This new study of Baudelaire’s writings is the first book to apply the principles of schizoanalysis to literary history and cultural studies. By resituating psychoanalysis in its socioeconomic and cultural context, this framework provides a new and illuminating approach to the poetry and art criticism of the foremost French modernist. Professor Holland’s book draws upon and transforms virtually the entire spectrum of recent Baudelaire scholarship, and demonstrates the impact of the capitalist market and Second Empire authoritarianism (as well as Baudelaire’s much-discussed family circumstances) on the psychology and poetics of the writer, who abandoned his romantic idealism in favour of a modernist cynicism that has characterized modern culture ever since.
Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-03134-9 - Baudelaire and Schizoanalysis: The Sociopoetics of Modernism
Eugene W. Holland
Frontmatter
More information
Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-03134-9 - Baudelaire and Schizoanalysis: The Sociopoetics of Modernism
Eugene W. Holland
Frontmatter
More information

CAMBRIDGE STUDIES IN FRENCH

General editor: Malcolm Bowie (All Souls College, Oxford)
Editorial Board: R. Howard Bloch (University of California, Berkeley),
Ross Chambers (University of Michigan), Antoine Compagnon
(Columbia University), Peter France (University of Edinburgh),
Toril Moi (Duke University), Naomi Schor (Duke University)

Recent titles in this series include
33. LAWRENCE D. KRITZMAN
   The Rhetoric of Sexuality and the Literature of the French Renaissance
34. JERRY C. NASH
   The Love Aesthetics of Maurice Scève: Poetry and Struggle
35. PETER FRANCE
   Politeness and its Discontents: Problems in French Classical Culture
36. MITCHELL GREENBERG
   Subjectivity and Subjugation in Seventeenth-Century Drama and Prose: The Family Romance of French Classicism
37. TOM CONLEY
   The Graphic Unconscious in Early Modern French Writing
38. MARGERY EVANS
   Baudelaire and Intertextuality: Poetry at the Crossroads
39. JUDITH STILL
   Justice and Difference in the Works of Rousseau: Bienfaisance and Pudeur
40. CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON
   System and Writing in the Philosophy of Jacques Derrida
41. CAROL A. MOSSMAN
   Politics and Narratives of Birth: Gynocolonization from Rousseau to Zola
42. DANIEL BREWER
   The Discourse of Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century France: Diderot and the Art of Philosophizing
43. ROBERTA L. KRUEGER
   Women Readers and the Ideology of Gender in Old French Verse Romance
44. JAMES H. REID
   Narration and Description in the French Realist Novel: The Temporality of Lying and Forgetting

A complete list of books in the series is given at the end of the volume.
BAUDELAIRE AND
SCHIZOANALYSIS

The Sociopoetics of Modernism

EUGENE W. HOLLAND

Department of French and Italian, The Ohio State University
To the memory of my father
Contents

Preface xi
Acknowledgments xvii

1 Introduction 1
   Social decoding 11
   Psychological decoding 17
   Textual decoding 30

PART I POETICS

2 Correspondences versus beauty 43
   The romantic cycle 43
   The beauty cycle 53
   Metonymy prevails 67

3 Spleen and evil 80
   “Spleen and Ideal” 80
   The spleen cycle 86
   The cycle of evil 96

PART II PSYCHOPOETICS

4 Romantic temperament and “Spleen and Ideal” 111
   The psychodynamics of experience 111
   The early art criticism 116
   The psychopoetics of “Spleen and Ideal” 124
Contents

5  Modernist imagination and the “Tableaux Parisiens”  137
   The later art criticism  139
   The introductory poems  148
   The street scenes  157
   The domestic scenes  166

PART III  SOCIOPOTetics

6  Decoding and recoding in the prose poems  177
   Historical Others  177
   “Moral masochism”  186
   Historical masochism  190
   Borderline decoding  197
   Narcissistic recoding  209

7  The prose poem narrator  221
   Historicizing borderline narcissism  221
   Super-ego failure  222
   Ego disintegration  230
   Bohemia at the heart of bourgeois society  236
   Modernity as prostitution  242
   The prose poem narrator as borderline narcissist  248
   The prose poem narrator as programmer  251

8  Conclusion  258
   The metonymy of real reference and desire  266
   The historical emergence and dispersion of the imaginary  267
   The split structure of social life in modernity  274

Notes  278
Select bibliography  296
Index  303
Preface

A Klee painting named “Angelus Novus” shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing... and has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.

Walter Benjamin

Perdu dans ce vilain monde, coudoyé par les foules, je suis comme un homme lassé dont l’œil ne voit en arrière, dans les années profondes, que désabusement et amertume, et devant lui qu’un orage où rien de neuf n’est contenu, ni enseignement, ni douleur.

Lost in a wasteland, jostled by the crowds, I am like a weary man who sees in the depths of the past behind him nothing but disappointment and bitterness, and before him a storm that contains nothing new, neither insight, nor grief.

Charles Baudelaire

Charles Baudelaire, c’est moi! For I, too, feel like someone who sees little but bitter disappointment in the past, like someone being blown irresistibly backwards into the future, who can
xii

Preface

only look aghast at the mounting piles of toxic waste and the growing numbers of homeless children that “progress” hurls at his feet. I, too, am someone who has witnessed authoritarian capitalism in the Reagan/Bush/Thatcher era crush the utopian promise of a more democratic society under its boot-heel, just as Napoleon III destroyed the democratic ideals Baudelaire shared in the 1840s, and Hitler those Benjamin shared in the 1930s. This recurring nightmare is no historical accident: within the cyclical, boom-and-bust rhythm of capital accumulation, it recurs at the moment that democratic potential once again succumbs to the authoritarian realities of capitalism. Benjamin speaks of “wish[ing] to retain that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to a man singled out by history at a moment of danger”; for him, as for me, the figure of Baudelaire provides such an image: Charles Baudelaire, c’est nous!

Baudelaire’s historical “moment of danger,” as this study will show, revolved around Napoleon’s coup d’état of December 1851: the romantic-socialist hopes fueling the Revolution of 1848 seemed on the verge of becoming reality in the Second Republic, only to be dashed by the founding of the Second Empire and the authoritarian reign of Napoleon III. Our own “moment of danger” did not arrive so punctually. Its corresponding dates might be 1968, the height of the anti-authoritarian counter-cultural “revolution”; and 1981, the culmination of the oil crisis begun in 1974. World War II had generated a tremendous concentration of highly productive capital which the outbreak of peace risked leaving idle. So a period of liberal largesse followed, sponsoring waves of social innovation in the civil rights, anti-war, and counter-culture movements while bankrolling “consumer society” in order to keep the wheels of industry turning. But this liberalizing phase of “capital dis-accumulation” was soon reversed in the subsequent, authoritarian phase of “capital re-accumulation,” triggered by the oil crises of 1974–81: funding for social, cultural, and political innovation was ruthlessly cut off in order to be reinvested in instruments of capital’s self-expansion, including the high-tech military-industrial complex, more aggressive state action against labor, curtailment of women’s
and civil rights, and so on. Though the transformation itself was not as dramatic as the coup d’état of Baudelaire’s day, the contrast between the two phases is strikingly similar, and equally dispiriting, in the two cases. That similarity made this schizoanalytic study of Baudelaire possible. 4

Schizoanalysis insists on restoring the full range of social and historical factors to psychoanalytic explanations of psychic structure and proclivities. From this perspective, the claim that “Charles Baudelaire, c’est moi” is not a statement of identification with Baudelaire as an individual (with whom I personally have very little in common: I did not lose my father at the age of five, but at twenty-seven; I am not a destitute poète maudit, but a professional cultural historian; not a melancholic bachelor, but a happily married husband and father, and so on). Rather than a statement of personal identification, it is a recognition of our shared socio-historical situation and the resulting psychological configuration (here designated as “borderline narcissism”) — a configuration that is epitomized in his works, but which is more or less characteristic of everyone living in market society. Hence Baudelaire’s lasting acclaim as the “lyric poet in the era of high capitalism” (as Benjamin put it). For he was among the first to diagnose the conditions of existence typical of modernity, and to suffer the emergence of a specifically capitalistic form of authoritarianism. That those conditions still exist and capitalist authoritarianism has not ceased recurring enables us, in Benjamin’s words, to “grasp the constellation which [our] own era has formed with a specific earlier one,” Baudelaire’s own.

At the same time, schizoanalysis insists on including psychodynamic factors in historical materialist explanations of social structure and cultural change. This inclusion is possible largely because of a certain notion of temporality that is shared by Marx — for whom “the anatomy of the human is the key to the anatomy of the ape” — and by Freud — for whom there exist not memories from childhood, but only memories of childhood. This is the form of temporality emphasized by Lacan in the notion of “deferred action” (Freud’s Nachträglichkeit), and by Benjamin in his critique of historicism:
Preface

Historicism contents itself with establishing a causal connection between the various moments in history. But no fact that is a cause is for that reason alone historical. It became historical posthumously, as it were, through events that may be separated from it by thousands of years. An historian who takes this as his point of departure stops telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary. Instead, he grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a specific earlier one.  

This form of temporality is crucial to schizoanalysis, as well, although the present study explores its psychodynamic more than its socio-historical implications. In focusing on Baudelaire, I have been unable to do justice here to all the complexities of schizoanalysis; that is the aim of my next book. Let me say in passing that the point of schizoanalysis is not to enter (much less settle) disputes among competing schools of psychoanalytic therapy or doctrine, but to extract what is useful for the purposes of historical analysis and social change. The Lacanian school is a special case: schizoanalysis draws heavily on Lacan, yet insists that even a stance conducive to profoundly radical (not to say revolutionary) therapy nonetheless risks appearing profoundly and “tragically” reactionary if transported into the domain of historical study unchanged. In focusing on Baudelaire alone, I have also, against my best intentions, unavoidably made him appear to be more of a special case historically speaking than he really is, however canonical he has become: it will take yet another book to show why the cultural masochism he shared with Masoch himself was not exceptional, but part of a larger pattern in late nineteenth-century history; and to show indeed that masochism, sadism, and narcissism are all fundamentally historical and cultural phenomena, before being treated as psychological ones.

What a schizoanalytic study focusing on Baudelaire is able to demonstrate, nonetheless, is that authoritarianism recurs in modernity, and that it does so not merely because of “man’s eternal inhumanity to man,” but because of historical dynamics specific to capitalism. Historical recurrence never amounts to sheer repetition, however: it always entails repetition with a difference. Merely to draw parallels between 1848/51 and
Preface

1968/81 would be no better than noting similarities in myth criticism or establishing causal connections in historicism. The point of doing schizoanalysis is not just to interpret history, but to change it. Hence the explicitly narrative cast of my reading of Baudelaire and his modernist repudiation of narrative. However out of favor it may be in some circles of high modernist criticism today, and however complex our understanding of it has become (thanks in part to that very criticism), narrative remains a fundamental form of human thought, one that is simply indispensable for thinking through historical change: things looked a certain way before; how do they look after such-and-such occurs? How, then, does the modernity we still share with Baudelaire look after modernism?

At the very emergence of market society in France, Baudelaire formulated his distinctive modernism in repudiation of romanticism; after more than a century of market rule, we are now struggling to repudiate modernism in the name of something called the “postmodern.” In repudiating romanticism, Baudelaire rejected the romantic commitment to nature and woman in favor of misogyny and urban artifice; inasmuch as modernism has roots in Baudelaire, any postmodernism worthy of more than the mere name will have to be feminist and environmentalist, or amount to nothing at all. Repudiating modernism is not easy; real postmodernism will not occur by fiat, for most of the institutions reflecting and supporting modernism are still very much in force today, having had more than a century since Baudelaire’s time to consolidate themselves. Within the academy, for example, modern(ist) disciplines are still organized to produce knowledge of literature for literature’s sake, of art for art’s sake, of history for history’s sake, and so on. As a postmodern intervention, this schizoanalytic study aims instead to produce a resolutely anti-historicist, anti-aestheticist reading of Baudelaire, one that in the face of historical contingency willingly assumes the risk of appearing “partial” or “dated.” This is not to say that I do not appreciate the lasting beauty of Baudelaire’s poetry, for personally I do. But I am someone who feels that in moments of danger, there are
Preface

more important things to talk about – and I am convinced that Baudelaire was, too.

Some may consider that, intending to talk about Baudelaire, I have succeeded only in talking about myself. It would certainly mean more to say that it is Baudelaire who was talking about me. He is talking about you.

Michel Butor
Acknowledgments

The ideas for this book first took shape in independent study with Chuck Wiz and Brenda Thompson at the University of California at San Diego; it is a pleasure to recall their enthusiasm and contributions. I am most grateful for generous support and encouragement in those early stages from Gilles Deleuze in Paris and Michel de Certeau in La Jolla. Several valuable secondary sources were recommended by my mother, Faith M. Holland, whose bibliographic input over the years I am pleased to acknowledge. My thanks for research assistance go to Medha Karmarkar of Ohio State, and to the W. T. Bandy Center for Baudelaire Studies at Vanderbilt University.

Dick Bjornson and Vassilis Lambropoulos read the manuscript early on, giving sound advice and much-appreciated encouragement. Ross Chambers, Dick Terdiman, and Fred Jameson deserve special recognition for their careful readings, expert advice, and/or welcome encouragement at various later stages of the writing process: I cannot thank them enough. Nancy Armstrong and Sabra Webber provided shrewd insights into the publishing process, and I would like to thank Charles G. S. Williams, too, for all his help as chairperson and senior colleague.

Most deserving of thanks and acknowledgment are my wife, Eliza Segura-Holland, whose clinical and political insights into schizophrenia and capitalism, and whose spirited intellectual companionship and unstinting support were crucial to writing this book; and our daughter, Lauren Louise Holland, who showed consideration far beyond her years: I thank them both with all my heart.

xvii