, ceux qui restent voient leur propre condition dans celle de leurs semblables, et, se regardant les uns et les autres avec douleur et sans espoérance, attendent à leur tour. C'est l'image de la condition des hommes. (B199, L434)

In the second stanza, spiritual Hope ("l'Espérance"),

compared to a blind bat, attempts to fly away towards freedom, but instead, finds itself "se cognant la tête à des plafonds pourris"(8).

In the final three stanzas, as the poem progresses, the power of Spleen increases correspondingly: it moves from phrases like "infâmes araignées"(11) and "avec furie"(13) to "un affreux hurlement"(14) and "geindre opiniâtrement"(16), until it finally reaches "l'Angoisse, atroce, desotique" (19). In addition, ennui has crushed all sense of hope, even human hope ("l'Espoir"), which is personified as weeping and "vaincu"(19). The furious sound of bells, which recall both "La Cloche Fêlée" and the first "Spleen", hurl a final insult, in defiance, at the sky. But the only response is the silence of Death; the heavy skies have become the symbol of Anguish within the poet's mind:

- Et de longs corbillards, sans tambours ni musique,
Défilent lentement dans mon âme; l'Espoir,
Vaincu, pleure, et l'Angoisse atroce, desotique,
Sur mon crâne incliné plante son drapeau noir.
(17-20)

Significantly, the generalized sense of ennui is now transformed into the personal torment of the poet's inner being: no longer does the poet make use of "nous"(4) and "nos cerveaux"(12); instead, at the end, we find "mon âme"(18) and "mon crâne"(20).

Thus, the four "Spleen" poems give us a coherent picture of Baudelairian ennui which is even more vivid and awesome.

It engulfs matter and mind, space and time; it attacks all men, regardless of rank; it symbolizes an age, and yet, it invades man's innermost nature. Clearly, Ennui is the figure of paradox and duality; but, more than that, it levels all contradictions, all contrasts to an ultimate consciousness of "le néant".

"Le Gouffre", which Ruff places after these poems in his edition, deserves a separate study after our discussion of Spleen, for we consider it fundamental to our understanding of Baudelaire's interpretation of Pascalian ennui. But a difficulty arises if we attempt to situate thematically "Les Plaintes d'Icare", which Ruff includes before the "Spleen" poems, because, in the tightly structured section of Spleen, it does not fit into the framework of the second edition of 1861. However, the poem itself is a finely constructed composition. The legend of Icarus corresponds perfectly to Baudelaire's yearning towards, but inability to attain, the Ideal: in other words, it represents a triumph of Spleen. Chérix points out the attractions of this myth for Baudelaire:

¹⁵²Ce gracieux mythe coordonne trois idées: le besoin de s'évader, la fascination de la lumière, la chute irrémédiable due à la précarité des moyens et des forces humaines.

The last stanza underlines the dual preoccupations of the poet, as conveyed particularly in the rhymes of "beau" with "tonneau" and "sublime" with "abîme":

Et brûlé par l'amour du beau,
Je n'aurai pas l'honneur sublime
De donner mon nom à l'aolme
Qui me servira de tombeau.
(13-16)

"Obsession" reveals a further development of the theme of ennui, for here the poet seeks peace of soul in an extreme form of asceticism: "Car je cherche le vide, et le noir, et le nu!"(11). However, both quatrains and the final tercet demonstrate the impossibility of attaining any fulfilment in this "débouillement", this voluntary deprivation. The second quatrain presents an image of the sea which is quite different from that found in a poem such as "La Musique": the restlessness of the sea makes the poet's search for oblivion impossible. As in the final "Spleen", man is "vaincu":

Je te hais, Océan! tes bonds et tes tumultes,
Mon esprit les retrouve en lui; ce rire amer
De l'homme vaincu, plein de sanglots et d'insultes,
Je l'entends dans le rire énorme de la mer.
(5-8)

The irregular syntax of this stanza adds to the sense of turbulence. In addition to this aspect, as Chérix elaborates,

163 les tumultes de la mer sont la figure des
agitations de l'esprit. Le rire et les pleurs,
unis, par antithèse, en une seule convulsion,
retentissent dans les flots bondissants.

The final tercet intensifies the poet's sense of failure; he cannot take refuge from spleen and "angoisse" in the darkness of the night, because, within the shadows, there exists an inner world of memories and associations:

Mais les ténèbres sont elles-mêmes des toiles
Où vivent, jaillissant de mon oeil par milliers,
Des êtres disparus aux regards familiers.
(12-14)

"Le Goût du Néant" represents an expansion of "Obsession", for now the poet finds himself attracted to a state of "néant". Chérix gives a sound analysis of Baudelaire's intention in these two poems:

164 "Obsession" trahissait déjà la fatigue d'une âme
exténuée, "le Goût du Néant" marque
l'aboutissement de cette fatigue, non plus même
dans un sommeil qui serait au moins la sensation
du repos et de l'oubli, mais dans la privation de
l'être.

We have now reached the furthest point of ennui, for the poet's realization of his condition has driven him to prefer non-being to being: at this stage, he does not envisage the "néant" of Death, but more the desire to return to the nothingness of pre-existence.¹⁶⁵ Time, instead of eluding him, overwhelms him, and he no longer wishes to remain in control of his senses: the very image of being consumed by an avalanche gives the poet a strange sense of objectivity, of being an onlooker, external to his existence:

Et le Temps m'engloutit minute par minute,
Comme la neige immense un corps oris de roideur;
Je contemple d'en haut le globe en sa rondeur,
Et je n'y cherche plus l'abri d'une cahute.

Avalanche, veux-tu m'emporter dans ta chute?
(11-15)

The image of alchemy, which we found in "Spleen III", reappears in "Alchimie de la Douleur". Again, contrary to the mood expressed in the proposed Epilogue to Les Fleurs du Mal, Spleen dominates the soul of the poet. Appealing to "Hermès inconnu" (perhaps the symbol of genius or inspiration), the poet exclaims,

Tu me rends l'égal de Midas,
Le plus triste des alchimistes;

Par toi je change l'or en fer
Et le paradis en enfer.
(7-10)

In the following poem, "Horreur Sympathique", the image of a "ciel bizarre et livide"(1) corresponds to the fourth "Spleen", where mind and matter are interrelated: here, the sky expresses the "âme vide"(3) of the "libertin", to whom the poet is speaking. It is striking that Baudelaire should thus address himself to the worldly unbeliever, for Pascal's projected Apology is also directed towards the "libertin". It is a poem dominated by Spleen, accentuated by words such as "tourmenté"(2), "deuil"(11) and "Enfer"(14): the final two tercets reflect this dramatic conflict, particularly through the image of "Cieux déchirés"(9).

Of the next six poems in Ruff's edition, none, except "L'Héautontimorouménos", appeared in the second edition of 1861. These pieces (including "L'Imorévu") reveal the deeper spiritual preoccupations of Baudelaire in his later life.

Here, the theme of ennui appears to be inextricably linked to man's fall from grace: the poet's sense of religious remorse and guilt implies a conception of ennui which is closer to Pascalian ennui than in the earlier poems. The abundance of Christian imagery in particular proves Baudelaire's greater interest in the dogmas of Christianity; but, in no way can this faith be assigned to him as his own belief, because in several cases it acts as a point of contrast against other poems, such as in the cycle dealing with Revolt, which contributed to our analysis of the Manichean tendencies in Baudelaire's poetry.

"Le Couvercle" is probably the most suggestive of these poems, for it relates most closely to "Le Gouffre" and to Baudelaire's conception of Pascal and ennui. The poet's terror undoubtedly represents a sense of spiritual awe, similar to Pascal's perception of the libertine's fear of the infinite expanse of the universe (B206, L201):

Partout l'homme subit la terreur du mystère,
Et ne regarde en haut qu'avec un oeil tremblant.
(7-8)

Furthermore, the final tercet implies another reference to the Pascalian "libertin":

Terreur du libertin, espoir du fol ermite;
Le Ciel! couvercle noir de la grande marmite
Où bout l'imperceptible et vaste Humanité.
(12-14)

In Pascal's terms, this terror is born of man's recognition

of the fundamental ennui of his existence and his subsequent bewilderment at the vastness of the universe.

"L'Héautontimorouménos" (which is taken from the Greek for "self-executioner") presents another portrait of the poet as prisoner of himself: this sense of ennui emanating from man's inner being is one of the essential aspects of the theme in Les Fleurs du Mal. In this poem, the theme of ennui is further developed into a sense of self-destruction and self-immolation. The vivid contrast of the tears in the first three stanzas and the laughter in the final stanzas underscores a central component of *Spleen*. The imagery of weeping corresponds to the theme of suffering considered as necessary for redemption (as was seen in "Bénédiction" and "L'Imprévu"); these tears indicate the waters of journeying and hope:

Mon désir gonflé d'espérance
Sur tes pleurs salés nagera

Comme un vaisseau qui prend le large,
(7-9).

And yet, ultimately, dry laughter provides the victorious contrast of *Spleen*. As Baudelaire wrote elsewhere, "le rire est satanique, il est donc profondément humain".¹⁶⁶ The poet names Irony (which attains for Baudelaire a socialized paradoxical meaning of both positive self-knowledge and wretchedness, not unlike the contradictions which can be discerned in the definition of Ennui) as the symbol of this

debased state: undoubtedly, it represents a limb of that monster, Ennui, for its poisonous pervasiveness would seem to be as all-encompassing:

Elle (l'Ironie) est dans ma voix, la criarde!
C'est tout mon sang, ce poison noir!
(17-18)

The final two stanzas encapsulate the destructiveness of ennui within the poet's self:

Je suis la plaie et le couteau!
Je suis le soufflet et la joue!
Je suis les membres et la roue,
Et la victime et le bourreau!

Je suis de mon coeur le vampire,
- Un de ces grands abandonnés
Au rire éternel condamnés,
Et qui ne peuvent plus sourire!
(21-23)

In "L'Irrémédiable", the poet appears to renounce his poetic ideals, and to accept the triumph of Spleen. "Une Idée, une Forme, un Être"(1), perhaps symbolic of the poet's mind, have fallen from the azure of inspiration "dans un Styx bourbeux et plombé"(3). Hélène Cassou-Yager offers an ingenious interpretation of the poem in relation to Pascal's writings. The basic similarity of their viewpoints, as she explains, is that "pour les deux auteurs, l'existence est une irrémédiable déchéance, une véritable mort-dans-la-vie".¹⁶⁷ But, while Pascal leads man from this miserable state towards God, Baudelaire cannot at this stage wish for any salvation: before, in searching for the Ideal, he maintained the hope of

some form of redemption; now, he finds himself drawn farther and farther into the "gouffre". Baudelaire perceives his condition in an identical way to Pascal: let us consider again a meditation, to support both writers' use of light and dark imagery:

L'homme ne sait à quel rang se mettre. Il est visiblement égaré, et tombé de son vrai lieu sans le pouvoir retrouver. Il le cherche partout avec inquiétude et sans succès dans des ténèbres impénétrables. (B427,L400)

This sense of futility is admirably captured in the fourth stanza of "L'Irrémédiable", where man's destiny assumes the form of a bewitchment:

Un malheureux ensorcelé
Dans ses tâtonnements futiles,
Pour fuir d'un lieu plein de reptiles,
Cherchant la lumière et la clé;
(13-16)

Similarly, Pascal speaks of "enchantement" and an "assoupissement surnaturel" (B194,L427) which blinds man from spiritual truth. As Cassou-Yager points out about this theme in "L'Irrémédiable",

168 Le damné s'est irrémédiablement perdu dans le labyrinthe du gouffre intérieur. Prisonnier de ses obsessions et de ses terreurs, le malheureux ne peut plus remonter vers la lumière de la miséricorde et de l'amour.

Baudelaire's vision of existence becomes nightmarish; he is haunted by Ennui and by Hell; the poet turns into

Un damné descendant sans lampe
Au bord d'un gouffre.
(17-18)

This acceptance of his fate resembles the image of an extinguished lamp at the end of "L'Examen de Minuit", where the poet expresses a wish to cower in the darkness of remorse and guilt:

- Vite soufflons la lampe, afin
De nous cacher dans les ténèbres!
(31-32)

The second part of "L'Irrémédiable" lends itself to several different interpretations: some commentators believe that it discloses Baudelaire's Satanism, others see it as proof of his Christianity: but, essentially here, this poem seems to present another development of the triumph of Spleen and of Evil. However, further ramifications can be discerned in the final lines:

Un phare ironique, infernal,
Flambeau des grâces sataniques,
Soulagement et gloire uniques,
- La conscience dans le Mal!
(37-40)

J.D. Hubert poses some pertinent questions concerning the conclusion of the poem:

169 Est-ce qu'on reçoit les grâces sataniques parce que le Diable, étant la caricature de Dieu, aura les mêmes attributs que Lui, ou parce que le démon, bien malgré lui, fournit au pécheur la lumière qui lui permettra de se sauver?

His last suggestion is of particular interest, because it

reveals a function of ennui which appears both in Pascal's Pensées and in Les Fleurs du Mal - namely, the recognition of one's own wretchedness as the first step towards spiritual enlightenment; the subsequent sections of Baudelaire's collection of poems, where the poet desperately seeks some kind of fulfilment, support this theory. But the difference between Pascal and Baudelaire lies in the solutions which they offer: the Christian moralist's conclusion is clear-cut, and contains no ultimate ambiguity; in his conclusion, the symbolist poet retains many of the contradictions which occur throughout the book, but he is no less sincere for that, as we shall see.

The meaning of "La conscience dans le Mal!" in the final line of the poem maintains the duality which characterizes Baudelaire's writing. The words can assume the sense of lucidity within Evil, which supports the victory of Spleen; but they can also mean that the poet has attained a state of moral conscience or consciousness through Evil. This second interpretation again would lend credibility to the subsequent sections of Les Fleurs du Mal, since, if Spleen's victory were to be complete, the poet would have neither the resources of inspiration nor the will to develop further the thematic line of his book.

But, despite this positive implication, "L'Horloge" reminds the reader that Time marches on inexorably. "L'Examen de Minuit" has already warned us of this theme:

La pendule, sonnant minuit,
Ironiquement nous engage
A nous rappeler quel usage
Nous fîmes du jour qui s'enfuit.
(1-4)

Through "L'Horloge", the poet alerts us to the dreadful realization of Time's destructive power; the clock becomes symbolic of a terrifying and merciless God:

Horloge! dieu sinistre, effrayant, impassible,
Dont le doigt nous menace et nous dit: 'Souviens-toi!'
(1-2)

It is significant that this poem concludes the section on the influence of *Ennui* as well as the whole of "Spleen et Idéal", because Time and Spleen are inseparable: they both inspire an equal sense of dread. Pascal makes similar use of the theme of Time when he states, "C'est une chose horrible de sentir s'écouler tout ce qu'on possède" (B212, L. 757).

Baudelaire's insistent reiteration of "Souviens-toi" emphasizes the fundamental importance of the past, because the poet looks back in time with nostalgia. Furthermore, the past attains greater significance when measured against the Spleen of the present and the uncertainty of the future: as the poet realizes, "le Plaisir vaporeux fuira vers l'horizon"(5). He regrets the moments that he has wasted, and recognizes how he ought to have manipulated time, like an alchemist who extracts gold from base metals; again, Baudelaire employs the symbol of the poet as "chimiste":

'Remember!' 'Souviens-toi!' prodigue! 'Esto memor!'
(Mon gosier de métal parle toutes les langues.)
Les minutes, mortel folâtre, sont des gangues
Qu'il ne faut pas lâcher sans en extraire l'or!
(13-15)

But the Clock forces man from light to darkness, from youth to age, from joy to ennui. Time passes remorselessly, and Spleen tightens its grip:

Le jour décroît; la nuit augmente; 'souviens-toi!'
Le gouffre a toujours soif; la clepsydre se vide.
(19-20)

As Chérix points out,

170 Fascination du passé, fugivité et précarité du temps, ces deux aspects corrélatifs de la vie mobile et insaisissable donnent au spleen baudelairien une de ses résonances de base.

"L'Horloge" ends on a note of despair. The poet foresees the time when "le divin Hasard"(21), "l'auguste Vertu"(22) and even Repentance, which he regards as "la dernière auberge"(23), will dissolve in Time. His final vision of "Spleen et Idéal" is the spectre of Death and the haunting cry that "il est trop tard!"(24). However, these words do not indicate total resignation on the part of the poet: rather, they represent a nightmarish vision of the future, which compels him to search for any means of escape from this seemingly inevitable fate. This he will attempt to do through a succession of explorations in "Tableaux Parisiens", "le Vin", "Fleurs du Mal", "Révolte" and ultimately, "la Mort".

Thus commences another voyage which is prompted by Soleen. As Guy Michaud puts it, "le soleen...est à la fois l'origine de son mal et le point de départ de son aventure mystique".¹⁷¹

6 "LE GOUFFRE"

But, before examining these sections of Les Fleurs du Mal, let us first consider "Le Gouffre", the poem which is most central to our analysis of Pascal, Baudelaire and the concept of ennui. We saw that the word "gouffre" recurs frequently in Les Fleurs du Mal, always in relation to the theme of ennui.

This term can also be found throughout Baudelaire's other writings, such as "Hygiène", where he declares,

¹⁷²Au moral comme au physique, j'ai toujours eu la sensation du gouffre, non seulement du gouffre du sommeil, mais du gouffre de l'action, du rêve, du souvenir, du désir, du regret, du remords, du beau, du nombre, etc.

While indicating a Pascalian dread ("effroi") towards existence, the passage also underlines the basic difference between Pascal and Baudelaire, which was mentioned earlier: Pascal is essentially an ascetic and Baudelaire a sensualist; this is evident in the poet's use of words such as "rêve", "désir", "regret" and "beau".¹⁷³ Later in the same text, he confesses that "j'ai senti passer sur moi le vent de l'aile de l'imbécillité".¹⁷⁴ In a penetrating analysis of Baudelaire's later poetry, Francis S. Heck considers this passage from "Hygiène", and states that:

175 The first part...accentuates the increasing omnipotence of the attraction of the "gouffre" for him, while the second part indicates the temporary loss of self-control on his part. In the future, a key-word such as "vertige" occurs with more frequency in his work. A definite Pascalian aura is therefore attached to the poet during the latter part of his life.

The term "gouffre" is undoubtedly integral to *Spleen*, because it forms an essential part of "le goût du néant" as opposed to "le goût de l'infini". Furthermore, it constitutes for the poet one of the few realities of existence: as Fondane puts it, "le Néant est une des deux seules issues ouvertes dans l'univers de Baudelaire; aussi horrifique que soit l'Enfer, il est".¹⁷⁶ This paradoxical sense of the existence of "le Néant" can be linked to Pascal's "mystère", the dogma of Original Sin, for; without it, everything becomes meaningless. As Pascal declares,

Sans ce mystère, le plus incompréhensible de tous, nous sommes incompréhensibles à nous-mêmes. Le noeud de notre condition prend ses replis et ses tours dans cet abîme; de sorte que l'homme est plus inconcevable sans ce mystère que ce mystère n'est inconcevable à l'homme. (B434, L131)

But let us consider the sonnet, "Le Gouffre":

Pascal avait son gouffre, avec lui se mouvant.
Hélas! tout est âme, - action, désir, rêve,
Parole! et sur mon poil qui tout droit se relève
Mainte fois de la Peur je sens passer le vent.

En haut, en bas, partout, la profondeur, la grève,
Le silence, l'espace affreux et captivant...
Sur le fond de mes nuits Dieu de son doigt savant
Dessine un cauchemar multiforme et sans trêve.

J'ai peur du sommeil comme on a peur d'un grand trou,
Tout plein de vague horreur, menant on ne sait où;
Je ne vois qu'infini par toutes les fenêtres,

Et mon esprit, toujours du vertige hanté,
Jalouse du néant l'insensibilité.
- Ah! ne jamais sortir des Nombres et des Êtres!

The actual "gouffre" to which Baudelaire refers in the first line concerns a popular, if apocryphal, legend, according to which Pascal was continually haunted by the vision of an abyss opening up on his left-hand side. However, even despite this tale, the concept of "le gouffre" is fundamentally important to Baudelaire's vision of Pascal and ennui, since both writers display, as Chérix puts it, "un même vertige de l'infini".¹⁷⁷ This aspiration towards the infinite reveals in his poetry two contradictory sensations which he felt as a child, "l'horreur de la vie et l'extase de la vie";¹⁷⁸ it is the sense of dread which dominates "Le Gouffre", as it does in other poems like "Le Couvercle" ("Partout l'homme subit la terreur du mystère"- 7) and "L'Irrémédiable" ("Au fond d'un cauchemar énorme"- 7).

But what exactly is Pascal's "gouffre", and to what extent does it meet Baudelaire's conception of the term? Fondane asserts that, through this poem,

¹⁷⁹Baudelaire n'hésite guère à confondre son gouffre avec celui de Pascal et nous invite à faire de même. Ce n'est pas qu'il se serve de Pascal comme d'une "autorité", mais il y voit un frère spirituel, un compagnon d'armes.

Indeed, despite their spiritual affinity and similar vision of humanity, Pascal and Baudelaire do differ notably from each other in a number of respects. In the second line of "Le

Gouffre", words such as "désir" and "rêve" confirm again Baudelaire's sensualism which is opposed to the asceticism of Pascal. Furthermore, while for Pascal Art is merely a subsidiary "divertissement", without relevance to man's ultimate salvation, Baudelaire sees Art as an all-important pursuit which reflects "l'extase de la vie", and which forms an essential part of the possible resolution of conflicts within him.

Hélène Cassou-Yager defines the "gouffre" of each author in the following outline:

180 Le gouffre de Pascal est la révélation de la faillite de l'intelligence humaine devant un univers absurde et menaçant. Le gouffre de Baudelaire est extérieur et intérieur; c'est l'immense distance qui le sépare du non-moi, et c'est aussi l'immense distance qui sépare son moi conscient de son moi profond et primitif. La peur de la désintégration de ce moi conscient se transmue très vite en obsession du gouffre: "tout est abîme..."

To expand Cassou-Yager's point of view, I believe that Pascal's "gouffre" goes beyond mere human intelligence, because it also includes a heightened consciousness of metaphysical anguish, of inner spiritual ennui. In this poem, especially in the sixth line, Baudelaire unquestionably bears in mind the celebrated "pensée", "Le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis m'effraie" (B206, L201). As we concluded previously, this brief fragment represents a combination of Pascal's personal experience and of the dialogue which he assigns to the "libertin", the worldly unbeliever. It

expresses that same "horreur" which Baudelaire perceives. The following meditation by Pascal, preoccupied as it is with the shortness of time, horror of the infinite and problem of existence, could easily be mistaken for Baudelaire's reflection:

Quand je considère la petite durée de ma vie, absorbée dans l'éternité précédant et suivant, le petit espace que je remplis et même que je vois, adonné dans l'infinie immensité des espaces que j'ignore et qui m'ignorent, je m'effraie et m'étonne de me voir ici plutôt que là, car il n'y a point de raison pourquoi ici plutôt que là, pourquoi à présent plutôt que lors. Qui m'y a mis? Par l'ordre et la conduite de qui ce lieu et ce temps a-t-il été destiné à moi? (B205, L68)

Baudelaire's vision of existence clearly answers Pascal's conception of life without God. However, Cassou-Yager's analysis of Baudelaire's "moi" and the "gouffre", which we quoted, reveals another difference between the two writers. The poet's dread of the disintegration of his conscious self, which is then transformed into an obsession with the "gouffre", shows the importance which he attaches to his "moi", for it signifies existence as opposed to non-existence ("néant" or "gouffre"). Pascal, on the other hand, with his mind focused on Christian salvation, declares that "le moi est haïssable" (B455, L597). Yet, despite this difference, both Pascal and Baudelaire remain fundamentally pessimistic about the natural depravity of man's self. As Baudelaire himself writes in Fusées,

1317, l'homme, c'est-à-dire chacun, est si naturellement dépravé qu'il souffre moins de l'abaïssement universel que de l'établissement d'une hiérarchie raisonnable.

But, to return to the poem, Baudelaire's conception of the "gouffre" is that of a primeval, instinctive terror:

...et sur mon poil qui tout droit se relève
Mainte fois de la Peur je sens passer le vent.
(3-4)

"Poil", a form usually only associated with animals, depicts more sharply this primordial, animal-like horror which the poet feels. Significantly, the word "Peur" appears three times in the sonnet; in the fourth line, the capital letter indicates its symbolical importance, for the poet is afraid of losing his consciousness and of being engulfed by the "gouffre", a fear which pervades the poem. "Peur" is supplemented by words like "affreux"(6), "cauchemar"(3), "horreur"(10) and "hanté"(12). Baudelaire expresses a similar sensation of terror in a letter addressed to his mother on 13th December 1862, where he writes of "la peur de mourir subitement;- la peur de vivre trop longtemps..., la peur de m'endormir, et l'horreur de me réveiller".¹³² This fear of the uncertainty induced by sleep is reflected in line 9 of the poem: "J'ai peur du sommeil comme on a peur d'un grand trou".

Yet, even the "gouffre" contains ambiguities: paraphrasing Pascal's meditation, Baudelaire writes of "le silence, l'espace affreux et captivant..."(6). Hélène Cassou-Yager offers a perspicacious interpretation of this line:

133 L'adjectif "affreux" correspond, par sa sonorité et son sens, à la forme verbale "effraie". Cependant, la juxtaposition à la fin du vers de deux adjectifs à sens contraire, révèle l'ambiguïté du gouffre baudelairien: si l'espace est affreux, il est aussi captivant, il nous attire. Or, l'adjectif "captivant" est lui-même ambivalent: "captiver" signifie "fasciner", charmer, et aussi s'emparer de quelqu'un, lui ôter sa liberté: l'intégrité du moi est toujours menacée.

The theme of imprisonment within Baudelaire's poetry appears again. He is once more entrapped by his spiritual ennui which reaches the extent of religious remorse and guilt, so that he believes that this very horror is God-sent:

Sur le fond de mes nuits, Dieu de son doigt savant
Dessine un cauchemar multiforme et sans trêve.
(7-8)

In the final tercet, the poet communicates his regret that he cannot be insensitive to his suffering; he "jalouse du néant l'insensibilité"(13); here, the poet finds himself ultimately drawn towards the "gouffre". His final cry, "-Ah! ne jamais sortir des Nombres et des Êtres", intensifies this sense of imprisonment within the limits of material existence from which he cannot escape. Elsewhere, the poet writes of the oppressive sense of "nombres". The second section, entitled *Tableaux Parisiens*, describes precisely such a state of suffocation. In *Fusées*, Baudelaire indicates the pervasiveness of the term:

184 Tout est nombre. Le nombre est dans tout. Le nombre est dans l'individu. L'ivresse est un nombre.

The metaphysical anxiety which has predominated in "Le Gouffre" is transformed at the end into a sense of utter despair. However, despite the poet's anguish, his recognition of Pascal's "gouffre" is not without positive implications: in a similar way to the Pascalian "libertin"'s acceptance of ennui, Baudelaire's sensation or impression of the "gouffre" could be, as Chérix puts it, "le prélude des illuminations".¹⁸⁵ The fact that the poet is a conscious being, that he has not become "insensible", like the "néant", proves that he has remained spiritually aware. For this reason, we must move onwards in the spiritual odyssey of Les Fleurs du Mal.

7 LE DIVERTISSEMENT

Ennui, the fastidious monster of which the reader was warned in "Au Lecteur", has shown its malevolent power by the end of "Spleen et Idéal". Possessed by this demon, the poet anxiously seeks a way to escape. As Fondane points out, "l'ennui...engendre un besoin immense d'excitants, susceptibles, dans sa croyance, de le tirer de son état d'apathie".¹⁸⁶ In other words, Baudelaire attempts to flee from his condition through "divertissements".

Thus, as we observed of Pascalian "divertissement", Baudelaire's outlook stems directly from ennui. However, "divertissement" for the poet constitutes a profound

development of Pascal's use of the term. Pascal regards it as a superficial effort made by man to avoid thinking of his wretchedness, while for Baudelaire it represents an authentic and serious undertaking to escape from the terrors of the "gouffre" in his quest for the absolute. For Pascal, it supplies a way of ignoring the ennui of our condition, but for Baudelaire, it marks the next stage of his spiritual voyage, once he has identified and recognized that very ennui.

Baudelaire devoted a whole volume of prose-writings, Les Paradis Artificiels, to these "divertissements", but, as our main study is concerned specifically with Les Fleurs du Mal, the former will only serve as an occasional point of reference.

The poet's first attempt to elude Spleen is by smothering his own sense of individuality, "en plongeant comme un nageur dans les flots innombrables des foules".¹³⁷ Thus, we come to "Tableaux Parisiens", the second part in the "secret architecture" of Les Fleurs du Mal which is taken up by impressionistic or visionary interpretations of scenes from city life.

Tableaux Parisiens

In "Spleen et Idéal", this second section is already anticipated by occasional glimpses of urban life, as in "Confession" ("la solennité de la nuit, comme un fleuve, / Sur Paris dormant ruisselait"- 7-8) and in the first "Spleen" ("Pluviôse, irrité contre la ville entière..."- 1). The poet yearns to broaden his vision of existence through sympathy for his fellow-man, to elude the obsessive sense of ennui through his search for the absolute within and through the multitudes of a great city: as he states in Fusées,

188 Ivresse religieuse des grandes villes.- Panthéisme.
Moi, c'est tous; tous, c'est moi. Tourbillon.

Undoubtedly, this represents no mere Pascalian "divertissement"; it acquires an essential spiritual dimension. The first poem, "Paysage", reflects a new hope of attaining some form of fulfillment within the urban landscape:

Car je serai plongé dans cette volupté
D'évoquer le Printemps avec ma volonté,
De tirer un soleil de mon cœur, et de faire
De mes pensers brûlants une tiède atmosphère.
(23-25)

The imagery of light (which expresses a positive side against the darkness of Spleen) continues in the following poem, "Le Soleil", where the sun is compared to the poet and to the role which he plays in life; his aspirations are renewed:

Quand ainsi qu'un poète, il descend dans les villes,
Il ennoblit le sort des choses les plus viles,
(17-18)

This early-morning sunlight points to a very definite time-structure in "Tableaux Parisiens", as the cycle begins with dawn, moves towards sunset in "Le Crépuscule du Soir", and concludes with dawn again in "Le Crépuscule du Matin". This frame-work is important, because the mood changes with this time-sequence, as the poet gradually recognizes the futility of the efforts that he makes to escape from ennui through the experience of city life.

The idyllic beginning, which is filled with hope, fades away as new amonquities are introduced in subsequent poems. "A Une Mendiante Rousse" presents an idealized evocation of beauty; but the harsh fact of poverty penetrates the poet's ecstasy. It certainly prepares the reader for the succeeding four poems, which form the core of "Tableaux Parisiens". All four express some aspects of the sordid realities of modern city life, although none of them are realistic or objective pieces: they represent the summit of Baudelaire's artistic genius, and were to influence profoundly other innovative poets for whom the concept of ennui plays a significant part, such as Jules Laforgue and T.S. Eliot. A common theme, closely related to ennui, runs through these poems: that of exile.

Exile remains a fundamental subject for Baudelaire, because he regards the poet's existence as one of solitude. Indeed, he writes in Mon Coeur Mis à Nu of "la vraie grandeur des parias".¹⁸⁹ This state of exile leads, manifestly, to a

feeling of loneliness which in turn generates an acute awareness of ennui, as is apparent in Pascal's and Baudelaire's writings.

"Le Cygne" is a remarkably structured composition, revealing great psychological depths through the poet's evocation of ancient and modern images. As Chérix notes,

190 Baudelaire, vaguant à travers Paris, en proie au spleen qui fait de lui un étranger parmi les hommes, est obsédé soudain par le sentiment de son exil.

Like "L'Horloge", this poem is dominated by the theme of memory. As he contemplates the famous classical and legendary character, the exiled widow, Andromache, a former queen and now a captive, weeping beside the river Simoïs, his "mémoire fertile"(5) is stimulated. This theme is supported by the subsidiary leit-motif of the changing face of Paris as opposed to the unchanging sense of exile and ennui:

Le vieux Paris n'est plus (la forme d'une ville
Change plus vite, hélas! que le coeur d'un mortel).
(7-8)

This paradoxical state of existence becomes intensified in the succeeding images, all of which express the incongruity of city life. The swan of the title epitomizes this duality as it searches desperately for water through the urban landscape:

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

Baignait nerveusement ses ailes dans la poudre.
(17-21)

This lack of water reflects the sterility of the poet's state of mind: his aspirations once again begin to evaporate. Although Paris changes, "rien dans ma mélancolie/ N'a bougé"(29-30). Furthermore, his "chers souvenirs sont plus lourds que des rocs"(32). The swan's restlessness adds to the picture of ennui. Indeed, as in the Pensées, ennui is closely linked to "inconstance"(B127,L24). Martin Turnell claims that "the swan is the symbol of the unrest of the modern exile - the unrest which torments the poet himself".¹⁹¹ This unrest is further reflected in the image of the consumptive black woman, far from her native Africa, tramping through the mud. "Le Cygne" concludes with the poet's recognition of his own exile, wherein he expresses his solidarity with all those who are estranged or alienated in the world:

Ainsi dans la forêt où mon esprit s'exile
Un vieux souvenir sonne à plein souffle du cor!
Je pense aux matelots oubliés dans une île,
Aux captifs, aux vaincus!...à bien d'autres encor!
(49-52)

The protagonists of the following three poems embody the modern exile within a purely urban setting: old men, old women and the blind. "Les Sept Vieillards" has inspired several dogmatically bizarre interpretations, which in turn have provoked equally prejudiced reactions. Perhaps it is

best to read the poem as a vision which emanates from the "fourmillante cité, cité pleine de rêves"(1). Martin Turnell links the seven old men, who are described as "ces sept monstres hideux"(40), to the seven kinds of animals depicted in "Au Lecteur". It is likely that his interpretation becomes too specific when he visualizes the seven men as an allegory of the Seven Deadly Sins; nevertheless, he points out a striking structural parallel.¹⁹² In "Au Lecteur", the poet describes an eighth kind of monster which is "plus laid, plus méchant, plus immonde"(33) - "l'Ennui". The eighth old man in "Les Sept Vieillards", from which the poet recoils, could possibly represent a similar evocation of Ennui:

Aurais-je, sans mourir, contemplé le huitième,
Sosie inexorable, ironique et fatal,
Dégoûtant Phénix, fils et père de lui-même?
- Mais je tournai le dos au cortège infernal.
(41-44)

Indeed, Baudelaire's conception of ennui has developed from the more romantic sense of personal anguish into the product of an essentially modern landscape. The description of the poet as "Blessé par le mystère et par l'absurdité"(48) recalls Pascal's vision of human existence even as it prefigures existentialist philosophy and the theatre of the Absurd. As Chérix observes, "ce vers pascalien marque l'égarement d'un esprit en face de ce qui dépasse son expérience et exaspère sa logique".¹⁹³

The final image of "Les Sept Vieillards" no longer reflects the waters of a spiritual journey, but a Pascalian

sense of restlessness and change: the poet is exiled upon a hostile sea:

Et mon âme dansait, dansait, vieille gabarre
Sans mâts, sur une mer monstrueuse et sans bords!
(51-52)

Remarkably, two major themes, which are closely related to Pascal's conception of ennui, appear in the poem, "inconstance" and "inquiétude", which are revealed by these lines:

Que celui-là qui rit de mon inquiétude,
Et qui n'est pas saisi d'un frisson fraternel,
Songe bien que malgré tant de décrépitude
Ces sept monstres hideux avaient l'air éternel!
(37-40)

As Pascal expressed it, "Condition de l'homme: inconstance, ennui, inquiétude" (Bl27,L24). Although it is probable that these words of Pascal did not directly influence Baudelaire in "Les Sept Vieillards", they nonetheless invite our attention to the analogous view of existence held by both writers.

"Les Petites Vieilles" reaffirms the poet's inability to escape from his predicament through an urban environment. Like the old men of the previous poem, the old women become "monstres", monsters no doubt, but also prodigies, a source of wonder, in the Latin sense. For, within the human wretchedness, there lies a well of spiritual compassion. Despite their outward appearance, these women are spiritual

beings. As the poet urges, "aimons-les! ce sont encor des âmes"(7). But, the city is uncompromisingly cruel towards these exiles, who become at the end victims of a malevolent God:

Où serez-vous demain, Êves octogénaires,
Sur qui pèse la griffe effroyable de Dieu?
(33-34)

The following sonnet, "Les Aveugles", is marked by a Pascalian sense of "gouffre". The tercets underline the dominance of Spleen and the poet's increased scepticism in his yearning towards an Ideal which might have been attained through the "Tableaux Parisiens":

Ils (les aveugles) traversent ainsi le noir illimité,
Ce frère du silence éternel. O cité!
Pendant qu'autour de nous tu chantes, ris et beugles,
Écorise 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?
(9-14)

As night falls in the following scenes, so too appears a sense of sadness and intimation of Death's approach. Pleasure becomes a curse (as we observe in "le fouet du plaisir" line 6 - in "Recueillement"); the poet longs for Death and the "néant", which in turn betray him:

¹⁹⁴Qu'envers nous le Néant est traître;
Que tout, même la Mort, nous ment.

Night develops into a cloak of crime, evil and illness in "Le Crépuscule du Soir". For those who are sick,

La sombre nuit les prend à la gorge; ils finissent
Leur destinée et vont vers le gouffre commun;
(32-33).

In the poem on gambling, "Le Jeu", Baudelaire dramatically presents another "divertissement" within the life of the city, which bears an evident relevance to Pascal's definition of "divertissement"; indeed, Pascal himself, as an observer of human behaviour, was no stranger to the gaming table. Both writers acknowledge the futility of this diversion, which plunges man further and further into a state of wretchedness. Baudelaire's attitude is characteristically ambiguous: he dreads but also envies the torments of the frenzied gamblers who at least prefer the anguish of risk to death and the hell of gambling to nothingness, because they experience a fullness of life which, however vain this "divertissement" may be, the poet lacks.

Et mon coeur s'effraya d'envier maint pauvre homme
Courant avec ferveur à l'abîme béant,
Et qui, soûl de son sang, préférerait en somme
La douleur à la mort et l'enfer au néant.
(21-24)

In "Danse Macabre", the skeleton epitomizes Baudelaire's preoccupation with Death; in many ways, this poem recalls Villon's "La Ballade des Pendus". Furthermore, the imagery of death reflects the poet's Pascalian consciousness of vertigo at the "néant" (or ennui) of existence and at the "néant" of

non-existence (death). The poet is trapped between a feeling of horror and a sensation of grotesque fascination, such as when he exclaims, "O charme d'un néant follement attié!"(16). And yet, later,

Le gouffre de tes yeux, plein d'horrioles pensées,
Exhale le vertige, et les danseurs prudents
Ne contempleront pas sans d'amères nausées
Le sourire éternel de tes trente-deux dents.
(37-40)

The dance becomes a mirror of the universe. Human existence itself appears laughable in the face of death, as the Parisian setting takes part in "le branle universel de la danse macabre"(51).

While the poet reflects upon the beauty of a woman in "L'Amour du Mensonge", he introduces a number of themes which recurred in Pascal's Pensées. Firstly, the woman incarnates the "néant" - the void - of existence, with "l'ennui de ton regard profond"(4), as the poet describes her. Then, his wish to avoid the truth of his existence corresponds closely to Pascal's meditation on "Amour-Propre", which he calls "une illusion volontaire" and which is in effect "une aversion pour la vérité"(B100, L978). In the final stanza of the poem, Baudelaire acknowledges his own attempts to flee from the truth:

Mais ne suffit-il pas que tu sois l'apparence,
Pour réjouir un coeur qui fuit la vérité?
Qu'importe ta bêtise ou ton indifférence?
Masque ou décor, salut! J'adore ta beauté.
(21-24)

In these poems, as in those which follow, not only does darkness invade the landscape, human or material, but the setting becomes distinctly autumnal. Death, as symbolized by the onslaught of winter, is never far away. Even a brief evocation of spring, after autumn and winter, in "Brumes et Pluies", anticipates, for the poet, death in the city:

O fins d'automne, hivers, printemps trempés de boue,
Endormeuses saisons! je vous aime et vous loue
D'envelopper ainsi mon coeur et mon cerveau
D'un linceul vaporeux et d'un vague tombeau.
(1-4)

"Rêve Parisien" provides an answer to Baudelaire's attempt to elude Solenn through the urban landscape. Martin Turnell describes the prison of man's existence as twofold:

195 He escapes from himself simply to find that he has become a prisoner in an inhuman world which can only drive him back into the self from which he has escaped with the realization that all the exits are blocked and that there is no way out.

The very artificiality of the poet's dream thrusts him back into a confrontation with "le gouffre", which is characterized by "Un silence d'éternité"(52).

The second part of the poem features the state of ennui into which the poet has returned. His use of the word, "taudis", reminds one of "La Chambre Double", where he realizes that "ce taudis, ce séjour de l'éternel ennui, est bien le mien".¹⁹⁶ All attempts to seek refuge within the city have failed, and the poet remembers the remorseless passing of time:

En rouvrant mes yeux pleins de flamme
J'ai vu l'horreur de mon taudis,
Et senti, rentrant dans mon âme,
La pointe des soucis maudits;

La pendule aux accents funèbres
Sonnait brutalement midi,
Et le ciel versait des ténèbres
Sur ce triste monde engourdi.
(53-60)

The final poem of this section, "Le Crépuscule du Matin", is infused with a sense of exhaustion. Even the poet sinks into a state of listlessness as the appearance of the light of dawn signals the disappearance of all dreams:

L'air est plein du frisson des choses qui s'enfuient,
Et l'homme est las d'écrire et la femme d'aimer.
(10-11)

But the final image of the poem indicates that daylight means the start of an honest day of toil in the city: in contrast to "les débauchés" who are "brisés par leurs travaux"(24) of the night before, Paris, still "sombre"(27), is personified as a "vieillard laborieux"(28). Despite the poet's failure to find comfort amongst the crowds of Paris, at least there remains one positive element within the city - a capacity and willingness, despite all hardship, to work. However, in his attempt to forget the ennui which is symbolized by the urban setting, he feels compelled to move towards another form of "divertissement". As Pierre Citron states of the function of Paris,

¹⁹⁷La beauté solennelle du paysage urbain donne naissance à une vision intérieure qui est le paysage même de l'ennui dévorant.

Le Vin

The new "divertissement" which the poet now seeks will come from wine, intoxication, drugs and other "paradis artificiels" which in themselves drive man to escape from his ennui through other more perverse forms of diversion. This section therefore represents perhaps no more than a transition. Wine provides temporary means whereby to avoid the ravaging effects of Spleen: as he urges the reader in the prose-poem, "Enivrez-vous":

198 Il est l'heure de s'enivrer! Pour n'être pas les
esclaves martyrisés du Temps, enivrez-vous;
enivrez-vous sans cesse! De vin, de poésie ou de
vertu, à votre guise.

As the title of "L'Âme du Vin" elucidates, wine provides a spiritual substitute for the ennui experienced by his own soul. An important function of wine stems from its ability to induce sleep, which constitutes another way of escaping from the realities of existence: indeed, he writes in "Le Vin de l'Assassin":

- Me voilà libre et solitaire!
Je serai ce soir ivre mort;
Alors, sans peur et sans remord,
Je me coucherai sur la terre,

Et je dormirai comme un chien!
(41-45)

The outward bravado of these lines conceals the poet's inner anguish, for, as we have observed with both Pascal and

Baudelaire, solitude is inseparable from ennui. Thus, wine can offer only temporary solace. In "Le Vin du Solitaire", the poet declares that wine gives solitary man "l'espoir, la jeunesse et la vie"(12), all of which is ultimately only an illusion. Nevertheless, this section ends on a triumphant note in "Le Vin des Amants", when the poet aspires towards other diversions:

Nous fuirons sans repos ni trêves
Vers le paradis de mes rêves!
(13-14)

Fleurs du Mal

The poet now descends into and explores the realm of perversity and vice in "Fleurs du Mal": by delving into forbidden worlds, he hopes to attain some form of solace. Remarkably, the title of this section corresponds almost exactly to that of the whole volume, were it not for the absence of the definite article, because the poet seeks here to deliver himself from ennui through absolute evil. His search now draws close to its climax.

The sonnet which introduces this section is especially relevant to our study of ennui and "divertissement":

La Destruction

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

Parfois il prend, sachant mon grand amour de l'Art,
La forme la plus séduisante des femmes,

Et, sous de spécieux prétextes de cafarl,
Accoutume ma lèvre à des philtres infâmes.

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

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

A major theme in this poem, that of religious ostracism ("loin du regard de Dieu..."), reappears throughout "Fleurs du Mal". While taking a delight in perversity, the poet is also haunted by an acute consciousness of guilt. The recurrence of words such as "destruction", "volupté" and "débauche" accentuates the poet's ambiguous feelings of revolt and remorse. The repetition of imagery related to "la Mort" maintains in the reader an awareness of what lies ahead.

"La Destruction" has been the subject of several extreme interpretations: even usually reliable commentators, such as Crépet, Blin and Martin Turnell, have gone so far as to suggest that the poem concerns masturbation, one of "ces habitudes lamentables contractées peut-être dans des dortoirs d'internat".¹⁹⁹ Yet surely "La Destruction" refers to nothing more specific than the devastating effects of "divertissement", which is personified in "le Démon" of the first line? Furthermore, as is evident in line 11, Ennui plays a key role. Antoine Adam offers a more pertinent reading of the poem:

200 Il serait plus exact d'observer que le poète reprend ici le thème de l'Ennui. L'expérience d'exister, c'est l'expérience de l'Ennui, c'est une plainte infinie et monotone. Mais à ce thème qui remoussait déjà la série de "Soleen et Idéal", voici que Baudelaire en ajoute un autre et qui donne la clef de la série nouvelle. Affolé d'ennui, l'homme nourrit son imagination d'images de violence, de tortures, de plaies saignantes. Par des rêves volontairement entretenus, il s'efforce d'échapper au soleen, de réveiller ses nerfs épuisés...

The "Démon" of "divertissement" controls the whole poem, leading man "loin du regard de Dieu". Although we cannot construe Baudelaire's God as specifically Christian, the poet tends towards the same view as Pascal's affirmation that "Tous les grands divertissements sont dangereux pour la vie chrétienne" (Bl1, L764). In the second quatrain, Baudelaire describes the different forms of "divertissement", and, in the two tercets, he reveals its consequences: "fatigue", "confusion", "blessures", "Destruction", and an even deeper awareness of Ennui.

An ambiguous sense of delight and guilt in his revolt is expressed in "Une Martyre", where the poet speaks of "Une coupable joie" (33). Through his vision of the dead woman, Baudelaire emphasizes once more the dangers of "divertissement" as man tries to escape from ennui:

Elle est bien jeune encore! - Son âme exaspérée
Et ses sens par l'ennui mordus
S'étaient-ils entr'ouverts à la meute altérée
Des désirs errants et perdus?
(41-44)

Discussing the nature of these "désirs", Antoine Adam

declares: "c'est exactement 'les fleurs du mal', le vertige, l'appel du gouffre, la tentation de se perdre".²⁰¹

It has been suggested that Baudelaire composed the three Lesbian poems, "Lesbos" and the two "Femmes Damnées", in order to add to the "perversity" of "Fleurs du mal". However, rather than writing of what he personally considers a deviation, his principal aim is to express a rebellion against the puritanical bourgeois society and its hypocritical norms which condemn lesbianism as perverse.²⁰² And yet, the poems are marked also by a sense of religious guilt.

With the repetition of the first line at the end of each verse, "Lesbos" recalls a sacred incantation, an impression which is supported by the recurrence of such words as "rite", "culte", "secret" and "mystère".

The poet's ambiguous perception of this revolt is reflected in "Femmes Damnées (Delphine et Hippolyte)": he is drawn towards the almost religious purity of the two women's love, and yet he remains obsessed by the godless ennui of existence. Delphine regards the love which she expresses for Hippolyte as spiritual and touching upon the eternal:

Toi, mon âme et mon cœur, mon tout et ma moitié,
Tourne vers moi tes yeux pleins d'azur et d'étoiles!
(36-37)

Hippolyte, on the other hand, represents the other side of a

dual personality, which is marked by a sense of guilt and of ennui: "je souffre et je suis inquiète"(43), she explains. Later, her cry becomes more desperate:

Je sens élargir dans mon être
Un abîme béant; cet abîme est mon cœur!
(75-76)

By the end of the poem, Soleen has assumed control; the poet himself remains haunted by a Pascalian "gouffre" as he contemplates the lesbians' descent into hell:

- Descendez, descendez, lamentables victimes,
Descendez le chemin de l'enfer éternel!
Plongez au plus profond du gouffre...
(85-87)

As with those "divertissements" which he has already encountered, the poet realizes that, rather than promoting the attainment of any consciousness of the Ideal, this form of revolt drives away man's potential grasp of eternity. The poem concludes with the strongly expressed words: "fuyez l'infini que vous portez en vous!"(104).

The second "Femmes Damnées" continues the dual theme of delight and remorse. "Le Divertissement" provides temporary relief from man's sense of guilt at his Original Sin: indeed, the poet addresses Bacchus, god of wine, as "endormeur des remords anciens!"(16). Despite the possibility of this brief respite from remorse, he is still haunted by the "gouffre". Some "Femmes damnées"

viennent, dans le bois sombre et les nuits solitaires,
L'écume du plaisir aux larmes des tourments.
(19-20)

In his anguished attempt to elude ennui through this revolt, Baudelaire identifies himself with those human beings who are regarded by society as perverse, and he shares their guilt:

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!
(25-26)

The "soifs inassouvies" of these women seem to stand for Baudelaire's own sense of failure in his attempts to quench his thirst for the infinite, although the poet's role after "Tableaux Parisiens" becomes principally that of witness rather than participant. Yet, all he finds it in himself to do is to plunge himself still further into perversity, as we see in his ironical personification of "la Débauche" and "la Mort" as "deux aimables filles"(1) in the following poem, "Les Deux Bonnes Soeurs". Later, while the poet gradually rejects "la Débauche", Death gains in strength until it assumes ultimately an all-powerful role in the final section of Les Fleurs du Mal.

"La Fontaine de Sang" reveals the failure of "divertissement" to heal the poet's awareness of ennui. As he exclaims in exasperation,

J'ai demandé souvent à des vins caotieux
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 pas pour moi qu'un matelas
d'aiguilles
Fait pour donner à boire à ces cruelles filles!
(9-14)

Thus, instead of dulling his senses, these "divertissements" sharpen his awareness and sensitivity, confining him more completely in the very state from which he is trying to escape.

The following three poems, "Allégorie", "La Béatrice" and "Les Métamorphoses du Vampire", all constitute variations on the theme of prostitution. In these pieces, the poet alternates between feelings of defiance and remorse. However, "Un Voyage à Cythère" sums up perfectly the main preoccupations of "Fleurs du Mal" and, through the imagery of a sea-journey, foreshadows the final poem of the book, "Le Voyage". Martin Turnell points out further parallels between this poem and "Le Voyage":

²⁰³The poems both describe the vain quest for an Eldorado; they both deal with the conflict between aspiration and reality; and in both the opening movement of expansion is followed by a movement of sudden contraction which leads finally to a mood of resignation or despair.

Although Turnell's assertion that both poems conclude on a note of despair is debatable, especially in relation to "Le Voyage", the importance of "Un Voyage à Cythère" comes from Baudelaire's ultimate rejection of "divertissement". His sense of religious guilt has intensified, and anticipates a

Final perception of ennui in the section devoted to "La Mort". In this poem, the movement from aspiration towards the infinite to recognition of man's wretchedness, marks yet again the failure of the Ideal and the triumph of Spleen.

The poem opens in the radiance of joy and hope: "Cythère", the legendary island of love, promises fulfilment and happiness:

Mon coeur, comme un oiseau, voltigeait tout joyeux
Et planait librement à l'entour des cordages;
Le navire roulait sous un ciel sans nuages,
Comme un ange enivré du soleil radieux.
(1-4)

However, this optimism is deflated in the second verse, when a voice (probably the poet's) asks, "Quelle est cette île triste et noire?"(5). It so turns out that, rather like T.S. Eliot's Waste Land,

- Cythère n'était plus qu'un terrain des plus maigres,
Un désert rocailleux troublé par des cris aigres.
(18-19)

As the travellers near the coast in their ship, they notice gallows with a recently hanged man being devoured by birds of prey. Cythera is no Eldorado; it is a place of punishment and expiation for sins. Baudelaire's acute sense of moral guilt has come to the fore: he recognizes the ultimate destructiveness of all "divertissements". Indeed, Baudelaire represents the modern equivalent of Villon: the grotesque image of the hanged man, allied to the consciousness of moral

corruption, echoes Villon's "La Ballade des Pendus", especially the third stanza:

La pluie nous a debués et lavés,
Et le soleil dessechiés et noircis;
Pies, corbeaux, nous ont les yeux cavés,
Et arrachié la barbe et les sourcis.
Jamais nul tems nous ne sommes assis;
Puis ça, puis là, comme le vent varie,
A son plaisir sans cesser nous charie,
Plus becqueté d'oiseaux que dés à coudre.
Ne soiez donc de notre confrerie;
Mais priez Dieu que tous nous veuille absoudre.

The last line, which appears at the end of each verse as a refrain, displays Villon's feeling of religious remorse: the last line of "Un Voyage à Cythère" conveys a similar image.

As the poem progresses, the poet gradually identifies himself with the hanged man. As he states, "tes douleurs sont les miennes!"(45). With this realization, the allegory becomes superfluous to the poet's inner state, which is indistinguishable from the image of the hanged man:

Dans son île, ô Vénus! je n'ai trouvé debout
Qu'un gibet symbolique où pendait mon image...
- Ah! Seigneur! donnez-moi la force et le courage
De contempler mon coeur et mon corps sans dégoût!
(57-60)

As R-B Chérix states, "La lugubre tragédie de Cythère s'achève sur un distique que Pascal eût murmuré non sans un frémissement".²⁰⁴ This vision of humanity is indeed closely related to Pascal's conception of the wretchedness of man: as he exclaims at the end of a meditation on "divertissement", "Que le coeur de l'homme est creux et plein

"ordure" (RI43,LI39). This concept of "ordure" seems to anticipate the image of mud which recurs frequently in Les Fleurs du Mal. But, furthermore, as at the end of "Un Voyage à Cythère", Baudelaire associates disgust with the vices of man. In Les Paradis Artificiels, for example, he cries out, "Hélas! les vices de l'homme... ordures de la route".²⁰⁵

La Révolte

In rejecting all forms of diversion, the poet makes a last desperate attempt to escape from the tragic reality of human life through Revolt. Baudelaire drew much of his influence from the rich heritage of the theme of revolt in the works of romantic writers such as Louis Maigrin, Byron and Hoffmann. His use of figures like Christ, Cain and Satan underscores a revolt which is both social and metaphysical, since the poet's quest for spiritual salvation now leads him to abandon those social and theological norms which have in their turn rejected him. Several commentators have branded Baudelaire a Satanist in this section. Yet, on the contrary, despite their Manichean attributes, these poems emphasize the poet's authentic efforts to attain inner spiritual truth. Satan symbolizes the anguish of Solen, as do the dramatic portrayals of the betrayal of Christ and of the triumph of Cain. Nevertheless, these attempts at Revolt become superficial in the face of the ultimate reality, Death. The poet is forced to move to the final stage of his odyssey, "La Mort".

La Mort

The sense of despair and tension which has dominated the book disappears at the beginning of this section and is transformed into a state of jubilation and exaltation. Death represents no temporary means of forgetting oneself, but fulfilment and a desired outlet.

"La Mort des Amants" expresses the certainty that death will revive love. In "La Mort des Pauvres", we find that

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;
(1-4).

"La Mort des Artistes" suggests the possibility of eternity, through death, for the artist; death "fera s'épanouir les fleurs de leur cerveau"(14); remarkably, the "fleurs" (the symbol of beauty in Les Fleurs du Mal) dominate here, and not "le mal". The image of darkness, which earlier represented the terror inspired by the "gouffre" and the "néant", now becomes "apaisant"(6) in "La Fin de la Journée". Furthermore, the "ténèbres" are "rafraîchissantes"(14).

"Le Rêve d'un curieux" displays the characteristic ambiguity of Baudelaire: the poet dreams of death, and, like an excited child, is both frightened and exultant; he feels "Désir mêlé d'horreur"(4), "Angoisse et vif espoir"(5) and finds that "ma torture était âpre et délicieuse"(7). As he

wakes from his dream at the end of the sonnet, he experiences a sense of disillusionment, both with death and with finding that "j'attendais encore"(14); nothing new has happened.

By now, the ambience is appropriate for the great conclusion of Les Fleurs du Mal, where the theme of ennui assumes its uttermost significance, in "Le Voyage".

6 LE VOYAGE

This poem represents the culmination of the poet's spiritual journeying on this earth; but, as the title suggests, the voyage is never complete; indeed, if it were finished, Baudelaire undoubtedly would have entitled it "La Fin du Voyage". Hélène Cassou-Yager, in comparing "Le Rêve d'un Curieux" and "Le Voyage", exclaims that "Ce n'est pas sur l'amertume d'une éternelle attente que s'achève l'oeuvre, mais sur l'élan du grand départ".²⁰⁶ This point of view is confirmed by the fifth stanza:

Mais les vrais voyageurs sont ceux-là seuls qui partent
Pour partir; coeurs légers, semblables aux ballons,
De leur fatalité jamais ils ne s'écartent,
Et, sans savoir pourquoi, disent toujours: Allons!
(17-20)

Just as Baudelaire invited the reader ("mon semblable, -mon frère!"), to participate at the beginning in the spiritual journey of Les Fleurs du Mal, here at the end the

travellers are seen as our spiritual companions and brothers. Baudelaire's frequent use of "nous" throughout the poem confirms the universal and collective quest of man: the poet speaks for all humanity. In this regard, one should likewise appreciate the skilful use of persona in the Pensées: in several fragments, Pascal shifts between "on" and "nous",

207 bringing the absent speaker and hearer into the same category by the assumption of a shared humanity,

as Richard Parish puts it, we find such a striking shift of pronouns in the following meditation from the Pensées:

Nous sommes glaisants de nous recoser dans la société de nos semblables, misérables comme nous, impuissants comme nous; ils ne nous aideront pas: on mourra seul. (B211, L151)

At this point, Baudelaire's use of the theme of death diverges notably from Pascal's own use of it. In this poem, the poet confronts death with a full awareness of its presence. For Pascal, on the other hand, the vanity of "divertissement" provides a simple way of forgetting death:

Les hommes n'ayant pu quérir la mort, la misère, l'ignorance, ils se sont avisés, pour se rendre heureux, de n'y point penser. (B169, L133)

Baudelaire's search for the absolute gains momentum in this very journey towards death. However, near the end of "Le Voyage", he too recognizes, with a feeling of regret, the folly of any kind of evasion; time will continue to pass, and death itself cannot be looked upon as a means of escape:

Faut-il partir? rester? Si tu peux rester, reste;
Pars, s'il le faut. L'un court, et l'autre se tapit
Pour tromper l'ennemi vigilant et funeste,
Le Temps! Il est, hélas! des coureurs sans répit,

Comme le Juif errant et comme les apôtres,
A qui rien ne suffit, ni wagon ni vaisseau,
Pour fuir ce rétiaire infâme;
(113-119)

Certainly, one of the major themes in this poem is that of disillusionment. As Chérix points out,

200 C'est une méditation sur la vanité du divertissement; c'est le discours amer d'un Pascal moins abstrait sur l'inquiétude humaine qui neut l'imagination, cette "maîtresse d'erreur", et la fait buter contre d'inolacables réalités.

This worldly disillusionment runs through much of the poem, and is contrasted with the leit-motif of eternal life, which gains esoeial significance at the end of "Le Voyage".

In the third section, the voyagers are asked to give an account of their travels:

Faites, pour égayer l'ennui de nos prisons,
Passer sur nos escrits, tendus comme une toile,
Vos souvenirs avec leurs cadres d'horizons.
(54-56)

Those who have not travelled attribute their ennui to the stagnation of their lives; but, when they ask the travellers to recite tales of their exotic adventures, they receive the following reply:

Nous avons vu des astres
Et des flots; nous avons vu des sables aussi;
Et, malgré bien des chocs et d'imprévus désastres,

Vous nous sommes souvent ennuyés, comme ici.
(57-60)

As with Pascal, movement and restlessness serve only to accentuate the ennui of man's condition. Even in their travels, the voyagers have experienced ennui. Indeed, the restlessness of man in Les Fleurs du Mal is related to his incapacity to attain any form of absolute, and it recalls Pascal's vision of humanity. Earlier in "Le Voyage", Baudelaire writes,

Singulière fortune où le but se déplace,
Et, n'étant nulle part, peut être n'importe où!
(29-30)

This echoes Pascal's famous meditation on the "disproportion" of man: "C'est une sphère dont le centre est partout, la circonférence nulle part"(B72,L199). The travellers of Baudelaire's poem embody the wretchedness of man's uncertainty, in his anguished search for fulfilment. As we have shown, the image of the sea is central to Les Fleurs du Mal, implying positive but also negative functions. The negative aspect, that of the restlessness which is provoked by ennui, can be found in Pascal's similar use of sea-imagery: "Nous voquons sur un milieu vaste, toujours incertains et flottants, poussés d'un bout vers l'autre" (B72,L199).

The conception of moral evil, which is vital to Baudelaire, remains a pivot in "Le Voyage", and is closely

associated with ennui, thus emphasizing again the fact that ennui for Baudelaire possesses simultaneously moral and spiritual significance: as the travellers exclaim, in response to further questioning,

Pour ne pas oublier la chose capitale,
Nous avons vu partout, et sans l'avoir cherché,
Du haut jusques en bas de l'échelle fatale,
Le spectacle ennuyeux de l'immortel péché:
(85-88).

At the beginning of the next movement (VII), the terrors provoked by ennui are vividly portrayed:

Le monde, monotone et petit, aujourd'hui,
Hier, demain, toujours, nous fait voir notre image:
Une oasis d'horreur dans un désert d'ennui!
(110-112)

The destructive powers of ennui have reached such proportions that even horror seems like an oasis of relief in comparison with the desert of ennui.

However, ennui cannot be interpreted as entirely negative, as Hélène Cassou-Yager has suggested it to be.²⁰⁹ Like Pascalian ennui, which leads man to reflect on metaphysical questions, Baudelairian ennui underlines the natural wretchedness of man and prompts him to search for some form of spiritual fulfilment, as is implied by the imagery of voyaging. In order to reach the beyond, man must plunge first into the unknown sea of darkness, of ennui:

Nous nous embarquerons sur la mer des Ténèbres
Avec le cœur joyeux d'un jeune passager.
(125-126)

As Robert Vivier elaborates,

210 La mort est à la fois la grande inconnue et le seul espoir de délivrance. Par une ambiguïté qui fait tout le tragique de l'existence, vers elle se tournent en même temps l'Angoisse et l'Espérance humaines.

This double aspect of anguish and hope, which Vivier points out, indicates the resolution of that other major tension within Les Fleurs du Mal, "Spleen et Idéal". Death alone, which is itself ambiguous, can unite the two, and can afford an access to the infinite. The very mystery and uncertainty of this absolute recall that major component of Pascal's projected Apology, "le Dieu caché", the hidden God. As Pascal wrote in a letter to Mlle de Roannez (from which we have already quoted),

211 si Dieu se découvrait continuellement aux hommes, il n'y aurait point de mérite à le croire; et s'il ne se découvrait jamais, il y aurait peu de foi.

By accepting that he must plunge into the uncertainty of death, Baudelaire commits himself to an equivalent faith. Indeed, in the final section of "Le Voyage", the poet rejects the ennui of this life ("ce pays"). But, in accepting death, his feelings remain ambiguous: he both dreads and desires the world beyond the range of man's perceptions (it is a "poison" which brings comfort). Yet, this future after death (be it Heaven or Hell) must be preferable to the ennui of existence; and thus, he entrusts himself to a final spiritual journey into the Unknown.

O Mort, vieux capitaine, il est temps! levons l'ancre!
Ce pays nous ennuie, ô Mort! Appareillons!
Si le ciel et la mer sont noirs comme de l'encre,
Nos cœurs que tu connais sont remplis de rayons!

Verse-nous ton poison pour qu'il nous réconforte!
Nous voulons, tant ce feu nous brûle le cerveau,
Plonger au fond du gouffre, Enfer ou Ciel, qu'importe?
Au fond de l'Inconnu pour trouver du nouveau!
(137-144)

Manifestly, Baudelaire, having experienced the Soleen of existence, has come, like Pascal, to the realization that "il n'y a de bien en cette vie qu'en l'espérance d'une autre vie" (3194, L427).

But what is the ultimate solution which Baudelaire offers? Pascal's solution is evident; Baudelaire's is less direct. As Hélène Cassou-Yager observes of Pascal,

²¹²alors que l'espérance de l'immortalité le conduit vers l'acceptation des mystères chrétiens, la mort reste une troublante énigme pour Baudelaire: bien qu'elle apparaisse comme la délivrance et le dépassement de "l'horrible vie", elle n'en demeure pas moins une source constante d'effroi métaphysique.

In his famous "Mémorial", Pascal speaks of "Certitude. Certitude. Sentiment. Joie. Paix".²¹³ Despite an element of hope, Baudelaire's solution, on the other hand, offers none of these convictions. Like the old tramp who, "piétinant dans la boue, / Rêve, le nez en l'air, de brillants paradis" (46), the poet retains an awareness of possibilities; but nowhere can there be found any certainty. Thus, Death, being inevitable, presents no clear-cut solutions.

It has been suggested that it is the poet's Art which attains the true infinite. Indeed, as Baudelaire affirms in the prose-poem, "Une Mort Héroïque",

2141 l'ivresse de l'Art est plus apte que toute autre
à voiler les terreurs du gouffre.

But, his use of the word "voiler" exposes the very frailty of this attempt to avoid the terrors of ennui. At first glance, it would seem that Art produces no more effect than other "divertissements".

Yet, all that survives of the poet's life (with all its ambiguities) is his creative output. In addition to this aspect, we must bear in mind the Epilogue which Baudelaire planned for Les Fleurs du Mal but never completed. In it, he discloses his belief that something lasting has been achieved through his Art:

215 Car j'ai de chaque chose extrait la quintessence,
Tu m'as donné ta boue et j'en ai fait de l'or.

Throughout Les Fleurs du Mal, Baudelaire maintains a hope, sometimes even a knowledge, of the healing powers of his poetry, because, as Robert Vivier puts it, his work represents "un pont miraculeux entre la matière et l'esprit".²¹⁶ Furthermore, the poet sees his Art as the fusion of the concrete and the spiritual; his role ordains him to take the part of an intercessor between the human and the divine, as we saw in "Bénédiction":

Je sais que vous gardez une place au Poète
Dans les rangs bienheureux des saintes Légions...
(61-62)

Thus, Baudelaire has somehow attained the absolute through no other means than his poetry. To use again Vivier's words,

217 Poursuivie à travers toutes les expériences de la vie, la solution du problème baudelairien a été trouvée en dehors et au-dessus d'elles, dans la poésie.

If anything has managed to overcome Ennui, the negative force which has dominated the whole of Les Fleurs du Mal, it is his Art.

At the conclusion of Les Fleurs du Mal, several ambiguities remain, which the poet surrenders to the uncertainty of Death. But, beyond the death of the poet himself, posterity enables us to interpret and to recognize the ultimate powers of Baudelaire's poetry. It is our duty as readers (whom Baudelaire addresses in "Au Lecteur" as his "brothers"), in hindsight, to evaluate the final solutions offered by his Art.

But nobody can show a greater understanding of the way in which Baudelaire overcame the ennui of a godless existence than a writer who lived two centuries before him and with whom he shared a common vision of existence, namely Pascal. Two meditations sum up between them the authenticity of what can ultimately be regarded as Baudelaire's religion, his Art:

Pour les religions, il faut être sincère: vrais
païens, vrais juifs, vrais chrétiens. (3590, L480)

...je ne puis approuver que ceux qui cherchent en
gémissant. (3421, L405)

NOTES: CHAPTER II

- 1 This term is used by Madeleine Bouchez in L'Ennui.
- 2 W. Jankélévitch, L'aventure, l'ennui, le sérieux, p. 112.
- 3 Molière, Don Juan, I, ii, from Ceuvres Complètes, volume II (Paris: Pléiade, 1971), p. 35.
- 4 Robert McBride, Aspects of Seventeenth Century French Drama and Thought (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 119.
- 5 B126/L78
- 6 Molière, Le Misanthrope, V, iv, from Ceuvres Complètes, II, p. 217.
- 7 Ibid., p. 155.
- 8 Racine, Andromaque, V, i, from Théâtre (Paris: Pléiade, 1969), p. 293.
- 9 Racine, Bérénice, II, iv, from Théâtre, p. 488.
- 10 La Bruyère, Les Caractères, ch. XI, 101 (Paris: Larousse, 1934), p. 34.
- 11 Marcel A. Ruff, L'Esprit du Mal et l'Esthétique Baudelairienne (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1955), p. 36.
- 12 Revue des Sciences Humaines, oct-nov 1960, pp. 459-467.
- 13 Ibid., p. 459.
- 14 All quotations from this treatise will be taken from Madeleine Bouchez's L'Ennui, pp. 48-50.
- 15 Voltaire, Candide, edited by J.H. Brumfitt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 147.
- 16 Ibid., p. 132.

- 17 Ibid., p. 149.
- 18 Baudelaire, Œuvres Complètes, I, p. 669.
- 19 Diderot, Correspondance, vol. III, (Paris: Minuit, 1957), pp. 199-200.
- 20 J-J Rousseau, La Nouvelle Héloïse, III, vi, from Œuvres Complètes, II (Paris: Pléiade, 1961), p. 317.
- 21 As quoted by Bouchez, p. 46.
- 22 As quoted by Mauzi, p. 452.
- 23 Ibid., p. 461.
- 24 Robert Mauzi, L'idée du bonheur au XVIIIe siècle (Paris: Armand Colin, 1967).
- 25 As quoted by Bouchez, p. 47.
- 26 A. Hood, "Le Romantisme et l'Existence Contemporaine", from Mercur de France, Nov. 1952, p. 440.
- 27 Chateaubriand, René, from Œuvres romanesques et Voyages, I (Paris: Pléiade, 1969), p. 128.
- 28 Ibid., p. 128.
- 29 Ibid., p. 130.
- 30 Baudelaire, Correspondance I (Paris, Pléiade, 1966), p. 451.
- 31 As cited by Joseph Toinet in his Dissertations Littéraires (Paris: Ecole, 1955), p. 106.
- 32 Musset, On ne badine pas avec l'amour, II, v, from Théâtre Complet (Paris: Pléiade, 1947), p. 244.
- 33 Vigny, Œuvres Complètes II (Paris: Pléiade, 1965), p. 999.

- 34 See note 26.
- 35 Stendhal, Le Rouge et le Noir, Book II, ch. iv, from Romans (Paris: Pléiade, 1956), p. 457.
- 36 As quoted by Bouchez, p. 75.
- 37 Bouchez, pp. 73-30.
- 38 Benjamin Fondane, Baudelaire et l'expérience du gouffre (Paris: Pierre Seghers, 1947), p. 325.
- 39 Ibid., p. 326.
- 40 Herbert S. Gochberg's statement in his brief article on "Baudelaire's Reference to Pascal in 'Le Gouffre'" (Romance Notes, 1960), pp. 9-11, that "the presence of Pascal does not indicate that Baudelaire had any profound knowledge of Pascal or any enduring interest in him" is blatantly false, as we hope to prove in this chapter.
- 41 Oeuvres Complètes I, p. 314.
- 42 Pierre Citron, La Poésie de Paris dans la Littérature Française de Rousseau à Baudelaire, vol. 2 (Paris: Minuit, 1961), p. 373.
- 43 Oeuvres Complètes I, p. 313.
- 44 Ibid., p. 700.
- 45 Ibid. II, p. 633.
- 46 Salon de 1859, Ibid., p. 1391.
- 47 Réflexions sur Quelques-uns de mes Contemporains, Ibid., p. 130.
- 48 Maurice Chapelain, "Baudelaire et Pascal", Revue de France, 1 Nov. 1933, p. 97.
- 49 "De L'Histoire de Neuilly de l'Abbé Bellanger", Oeuvres Complètes II, p. 55.

- 50 Oeuvres Complètes I, p. 706.
- 51 Ibid. II, p. 795.
- 52 "Au Lecteur", line 9.
- 53 "L'Irrémédiable", lines 29-32.
- 54 A. Adam, p. 420.
- 55 "Les Litanies de Satan", line 2.
- 56 Robert Vivier, L'Originalité de Baudelaire (Brussels: Académie Royale, 1926), p. 122.
- 57 "Les Litanies de Satan", line 45.
- 58 Jacques Lacarrière, Les Gnostiques (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), p. 10.
- 59 Oeuvres Complètes I, pp. 682-683.
- 60 Lacarrière, p. 11.
- 61 Cf. "Il y a eu dans mon enfance une époque d'amour passionné pour toi", letter to his mother, 5th May 1861, Correspondance II, p. 153.
- 62 Ibid., p. 151.
- 63 Louis Aquettant, Baudelaire (Paris: Cerf, 1973), p. 48.
- 64 Oeuvres Complètes I, p. 649.
- 65 Ibid., p. 650.
- 66 Ibid., p. 653.
- 67 Ibid., p. 659.
- 68 Aquettant, p. 48.
- 69 Oeuvres Complètes I, p. 673.

- 70 Ibid., p. 671.
- 71 Ibid., p. 706.
- 72 Cf 8513/1930, 2532/1926, 3663/1943.
- 73 Mon Coeur Mis à Nu, Oeuvres Complètes I, p. 671.
- 74 Ibid., p. 695.
- 75 Ibid., p. 681.
- 76 Ibid., p. 705.
- 77 Ibid. II, p. 532.
- 78 Ibid. I, p. 409.
- 79 Ibid., p. 678.
- 80 Jean Prévost, Baudelaire (Paris: Mercure de France, 1964), p. 85.
- 81 Hélène Cassou-Yaeger, La Polyvalence du thème de la mort dans "Les Fleurs du Mal" de Baudelaire (Paris: Librairie A.G. Nizet, 1979), p. 84.
- 82 Ruff, L'Esprit du Mal et l'Esthétique Baudelairienne, p. 153.
- 83 L'Oeuvre et la Vie de Delacroix, Oeuvres Complètes II, p. 767.
- 84 Oeuvres Complètes I, p. 697.
- 85 Correspondance I, p. 337.
- 86 Ibid. II, p. 141.
- 87 Ibid., p. 610.
- 88 This quotation appears in numerous commentaries on the poem, including those by Crépet and Blin, Adam and Chérix.

- 89 Adam, p. 453.
- 90 Correspondance II, p. 281. R-B Chérix, in his Commentaire des "Fleurs du Mal" (Geneva: Cailler, 1949), pp. 474-475, has given an excellent summary of the comments of the poet's contemporaries on his newly found religious zeal towards the end of his life.
- 91 Pascal, L'Œuvre, pp. 328-329.
- 92 As quoted by Adam, p. 450.
- 93 Fondane, p. 327.
- 94 Paul Bourget, Essai de Psychologie Contemporaine I (Paris: Plon, 1926, first published 1885), p. 12.
- 95 Ibid., p. 15.
- 96 Prévost, p. 176.
- 97 Martin Turnell, Baudelaire (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1953), p. 98.
- 98 letter, 21 January 1855, Correspondance I, p. 337.
- 99 Chérix, p. 11.
- 100 Ibid., p. 11.
- 101 Alison Fairlie, Baudelaire: Les Fleurs du Mal (London: Edward Arnold, 1975), p. 35.
- 102 Fondane, p. 328.
- 103 Ibid., p. 328.
- 104 16 July 1839, Correspondance I, p. 76.
- 105 Ibid., pp. 437-438.
- 106 Mon Cœur Mis à Nu, Œuvres Complètes I, p. 687.

- 107 Chabellan, p. 84.
- 108 Ibid., p. 84.
- 109 Vivier, p. 109.
- 110 Crépet-Blin, p. 257.
- 111 Vivier, p. 109.
- 112 Albert Feuillerat, "L'Architecture des Fleurs du Mal", from Studies by Members of the French Department of Yale University (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), p. 261.
- 113 Although the second edition of Les Fleurs du Mal, as followed by Adam, is the final ordering of which Baudelaire approved, I have chosen to follow the Ruff edition, which contains both earlier and later poems under a thematic whole, as thematic unity is more appropriate to this study.
- 114 Œuvres Complètes II, p. 67.
- 115 Turnell, p. 103.
- 116 Œuvres Complètes II, p. 578.
- 117 Pascal, L'Œuvre, p. 288.
- 118 Cassou-Yager, p. 93.
- 119 Œuvres Complètes I, p. 682.
- 120 Ibid., p. 678.
- 121 As quoted by Bouchez, p. 61.
- 122 Feuillerat, pp. 229-230.
- 123 Chérix, p. 53.
- 124 Œuvres Complètes II, p. 656.

- 125 Ibid. I, p. 656.
- 126 Chérix, p. 61.
- 127 "L'Ennemi", line 13.
- 128 Turnell, p. 247.
- 129 Francis S. Heck, "The Evolution in Baudelaire's Later Poetry from Eternal Beauty to the Goût de l'Infini", from Nottingham French Studies, vol. 20 No. 2, 1981, p. 5.
- 130 Turnell, p. 109.
- 131 Sartre, Quis Clos (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), p. 92.
- 132 Adam, p. 313.
- 133 Fondane, p. 333.
- 134 Ibid., p. 337.
- 135 Feuillerat, p. 246.
- 136 Chérix, p. 182.
- 137 Ibid., p. 182.
- 138 Œuvres Complètes I, p. 409.
- 139 Ibid., p. 438.
- 140 Adam, p. 343.
- 141 Steinmann, p. 295. "Il est assez étrange que le sens du nécessé soit moins vif chez Pascal que chez Baudelaire".
- 142 Chérix, p. 215.
- 143 Œuvres Complètes I, p. 231.
- 144 Ibid., p. 314.

- 145 Chapelain, p. 84.
- 146 Le Soleil de Paris, Œuvres Complètes I, p. 356.
- 147 Œuvres Complètes I, p. 696.
- 148 Feuillerat, p. 302.
- 149 Ibid., p. 302.
- 150 For this reason, I believe that Ruffé is mistaken in placing "Les Plaintes d'Icare" between these two poems.
- 151 Fondane, p. 182.
- 152 Verlaine, Œuvres Posthumes, vol. II (Paris: Messein, 1927), p. 4.
- 153 All references to "The Waste Land" are taken from T.S. Eliot, Collected Poems 1909-1962 (London: Faber, 1963), pp. 61-79.
- 154 J.D. Hubert, L'Esthétique des Fleurs du Mal (Geneva: Cailler, 1953), p. 107.
- 155 Bouchez, p. 88.
- 156 Fondane, p. 337.
- 157 Hubert, p. 136.
- 158 Le Soleil de Paris, Œuvres Complètes I, p. 320.
- 159 Marc Eigeldinger, "Baudelaire et l'Alchimie Verbale", from Études Baudelairiennes II (Neuchâtel: Ed. de la Baconnière, 1971), p. 97.
- 160 Œuvres Complètes I, p. 192.
- 161 Adam, p. 364.
- 162 Chérix, p. 281.
- 163 Ibid., p. 284.

- 164 Ibid., p. 239.
- 165 This conception of "néant" and existence is a particularly fascinating one. In Proust's Combray, for example, the young Marcel, on awakening from a night's sleep, does not anticipate the "néant" of post-existence, but rather senses the nothingness of his pre-existence: "j'avais seulement dans sa simplicité première le sentiment de l'existence comme il peut frémir au fond d'un animal...; mais alors le souvenir...venait à moi comme un secours d'en haut pour me tirer du néant d'où je n'aurais pu sortir tout seul" (Proust, Combray, Pléiade vol.I, 1955, p. 6).
- 166 "De l'essence du rire", Œuvres Complètes II, p. 532.
- 167 Cassou-Yager, p. 35.
- 168 Ibid., pp. 37-38.
- 169 Hubert, p. 246.
- 170 Chérix, p. 309.
- 171 Michaud, p. 46.
- 172 Œuvres Complètes I, p. 668.
- 173 I owe much of this argument to Chapelan's article, p. 81.
- 174 Œuvres Complètes I, p. 668.
- 175 Heck, p. 4.
- 176 Fondane, p. 242.
- 177 Chérix, p. 238.
- 178 Mon Coeur Mis à Nu, Œuvres Complètes I, p. 703.
- 179 Fondane, p. 225.

- 180 Cassou-Yaqer, p. 90.
- 181 Oeuvres Complètes I, p. 655.
- 182 Correspondances II, p. 274.
- 183 Cassou-Yaqer, p. 92.
- 184 Oeuvres Complètes I, p. 649.
- 185 Chérix, p. 238.
- 186 Fondane, p. 331.
- 187 Vivier, p. 111.
- 188 Oeuvres Complètes I, p. 650.
- 189 Ibid., p. 703.
- 190 Chérix, p. 324.
- 191 Turnell, p. 182.
- 192 Ibid., p. 186.
- 193 Chérix, p. 330.
- 194 "Le Squelette Laboureur", lines 25-26.
- 195 Turnell, p. 196.
- 196 Oeuvres Complètes I
- 197 Citron, p. 383.
- 198 Oeuvres Complètes I, p. 337.
- 199 Créoet-Blin, p. 492.
- 200 Adam, p. 408.
- 201 Ibid., p. 410.

- 202 Although the circumstances are obviously different for each writer, both Pascal and Baudelaire hold similar views of the hypocrisy of society: Pascal writes, "Personne ne parle de nous en notre présence comme il en parle en notre absence. L'union qui est entre les hommes n'est fondée que sur cette mutuelle tromperie; et peu d'amitiés subsisteraient, si chacun savait ce que son ami dit de lui lorsqu'il n'y est pas, quoiqu'il en parle alors sincèrement et sans passion" (3100, 1978). Meanwhile, Baudelaire expresses a similar opinion in Mon Coeur Mis à Nu: "le monde ne marche que par le Malentendu. - C'est par le Malentendu universel que tout le monde s'accorde. - Car si, par malheur, on se comprenait, on ne pourrait jamais s'accorder" (Oeuvres Complètes I, p. 704).
- 203 Turnell, p. 212.
- 204 Chérix, p. 423.
- 205 Quoted by Chapelan, p. 83.
- 206 Cassou-Yager, p. 97.
- 207 Richard Parish, "Mais Qui Parle? Voice and Persona in the Pensées", Seventeenth Century Studies, May 1986, p. 25.
- 208 Chérix, p. 457.
- 209 Cassou-Yager, p. 103.
- 210 Vivier, p. 59.
- 211 Pascal, L'Oeuvre, p. 287.
- 212 Cassou-Yager, p. 105.
- 213 Pascal, L'Oeuvre, p. 336.
- 214 Oeuvres Complètes I, p. 321.
- 215 Ibid., p. 192.
- 216 Vivier, p. 128.
- 217 Ibid., p. 132.

CONCLUSION

The year after the first edition of Les Fleurs du Mal (1857) was published, Edmond Scherer claimed that "L'apologie de Pascal a vieilli, vieilli tout entière".¹ Despite the similarity of vision in both Pascal and Baudelaire, especially as far as their treatment of the theme of ennui is concerned, which immediately counteracts Scherer's assertion, the popularity of Pascal's Pensées soared towards the middle of the nineteenth century, reaching unprecedented heights at the beginning of this century. In a penetrating analysis of the influences felt by Baudelaire, Jean Pommier adds that "Aucun classique n'a été, au milieu du siècle dernier, plus vivant que Pascal".² Moreover, Gustave Rudler goes on to question the reasons for this change in attitude; as he declares, "Pascal's Pensées would never have experienced that kind of resurrection but for their astonishing similarity to some part at least of pre-war thought in France".³ Indeed, the theme of ennui, as initially perceived by Pascal and then expanded by Baudelaire, struck a chord in the spirit of the age. Victor Giraud, writing at the beginning of this century, refers to philosophers such as Schopenhauer, Taine and Renan, whose doctrines correspond closely to Pascal's central preoccupations, and explains, in an allusion to the Pensées,

"je doute qu'il y ait une philosophie dont les cadres et les formules puissent mieux 's'accommoder à tous nos besoins' et mieux satisfaire aux exigences si diverses, et en apparence même contradictoires, de la pensée contemporaine.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, eminent poets like Mallarmé, Verlaine and Laforgue derived their inspiration from Baudelaire's conception of Ennui. Laforgue's poetry is particularly remarkable in this respect, since his use of the word becomes synonymous with the innovative "esprit décadent", which was characterized by the ironical bitterness of a group of poets, of which Laforgue was the most authentic and moving example, who reacted against the cold solemnity of the Parnassian school of poets. Laforgue infuses his poetical work with words such as "spleen" and, naturally, "ennui", inspired by Baudelaire. Among all his poems, several of which are titled "Spleen", the line which seems most expressive of Laforgue's ennui comes from "Complainte sur certains Ennuis":

An! que la Vie est quotidienne...
(2)

In his writings, the poet remains imprisoned by the banality of existence. However, Laforgue's poetry lacks the clarity, balance and depth of Les Fleurs du Mal, possibly because he becomes too immersed in the melancholic mire of ennui, without aspiring towards any ennobling form of "Idéal", although his premature death at the age of 27 could well have prevented him from reaching full maturity in his works.

It is in twentieth-century literature that ennui becomes central to the very meaning of existence. Indeed, the existentialist school of thought appears to be founded upon

precisely such a basis. Yet, even before 1945, it played a significant role: in L'Âme et La Danse (1921), Paul Valéry, that celebrated adversary of Pascal, perceives that the purpose of life is, in Madeleine Bouchez's words, to

⁵dépouiller l'existence de ses faux prestiges,
c'est la décaper, c'est la représenter toute nue
dans son ennui essentiel.

Perhaps the most direct descendant of both Pascal and Baudelaire is the novelist and essayist, Georges Bernanos (1888-1948), for whom ennui attains a distinctly metaphysical dimension. Although he may not be as important a writer as his two predecessors, his use of the theme of ennui represents a synthesis of the profound spiritual implications which both writers accorded to this condition. In Dialogues d'ombres (1928), Jacques seeks refuge from ennui in dissipation, and yet he also recognizes that "par l'ennui...je me connais une âme".⁶ In Bernanos' greatest novel, Journal d'un curé de campagne, ennui is consistent with a metaphysical sense of anguish.

Nevertheless, Sartre's novel, La Nausée, can be considered as "la bible de l'ennui".⁷ to quote Madeleine Bouchez's phrase. Indeed, the term "nausée" presents an extension of the meaning of ennui, as we gather from Madeleine Bouchez's evaluation of the hero, Antoine Roquentin:

⁸Différent de l'ennui pascalien, de l'ennui baudelairien ou de l'ennui dépeint par Bernanos, l'ennui n'en est pas moins, lui aussi, un ennui

philosophique, métaphysique. Il est lié au sentiment ossédant d'une existence contingente et injustifiée. L'horreur d'exister quand il se considère, "l'énorme absurdité de leur existence" quand il observe les autres, inspirent à Roquentin un sentiment d'impuissance et de dégoût qui va jusqu'à la détresse: il est "de trop", tout existant est "de trop".

Here is to be found the complete embodiment of Pascal's vision of a godless universe.

Two major twentieth-century playwrights, Samuel Beckett and Eugène Ionesco,⁹ transformed their art into an interaction between ennui and the fundamental absurdity of existence. Vladimir and Estragon, the two tramps in Beckett's En Attendant Godot (1953), represent human embodiments of an ennui which, contrary to the positive metaphysical implications of Pascalian and Baudelairian ennui, ultimately thwarts all hope of spiritual salvation. Furthermore, the cluttered, stagnant lives of Ionesco's characters in plays like Les Chaises (1951) and Amédée (1953) stem from the essential ennui of their existence. Indeed, the growing corose which threatens to overwhelm the house of Amédée and of his wife clearly symbolizes the growing ennui of their own lives and the corresponding death of their marriage.

Despite these variations on the literary and philosophical theme of ennui, the present-day significance of Pascal's perception of ennui remains astonishing. Throughout his dialectical approach, his "pensées" anticipate major

future trends in European literature. Indeed, his fundamental pessimism about the paradoxical nature of human existence finds its true expression only three centuries later, in existentialist thought, where man is seen as responsible for his own actions, and in the theatre of the Absurd, where human existence by itself is deemed absurd because of man's apparent aimlessness and contradictions.

Baudelaire's unique conception of ennui is as notable as Pascal's use of it, because it was he who enlarged a major part of Pascal's outlook and integrated it into new perceptions of the duality of human existence.

There can surely be no doubt that, despite their psychological and metaphysical differences, Pascal and Baudelaire share an identical vision which is characterized by human sincerity and spiritual intensity, a vision which is underlined by their respective treatments of the condition of ennui.

NOTES: CONCLUSION

- 1 Quoted by D.M. Eastwood, The Revival of Pascal (Oxford: Clarendon, 1936), p. 1.
- 2 Jean Pommier, Dans les Chemins de Baudelaire (Paris: José Corti, 1945), p. 145.
- 3 Preface to The Revival of Pascal, p. xi.
- 4 Victor Giraud, Pascal l'Homme, l'Œuvre, l'Influence (Paris: Thorin, 1905), p. 213.
- 5 Bouchez, p. 141.
- 6 Bernanos, Œuvres Romanesques, n. 43.
- 7 Bouchez, p. 156.
- 8 Ibid., n. 158.
- 9 Richard Parish gives a most interesting Pascalian interpretation of Ionesco's Tueur sans Gages in his article, "Ionesco's Tueur sans Gages: A Pascalian Reading", (Nottingham French Studies, 1976), pp. 36-47.

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