Contributor

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Daniel Finch-Race is a Research Scholar at Trinity College in the University of Cambridge. As part of his doctoral work on the 1861 edition of Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal*, he is investigating the ways in which studies of nineteenth-century French versification can be enhanced using ecocritical perspectives. His recent articles examine masculine hegemony and feminine alterity in Baudelaire's 'À une mendiante rousse' (*French Studies Bulletin*), and ecosensitivity in Rimbaud's 'Comédie de la soif' (*Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*). He is also co-editor of a special issue of *Dix-Neuf* on ecopoetics.

Abstract

'Je n'ai pas oublié', the ninety-ninth poem in the second edition of Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* (1861), involves the narrator reminiscing about his impoverished childhood in his mother's small house near Paris. In the following piece, 'La Servante au grand cœur', the narrator suggests to his mother that they should take flowers to the tomb of his nursemaid, whose nigh forgotten body lies beside other neglected corpses suffering the passage of the seasons. These two vignettes of memory highlight a burgeoning awareness of new prosodic and ecological systems, making them ripe for ecopoetic analysis. This article suggests that the evocation of Baudelaire's modest pre-metropolitan existence offers the key to understanding the diminished human and non-human presences that figure in the surrounding sixteen poems of the 'Tableaux parisiens' series, marked by the melancholic metrocentrism that suffuses Baudelaire's later poetry.

Keywords

city/cities; poverty; transience; childhood; French versification; ecopoetry

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Les Fleurs du mal [*The Flowers of Evil*] (1861)

[All translations are mine]

XCIX

(Baudelaire 1975: 99)

Je n'ai pas oublié, voisine de la ville,
Notre blanche maison, petite mais tranquille;
Sa Pomone de plâtre et sa vieille Vénus
Dans un bosquet chétif cachant leurs membres nus,
Et le soleil, le soir, ruisselant et superbe,
Qui, derrière la vitre où se brisait sa gerbe,
Semblait, grand œil ouvert dans le ciel curieux,
Contempler nos dîners longs et silencieux,
Répandant largement ses beaux reflets de cierge
Sur la nappe frugale et les rideaux de serge.

[I have not forgotten, neighbouring the town,
Our white house, small but calm;

Its plaster Pomona and old Venus
Hiding their bare limbs in a meagre bush,
And the sun, in the evening, streaming and splendid,
Who, behind the windowpane on which his spray was breaking,
Seemed, great open eye in the curious sky,
To contemplate our dinners, long and silent,
Widely spreading his beautiful candle-like reflections
Over the frugal tablecloth and serge curtains.**]**

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(Baudelaire 1975: 100)

La servante au grand cœur dont vous étiez jalouse,
Et qui dort son sommeil sous une humble pelouse,
Nous devrions pourtant lui porter quelques fleurs.
Les morts, les pauvres morts, ont de grandes douleurs,
Et quand Octobre souffle, émondeur des vieux arbres,
Son vent mélancolique à l'entour de leurs marbres,
Certe, ils doivent trouver les vivants bien ingrats,
À dormir, comme ils font, chaudement dans leurs draps,
Tandis que, dévorés de noires songeries,
Sans compagnon de lit, sans bonnes causeries,
Vieux squelettes gelés travaillés par le ver,
Ils sentent s'égoutter les neiges de l'hiver
Et le siècle couler, sans qu'amis ni famille
Remplacent les lambeaux qui pendent à leur grille.

Lorsque la bûche siffle et chante, si le soir,
Calme, dans le fauteuil je la voyais s'asseoir,
Si, par une nuit bleue et froide de décembre,
Je la trouvais tapie en un coin de ma chambre,
Grave, et venant du fond de son lit éternel
Couver l'enfant grandi de son œil maternel,
Que pourrais-je répondre à cette âme pieuse,
Voyant tomber des pleurs de sa paupière creuse?

[The kind-hearted servant of whom you were jealous,
And who sleeps her sleep under a humble lawn,
We should nevertheless take her some flowers.
The dead, the poor dead, suffer great pains,
And when October, stripper of old trees, blows
Its melancholic gust around their marble tombs,
They certainly must find the living very ungrateful,
For sleeping, as they do, warmly in their sheets,
While, devoured by black reveries,
Without a bedfellow, without good conversation,
Old, frozen skeletons, worked over by worms,
They feel the snows of winter dripping
And the century flowing, without friends or family
Replacing the scraps that hang from their railings.

If, at night, while the log on the fire whistles and sings,
I were to see her calmly sit in the armchair,
If, on a blue and cold December night,
I found her lurking in a corner of my bedroom,
Grave, and coming from the depths of her eternal bed
To watch over the grown-up child with her maternal eye,
What could I reply to this pious soul,
Seeing tears fall from her hollow eyelid?]

This discussion seeks to determine the role of reminiscence within an ecocritical framework in two pieces from Baudelaire's urban verse of 1857-1861, 'Je n'ai pas oublié' ['I Have Not Forgotten'] and 'La Servante au grand cœur' ['The Kind-Hearted Servant']. Focussing on prosodic mechanisms as much as on descriptive content, it is possible to demonstrate that Baudelaire's childhood memories in these poems evoke a tranquil pre-metropolitan existence that starkly contrasts with the melancholic metrocentrism of the pieces that precede and follow the diptych of reminiscences. Beginning with an outline of *Les Fleurs du mal*, the present analysis focalises the potential for ecopoetic insight into Baudelaire's work, undertaking a close reading of the two poems in order to highlight a youthful eco-sensitivity in the pair of early compositions. It will be shown that this proto-ecological awareness hints at an understanding of the importance of human and non-human presences in an extra-urban context, leading to the conclusion that 'Je n'ai pas oublié' and 'La Servante au grand cœur' indicate an environmental and poetic threshold, as they foreground the tranquillity of everyday life in a world set apart from the consequences of industrialisation.

Baudelaire's urban verse: the 'Tableaux parisiens' in *Les Fleurs du mal*

First issued in June 1857, *Les Fleurs du mal* [*The Flowers of Evil*] is Baudelaire's only collection of verse. Following a trial for public indecency two months after its release, six of the original hundred poems were excised, leading Baudelaire to reconceive the work in its entirety for a second edition in 1861. Not content with adding thirty-five poems to the ninety-four retained pieces, Baudelaire created a new second section, the 'Tableaux parisiens' ['Parisian scenes'], in which he arranged eighteen urban vignettes that offer remarkable insights into the mutating Parisian cityscape in the era of Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann's reconstruction projects. Following the eighty-five *ennui*-infused musings of the first section, 'Spleen et idéal' ['Spleen and ideal'], the 'Tableaux parisiens' focalise temporal and societal pressures on the inhabitants of modernising Paris, presaging the narrator's desire to flee the trappings of everyday life in the four concluding sections: 'Le Vin' ['Wine'], 'Fleurs du mal' ['Flowers of evil'], 'Révolte' ['Revolt'] and 'La Mort' ['Death']. The protagonists of the narratives in the 'Tableaux parisiens' are predominantly lowly or disregarded members of nineteenth-century society (ranging from a red-haired beggar-girl to seven old men), set against a transient backdrop that establishes the section as an insight into the urban life-cycle in which Baudelaire is enmeshed as a maturing poet.

The non-urban depictions in 'Je n'ai pas oublié' and 'La Servante au grand cœur' stand in opposition to the sixteen other poems in the 'Tableaux parisiens' that are predominantly city-oriented. As a whole, the section exemplifies an emerging urban fixation centred on the vicissitudes of marginalised human figures, as well as on the kind of changing ecology and degradation to which Yi-Fu Tuan alludes in *Romantic Geography*: 'the city began as an attempt to bring the order and majesty of heaven down to earth, and it proceeded from there by cutting itself from agricultural roots, civilising winter, turning night into day, and disciplining the sensuous human body in the interest of developing the mind' (Tuan 2013:

113). The 'Tableaux parisiens' insinuate that urban life marginalises environmental concerns, as society is increasingly contained in an unnatural space that is threatened by the invasive power of non-humanity. The sordidness of the world framing the drama of the series is especially highlighted in a triptych of poems addressed to Victor Hugo, encompassing 'Le Cygne', 'Les Sept Vieillards' and 'Les Petites Vieilles' (the fourth, fifth and sixth pieces in the section). These three pieces foreground the grime of Baudelaire's urban setting by way of unsettling environmental features that are suggestive of the contaminated character of the city: 'les gros blocs verdis par l'eau des flaques [the large blocks turned green by the water of the puddles]' (LXXXIX.11); 'Un brouillard sale et jaune inondait tout l'espace [A dirty and yellow fog was flooding the whole space]' (XC.9); 'le soleil tombant/Ensanglante le ciel de blessures vermeilles [the setting sun/Bloodies the sky with ruby wounds]' (XCI.50-51). The mounting hideousness of urban life exemplified in the poems is matched by the escalating unnaturalness of the mutating physical environment, marked by the passage of animalistic crowds, as well as by the discombobulating consequences of overarching human ambition: 'Le vieux Paris n'est plus (la forme d'une ville/Change plus vite, hélas! que le cœur d'un mortel) [Old Paris is no more (the form of a town/Changes more quickly, alas! than the heart of a mortal]' (LXXXIX.7-8); 'Fourmillante cité, cité pleine de rêves,/Où le spectre en plein jour raccroche le passant! [Swarming city, city replete with dreams,/Where the spectre grabs the passerby in broad daylight!]' (XC.1-2); 'j'entrevois un fantôme débile/Traversant de Paris le fourmillant tableau [I glimpse a feeble phantom/Traversing the swarming scene of Paris]' (XCI.25-26).

The form and content of the 'Tableaux parisiens' consequently imply that there is an increasingly significant link between environmental changes and the substance of modern poetry in the metropolitan era, as Michel Collot evokes in *Pour une géographie littéraire* [*For a Literary Geography*]: 'la configuration des éléments du paysage est inséparable des figures poétiques [the configuration of the elements of the landscape is inseparable from poetic figures]' (Collot 2014: 109). The conception of the interlocking components of a poem as analogous to the interweaving of ecosystemic elements is foregrounded by the peculiarities of Baudelaire's versification in the 'Tableaux parisiens'. Embodying the strained relationship between humanity and nature in the anthropocene, the prosody and descriptions of the metrocentric section raise awareness of the complexities of urban life, expressing a counterclaim to nineteenth-century beliefs about the triumphs of progress. As Baudelaire begins the transition to the prose poetry published posthumously in *Le Spleen de Paris* [*Paris' Spleen*] (in which the iniquities and degradation of urban life are minutely demonstrated in fifty-one narratives unconstrained by the requirements of verse), the 'Tableaux parisiens' evoke a presentiment of the ecosystemic and poetic threshold represented by Haussmann's major reconfiguration of Paris in the 1860s.

In *Baudelaire*, Alison Fairlie observes that *Les Fleurs du mal* 'suggest something basic in human experience: the sense of both haunting mystery and significant pattern behind the forms of the natural world' (Fairlie 1969: 21). The prosodic mechanisms of Baudelaire's verse highlight changes in attitudes and patterns of existence caused by urbanisation, as well as the necessity of a new poetic vision for the expression of modern concerns. The particularities of Baudelaire's versification represent more than a reaction against the restrictive tenets of tradition. The prosodic dissonances and emphases in his poems encompass an interrogation of the mimetic potential of poetry in an era during which an increasing amount of scientific attention is becoming attached to the components of systems in the natural world. It is important to recognise, therefore, that the particularities of versification in *Les Fleurs du mal* go hand-in-hand with a broader interrogation and modulation of everyday paradigms, as David Evans recognises in *Rhythm, Illusion and the*

Poetic Idea: 'an analysis of Baudelaire's verse irregularities can only do him justice by acknowledging that his agenda is not simply a rebellion against a restrictive yoke, but rather a matter of matching the suitable verse structure to the process of spiritual and philosophical inquiry particular to each individual poem' (Evans 2004: 84). Baudelaire's versification should be construed as corresponding to the structural changes in Paris in the latter half of the nineteenth century: his poetry mimics the transformations taking place in the cityscape, provoking questions about humanity's relationship to the changing nature of its surroundings.

From an ecopoetic perspective, Baudelaire's verse challenges preconceptions about the world through form and content. As the physical components of Baudelaire's printed work, the prosodic particularities of *Les Fleurs du mal* reinforce the probing of the limits to conventional understanding suggested in the narrative of his verse, raising issues about the ways in which humans conceptualise relationships to their surroundings. In this regard, it is important to consider Stéphanie Posthumus' assertion in her theorisation of French ecocriticism that 'le texte littéraire circonscrit un ensemble d'objets de façon régionale ou encore nationale [the literary text circumscribes a set of objects in a regional or even national way]', making it possible to 'identifier le rapport entre le local et le global, entre le milieu et le monde [identify the relationship between the local and the global, between the locale and the world]' (Posthumus 2011: 92). The distinctive narratives and versification of *Les Fleurs du mal* encourage a developed understanding of Parisian experiences of urbanisation, providing a framework for understanding nineteenth-century French poetry as the site of an evolution through which versification eventually comes to evoke the cadenced patterns of an ecosystem, as Jonathan Bate proposes in *The Song of the Earth*: 'metre itself - a quiet but persistent music, a recurring cycle, a heartbeat - is an answering to nature's own rhythms, an echoing of the song of the earth itself' (Bate 2000: 76). Heeding this concept, we can hypothesise an ecosystemic interpretation of Baudelaire's verse, whereby each prosodic element affects the poetic environment in a manner that has physical consequences for understanding. If we consider peculiarities of versification as mutations that augment the diversity of poetic space, the 'Tableaux parisiens' represent a threshold in terms of the relationship between poetry and experience. Couched in centuries-old prosodic and societal traditions, yet situated in an era during which the Parisian cityscape is undergoing profound alteration, the mechanisms of Baudelaire's verse evoke the effects of such changes at an ecosystemic level.

Les Fleurs du mal XCIX, 'Je n'ai pas oublié'

Let us turn to 'Je n'ai pas oublié' ['I have not forgotten'], the fourteenth piece in the 'Tableaux parisiens'. The first part of a diptych aimed at Caroline Aupick (Baudelaire's mother), 'Je n'ai pas oublié' focusses on Baudelaire's childhood in Neuilly, when Madame Aupick had recently become a widow. As the narrator's memory of the scanty garden and dining-room of his childhood home unfolds, the family's penury is evoked by the meagre trappings of their existence. Counterpoising the reduction of traditional emblems of prosperity embodied in the plaster statues of Pomona and Venus, the vitalising power of the sun's energy is dulled by the thick windowpane that acts as a barrier between the exterior world of nature and the interior human space. In a disquieting evocation of an impoverished world, 'Je n'ai pas oublié' expresses the gulf between ideologies of progress and the circumstances of everyday life, shuttling uneasily between the idealisation of a bygone age and the hard truths of modernity.

Delving into Baudelaire's memory to an era preceding his life in Paris, 'Je n'ai pas oublié' finds the narrator contemplating his childhood, when his contact with the world was more unadulterated. The regular alexandrines and rhyming couplets hearken to an extra-urban existence practically untouched by concerns of progress and industrialisation.[i] Heeding Felix

Leakey's comment that the narrator 'literally "transports" himself, in time if not in place, to a past reality that utterly displaces the present' (Leakey 1990: 94), the poem provides a precursor to the surrounding 'Tableaux parisiens', acting as a counterpoint to the hyperbolically bucolic vision in 'Paysage' ['Landscape'] at the opening of the section ('Alors je rêverai des horizons bleuâtres,/Des jardins, des jets d'eau pleurant dans les albâtres ['Then I will dream of blue-hued horizons,/Of gardens, of jets of water weeping into alabaster pools']' (LXXXVI .17-18)). Given the emotive opening gambit, where the verb of memory ('oublié [forgotten]' (1)) gains prominence from its position at the comma-emphasised caesura, the role of the poem as a source of reassurance cannot be overlooked. Drawing on evocative details ranging from the colour of the walls to the material of the garden statues (in a manner that is redolent of the increasing importance of photographic souvenirs in the mid-nineteenth century), the narrator attempts to reassure his mother that he still cherishes his infancy with her, despite his immersion in an urban world as an adult. Analysing Baudelaire's heightening of the lowly, Ross Chambers notes that the repositioning of 'Je n'ai pas oublié' from its role as the seventieth poem of *Les Fleurs du mal* in 1857 to its setting in the latter half of the 'Tableaux parisiens' in 1861 'transferred the sacrosanct site of hallowed memory […] to the seemingly incompatible poetic space of "la rue étourdissante [the deafening street]" […], among the beggars and spectres, […] construction sites and misplaced swans, of Baudelaire's city' (Chambers 2008: 45). As a result, 'the house that was the erstwhile focus of nostalgia [becomes] part and parcel of the contemporary urban jumble, one more incongruous feature of that noisy scene, where, like Mariette in "La Servante au grand cœur", it figures perhaps as a somewhat painful phantom from a now vanished past' (Chambers 2008: 45). The intimacy of the setting, from which the metropolitan tumult highlighted elsewhere in the 'Tableaux parisiens' is absent, sets the tone for the modest description that follows. Evoking an enclave in which Baudelaire is free to remember the human connections that sustained his development, the description prefigures 'La Servante au grand cœur' ('La servante au grand cœur dont vous étiez jalouse,/Et qui dort son sommeil sous une humble pelouse [The kind-hearted servant of whom you were jealous,/And who sleeps her sleep under a humble lawn]' (C.1-2)) as part of a temporal dichotomy that opposes a rural past to the urban present of the surrounding poems in the section.

The personal value of the experience of an extra-urban environment for the narrator is emphasised from the very beginning, as the opening first-person-singular subject pronoun ('Je n'ai pas oublié [I have not forgotten]' (1)) broadens to the plural possessive at the beginning of the following line: 'Notre blanche maison,|| petite mais tranquille [Our white house, small but calm]' (2). The progression from individual to collective experience draws Baudelaire and his mother together in the white house, set in a well-defined hemistich before the comma at the unequivocal caesura in the second line. This prosodic enclosure highlights the compartmentalisation of the human connection as a cherished memory. Examining Baudelaire's landscapes, Patrick Labarthe asserts that 'les "Tableaux parisiens" comprennent le paysage élégiaque le plus émouvant que Baudelaire ait évoqué, avec la "blanche maison" d'enfance du poème XCIX [the "Tableaux parisiens" comprise the most moving elegiac landscape that Baudelaire ever evoked, with the childhood "white house" of poem XCIX]' (Labarthe 1999: 1034), drawing attention to the significance of the emotive rumination for the seventeen other vignettes in the series. The calm of the carefully delineated space is underscored by the first *rime suffisante* between 'ville [town]' (1) and 'tranquille [calm]' (2), in which the softness of the feminine endings adds to the intimate tranquillity of the scene. The mediocrity of rhyme strength is intriguing, since it suggests not only that the narrator abhors the encroachment of the town on his calm existence, but also that the tranquillity of his younger life is indissoluble from the *ennui* that suffuses his urban compositions. The plosive alliteration in /p/ of the third line ('Pomone de plâtre [plaster Pomona]' (3)) echoes the

prominent adjective following the caesura in the second line ('petite [small]' (2)), evoking a humbleness in the statue of the goddess of abundance. The parallel alliteration in /v/ at the end of the line ('vieille Vénus [old Venus]' (3)) conveys a concomitant diminishment of the goddess of beauty, as two theoretically ageless deities are rendered humbly mortal: 'Sa Pomone de plâtre | et sa vieille Vénus/Dans un bosquet chétif cachant leurs membres nus [Its plaster Pomona and old Venus/Hiding their bare limbs in a meagre bush]' (3-4). The submerged caesura in the third line due to the elision of the *e caduc* is followed by an enjambement that elongates the sense of the third line into the fourth line, emphasising the dearth of vegetation that barely conceals the statues (by means of the diminishment of traditional prosodic referents). The relative poverty of the masculine *rime suffisante* between 'Vénus' (3) and 'nus' (4) highlights the scantiness of the greenery, as well as the quasi-voyeuristic focalisation of the female figures. The bare limbs of the goddesses (concealed from prying eyes by blooming greenery in classical mythology) are revealed to the world because of the poverty of the garden, emblematising the narrator's impoverished existence in this humble memory.

The ecopoetic import of the piece gains prominence in the fifth line, as the latter half of the recollection is bathed in the energising glow of the sun : 'le soleil, le soir, ruisselant et superbe,/[…]/Semblait […]/Contempler nos dîners […],/Répandant largement ses beaux reflets de cierge/Sur la nappe frugale [the sun, in the evening, streaming and splendid,/[…]/Seemed […]/To contemplate our dinners […],/Widely spreading his beautiful candle-like reflections/Over the frugal tablecloth]' (5-10). Recalling the solar presence at the beginning of the 'Tableaux parisiens' in 'Le Soleil' ['The Sun'] ('Ce père nourricier, ennemi des chloroses,/Éveille dans les champs les vers comme les roses [This nourishing father, enemy of chlorosis,/Wakes the worms in the fields like roses]' (LXXXVII .9-10)), the illuminating sun is vividly anthropomorphised in the latter half of 'Je n'ai pas oublié', as it observes the silent dinner through the window. The generative influence of the glow of the sun for both physical and poetic space resonates with the preceding evocation of the two female classical deities. The personified dwarf-star is presented as the inheritor of Helios by way of the tripartite sibilance in the fifth line ('soleil [sun]' (5), 'soir [evening]' (5), 'superbe [splendid]' (5)), the aggrandising import of 'superbe' (5), and the feminine *rime riche* with 'gerbe [spray]' (6). The richness of the rhyme contrasts with the way that the shower of rays is dulled by the windowpane, as the sun is unable to bring its energising potential to bear because of the manmade barrier (evoking the increasing separation of humanity from nature in the metropolitan era). In this regard, it is useful to consider Thomas Pughe's proposal in his theorisation of ecopoetics that 'plus l'urbanisation et l'industrialisation de nos sociétés ont progressé, plus la pastorale a exprimé les craintes et le désir d'évasion vers une vie plus saine, typiques de notre culture urbaine [the further the urbanisation and industrialisation of our societies has progressed, the more pastoralism has expressed the fears and desire of escaping towards a healthier life, typical of our urban culture]' (Pughe 2005: 74). The superior position of the sun, benevolently pouring forth its rays over the scene, indicates the importance of the environment in this childhood recollection. Implying that Baudelaire was already sensing an emerging disharmony between humanity and nature at the time of his youth, the disjointed 4-2-6 phrasal division of the fifth line is augmented by the 1-11 split in the sixth line: 'Et le soleil, le soir, ruisselant et superbe,/Qui, derrière la vitre | où se brisait sa grebe [And the sun, in the evening, streaming and splendid,/Who, behind the windowpane on which his spray was breaking]' (5-6). Emphasised by the delineating commas and stark caesura, the present participle of the fifth line ('ruisselant [streaming]' (5)) underscores the separation of the fading sunshine from the room containing Baudelaire and his mother. The sun remains 'derrière la vitre [behind the windowpane]' (6), in a manner that is accentuated by the isolation of the monosyllabic relative pronoun ('Qui [Who]' (6)) at the beginning of the sixth

line before the comma. The subsequent submerged caesura due to the elision of the *e caduc* ('vitre|où [windowpane on which]' (6)) incarnates the disyllabic verb of rupture ('brisait [was breaking]' (6)), as the reduced medial accentuation of the line parallels the diminishment of the effectiveness of the sun.

The versification of the final four lines of the piece perpetuates the image of sunshine pouring over the dinner. Three instances of a submerged caesura evoke streaming fluidity, particularly in the case of the diminished medial accentuation in the tenth line due to the elision of the *e caduc*: 'frugale|et [frugal; and]' (10). The respective instances of an adjective or adverb at three of the midpoints in the concluding four lines ('ouvert [open]' (7); 'longs [long]' (8); 'largement [widely]' (9)) gain in importance due to their position. Along with the amplitude of the energising rays, the complexities of the dynamic between the narrator and his surroundings are underscored. In *Baudelaire's Poetic Patterns*, Peter Broome focalises this intricate relationship: 'the impassive immensity of nature on the one hand, and the *je* with its limited resources on the other [are] drawn into an unresolved relationship with each other as if, disrupting uniformity and monotony as well as any possible quiescence, powerful contrasting waves were passing between them, the one hypothetically capable of containing and "redeeming" the other' (Broome 1999: 309). The relative poverty of the masculine *rime suffisante* between 'ciel curieux [curious sky]' (7) and 'silencieux [silent]' (8) foregrounds the manner in which Baudelaire and his mother are prevented from feeling the beneficent effects of the sunshine because of the divisive windowpane. The glass barrier deadens the importance of the outside world, compounding the peculiar silence that suffuses the poem (in ten lines, there is not even a whisper). The feminine *rime riche* between 'ses beaux reflets de cierge [his beautiful candle-like reflections]' (9) and 'les rideaux de serge [serge curtains]' (10) augments the solemnity and pathos of the reminiscence, highlighted by Yves Bonnefoy in *Sous le signe de Baudelaire* [*Under the Sign of Baudelaire*]: 'dans cette atmosphère d'eucharistie la table à la nappe éclairée est un signifiant de l'autel [in this Eucharistic atmosphere, the table with its illuminated cloth signifies an altar]' (Bonnefoy 2011: 147-148). The quasi-religious ending to the piece is doubly remarkable: first, it alludes to humanity's unnatural attempts to transcend solar rhythms by artificial means; second, the ritualistic glow of the final lines of the piece embodies a humble counterpoint to the audacious narratives of urban modification conducted under Haussmann's authority. As the enclave of memory reaches its limit, it is startling to realise that there has been no definitive pause punctuated by a full-stop in the whole monologue. The meandering stream-of-consciousness becomes even more significant on the basis that it comprises a single sentence of 120 syllables, since this peculiarity hints at the evolution that is underway in Baudelaire's conception of poetry. In line with the almost limitless ambitions of Napoleon III and his Second Empire, the boundaries delimiting poetic space are becoming increasingly fluid. Following Chambers' assertion that the poem marks 'a fall, *out* of harmony, and *into* the unredeemed everyday of the "ville", the jumble of incongruity, noise and renewed pain that the "Tableaux parisiens" depict' (Chambers 2008: 45), Baudelaire's humble reminiscence in 'Je n'ai pas oublié' can be envisioned as the elucidation of an originary eco-sensitivity that contrasts with the metrocentrism of the surrounding 'Tableaux parisiens', providing a pre-urban foundation for the innovative poetic enterprise of *Les Fleurs du mal*.

Les Fleurs du mal C, 'La Servante au grand cœur'

Let us now consider 'La Servante au grand cœur', the fifteenth piece in the 'Tableaux parisiens'. The latter of the two sequential poems addressed to Baudelaire's mother opens with the evocation of Mariette, the narrator's dead nursemaid. As Baudelaire's musing on the fate of one of the two dearest feminine presences in his early life unfolds, he expresses regret for failing to remember Mariette, as well as for the lack of care shown to the decomposing

bodies of other forgotten dead figures that lie near her. In an arresting depiction of corporeality and mortality, the possibility of Mariette's spectre dutifully returning to watch over the narrator at the nocturnal conclusion of the piece underscores the importance of the bygone connection to a more natural way of life. Baudelaire's meditation on the inevitability of death and the failure of living humans to pay heed to the past ultimately signals a momentous transition from a pre-urban world to the metropolitan bustle of Haussmannian Paris.

Dating from the same era as 'Je n'ai pas oublié' (the two pieces were probably drafted very early in Baudelaire's poetic development, somewhere around the mid-1840s), 'La Servante au grand cœur' represents another youthful composition in rhyming couplets of alexandrines. Demarcated by a *volta* between the fourteen-line opening part and the eight-line latter part, the second poem in the diptych of childhood reminiscences offers a rather traditional development, filled with pathos and admiration. Signalled by the prominence of the female definite article as the opening word of the poem ('La [The]' (1)), the centrality of femininity in Baudelaire's reminiscence is reinforced by the predominance of feminine rhymes (six of the eleven couplets are feminine pairings), as well as by the repositioning of the piece in the wake of 'Je n'ai pas oublié' for the 1861 re-issue of *Les Fleurs du mal* (it preceded the other childhood recollection in the 1857 edition). The inverted order of the pieces in the 'Tableaux parisiens' implies a subtle shift in Baudelaire's relationship to the two key feminine presences from his childhood: his mother is rebuked at length in 'La Servante au grand cœur' after the brief attempt at reassurance in 'Je n'ai pas oublié', complicating the atmosphere of the unfolding collection. Madame Aupick's jealousy towards Mariette's quasi-maternal role as Baudelaire's nursemaid is foregrounded in 'La Servante au grand cœur' through the first feminine *rime riche* between 'jalouse [jealous]' (1) and 'humble pelouse [humble lawn]' (2). The richness of the association between the ill will of Baudelaire's mother and the grass under which the nursemaid is buried extends the customary rendering of green-hued jealousy by means of the insinuation that the living addressee is envious of the humble verdancy of the place in which the nursemaid has been laid to rest.

The contrast between human and non-human spaces is compounded by the plosive string running from the second line to the fourth line: 'pelouse [lawn]' (2); 'pourtant [nevertheless]' (3); 'porter [take]' (3); 'pauvres [poor]' (4). The connection between the turf and the pathetic situation of the corpses frames Baudelaire's imploration to his mother to take 'quelques fleurs [some flowers]' (3) to the graveside, making the narrator a conduit between the non-human world and human mortality. Contributing to *Paysage et poésies francophones* [*Landscape and Francophone Poetry*] about the affective resonances of poetic landscapes, Antonio Rodriguez notes that 'une tension naît entre l'ancrage géographique empirique, le positionnement objectif (dans un pays, dans une ville), d'une part, et, d'autre part, la configuration de l'espace, la situation sensible liées à un sujet (qui nous donne par exemple à lire la perte de soi, le sentiment d'abandon) [a tension is created between an empirical geographic anchoring, an objective positioning (in a country, in a city), on the one hand, and, on the other, a configuration of space, a perceptible situation linked to a subject (giving us to interpret, for example, a loss of self, a feeling of abandonment)]' (Rodriguez 2005: 38-39). The repeated invocation of the dead in the fourth line combines with the submerged caesura due to liaison ('Les morts, les pauvres morts, ont de grandes douleurs [The dead, the poor dead, suffer great pains]' (4)) to reinforce the import of the masculine *rime riche* between 'fleurs [flowers]' (3) and 'douleurs [pains]' (4). Evoking the title of *Les Fleurs du mal* in a melancholic manner that echoes the *ennui*-infused heart of the poems preceding the 'Tableaux

parisiens', the rhyme highlights the role of Baudelaire's reminiscence as a focal point in a continuum stretching from non-humanity to humanity.

Preparing the ground for the macabre involvement of the dead that commences in the seventh line ('Certe, ils doivent trouver les vivants bien ingrats [They certainly must find the living very ungrateful]' (7)), the anthropomorphisation of October (the apogee of autumn) in the fifth and sixth lines demonstrates Baudelaire's attentiveness to the harshness of the changing seasons for both the landscape and the buried corpses: 'quand Octobre souffle, | émondeur des vieux arbres,/Son vent mélancolique | à l'entour de leurs marbres [when October, stripper of old trees, blows/Its melancholic gust around their marble tombs]' (5-6). The evocation of Baudelaire's emotional state through the attribution of melancholia to the October wind is underscored by the continuation of the sibilance from the first two lines ('servante [servant]' (1); 'son sommeil sous [her sleep under]' (2)) in the verb of the fifth line: 'souffle [blows]' (5). The sibilant possessive pronoun at the beginning of the sixth line ('Son [Its]' (6)) further highlights the wispy acousticity of the poem because of its homonymic association with 'le son' [sound]. The connection between the sleep of the dead nursemaid and the morose gusts of wind exemplifies the authorial attitude characterised by Felix Leakey in *Baudelaire and Nature* as a 'vein of youthful Nature-*mysticism*' (Leakey 1969: 10). The agency of the wind stripping the leaves from the 'vieux arbres [old trees]' (5) emblematises the passage of time that snatched the life from Mariette and the other defunct humans.

Augmenting the harsh atmosphere, the two instances of a submerged caesura due to the elision of an *e caduc* in the fifth and sixth lines (subverting the visual break of a comma in the fifth line) cause the sense to run breathlessly through each of the dodecasyllabic units, as the harrowing gusts of wind whipping through the description are prosodically foregrounded. The association of the old trees with the cold marble of the tombs of the dead in the feminine *rime riche* between 'arbres [trees]' (5) and 'marbres [marble tombs]' (6) enhances the materiality of the piece by juxtaposing a human-modified form against unadulterated natural growth, in a manner that is suggestive of an increasing reification of the non-human world in the era of Haussmannisation. The prominent adverb at the beginning of the seventh line ('Certe [Certainly]' (7)) underscores the accusatory pathos of the piece, and couples with the relative poverty of the masculine *rime suffisante* between 'ingrats [ungrateful]' (7) and 'draps [sheets]' (8) after three rich rhymes to evoke a lack of warmth that is both physical and emotional. The dearth of appreciation shown by the selfish living for their defunct friends and family merges with the imagined discomfort of an undead consciousness that is posited as impregnating the cold, wet earth: 'Certe, ils doivent trouver les vivants bien ingrats,/À dormir, comme ils font,|| chaudement dans leurs draps [Certainly, they must find the living very ungrateful,/For sleeping, as they do, warmly in their sheets]' (7-8). Isolated by the two commas, the interjection of the comparative clause in the eighth line ('comme ils font [as they do]' (8)) causes a syntactic and prosodic disjuncture that emphasises the demarcation of the worlds of the living and the dead. The warm corporeality of the living in their beds is distinguished from the inhospitable cold of the October wind suffered by the corpses that Baudelaire foregrounds at the heart of his reproach.

The uneasy juxtaposition of the natural environment of the dead and the manmade space of the living is heightened at the beginning of the ninth line. The prominent contrastive conjunction ('Tandis que [While]' (9)) lacks a complement until the beginning of the eleventh line ('Ils sentent [They feel]' (11)), delaying the revelation of the disparity between the two worlds for thirty-one syllables. The ensuing atmosphere of wary anticipation is augmented by the macabre depiction of the frozen corpses suffering the decomposing attentions of worms:

> Tandis que, dévorés de noires songeries,
> Sans compagnon de lit,|| sans bonnes causeries,
> Vieux squelettes gelés travaillés par le ver,
> Ils sentent s'égoutter les neiges de l'hiver
> Et le siècle couler,|| sans qu'amis ni famille
> Remplacent les lambeaux qui pendent à leur grille.
>
> [While, devoured by black reveries,
> Without a bedfellow, without good conversation,
> Old, frozen skeletons, worked over by worms,
> They feel the snows of winter dripping
> And the century flowing, without friends or family
> Replacing the scraps that hang from their railings.] (9-14)

An intriguing contrast is created between the conjectured undead consciousness and the materiality of the skeletons, as the past participle describing the effect of the 'noires songeries [black reveries]' (9) on the dead in the ninth line ('dévorés [devoured]' (9)) would be more conventional in relation to the consumptive practices of the worms, parodically figured as the workers of nature by the past participle in the eleventh line: 'travaillés [worked over]' (11). This subtle subversion of linguistic preconceptions chimes with the rebellious tone of the reproach to Madame Aupick at the end of the first part of the piece, setting the stage for the spectral intrusion of Mariette into the description in the second part, in which she becomes the defining element of the narrator's own 'noires songeries [black reveries]' (9). The lack of care for the corpses is framed by a sibilance that echoes the delicate acousticity of the early lines of the poem, further compounding the opening reproach to Baudelaire's mother ('La servante au grand cœur dont vous étiez jalouse,/[…]/Nous devrions pourtant lui porter quelques fleurs [The kind-hearted servant of whom you were jealous,/[…]/We should nevertheless take her some flowers]' (1-3)). The threefold repetition of 'sans [without]' (twice in 10; once in 13) inaugurates another sibilant string that highlights the temporal vicissitudes of the skeletons at the end of the first part: 'songeries [reveries]' (9); 'squelettes [skeletons]' (11); 'sentent s'égoutter [feel dripping]' (12); 'siècle [century]' (13). The blurring of traditional referents is further emphasised by the first two (of three) instances of enjambement in the poem: the first half of the thirteenth line is a *rejet* [*reject*] of the twelfth line ('Ils sentent s'égoutter les neiges de l'hiver/Et le siècle couler' (12-13)); the second half of the thirteenth line is a *contre-rejet* [*counter-reject*] of the fourteenth line ('sans qu'amis ni famille/Remplacent les lambeaux qui pendent à leur grille' (13-14)). Echoing the atmosphere of decrepitude and mortality that suffuses 'Danse macabre' ['Macabre Dance'] ('qui n'a serré dans ses bras un squelette,/Et qui ne s'est nourri des choses du tombeau? [who has not grasped in his arms a skeleton,/And who has not been nourished by the stuff of the tomb?]' (XCVII.41-42)), the absence of companionship and good humour for the dead demonstrates that the feelings of emptiness plaguing Baudelaire's consciousness in *Les Fleurs du mal* remain a concern even after death severs any hope of establishing a sustaining connection with other entities.

Faced with such emptiness, Jean-Michel Maulpoix's vision of the impact of verse compositions in *Le Poète perplexe* [*The Perplexed Poet*] is insightful:

> Il est dans le pouvoir du poème de nous rendre un instant visible et respirable le langage que la société aveugle et asphyxie. D'y rendre sensible et mobile notre rapport incertain au sens, occulté et figé par la vie commune. Et donc de nous reconduire à nous-mêmes, moins pour nous rassurer que pour nous rappeler de quelle opacité nous sommes constitués.

> [It is in the power of the poem to make the language that society blocks and asphyxiates momentarily visible and breathable for us. To make perceptible and mobile therein our uncertain relationship with sense, occluded and fixed by communal life. And thus to lead us back to ourselves, not so much to reassure us, as to remind us of which obscurity we are constituted.] (Maulpoix 2002: 252)

Baudelaire's awareness of the forces at work in poetic representation is subtly implied by the homophonic resonances of the noun at the end of the eleventh line: 'ver [worm]' (11). The echo of 'le vers' [verse] and 'vers' [towards] augments the evocation of animal agency, associating it with the versifier's work, as well as with a promising vector towards the future. This linguistic matrix hints at a new world beyond the wintry atmosphere suggested by the masculine *rime riche* with 'l'hiver [winter]' (12).

The temporality of the poem begins to condense as the first part draws to a close: the inexorable flow of the century in the thirteenth line is bounded by the unequivocal caesura at the comma after the infinitive: 'le siècle couler,|| sans qu'amis ni famille [the century flowing, without friends or family]' (13). The definitive pause due to the second full-stop of the piece at the end of the fourteenth line draws attention to the withered 'lambeaux [scraps]' (14) that hang from the forgotten tombs (as well as concluding the second sentence of the poem). Following the explicit reproach to Baudelaire's mother in the opening three lines before the first full stop, the evocation of the unnamed dead in the 132 syllables between the fourth and fourteenth lines is halted by the stanzaic break that initiates the third (and final) unit of description encompassed by the latter part of the piece. Composed of two masculine couplets and two feminine couplets displaying particularly rich rhymes, the concluding eight lines focalise the prospect of Mariette's spectre appearing in the narrator's bedroom 'par une nuit bleue|~~|~~et froide de décembre [on a blue and cold December night]' (17), as part of an intimately humble scene punctuated by the crackling of a warm fire: 'Lorsque la bûche siffle~~|~~ et chante [while the log on the fire whistles and sings]' (15). Foregrounded by the feminine *rime riche* between 'décembre [December]' (17) and 'chambre [bedroom]' (18) that echoes the feminine *rime riche* between 'arbres [trees]' (5) and 'marbres [marble tombs]' (6), the warmth of the interior space of the living is juxtaposed with the chilly night surrounding the dead nursemaid. The human sphere is thus demarcated as separate from the non-human environment that is plagued by the coldness of the October wind. Heeding Chambers' claim that 'the spatial proximity of past and present can become a case of *hauntedness*' (Chambers 2008: 45), the two cases of a submerged caesura due to the elision of an *e caduc* in the fifteenth and seventeenth lines heighten the contrast between the nonasyllabic unit encapsulating the warmth of the human sphere ('Lorsque la bûche siffle~~|~~et chante' (15)) and the hendecasyllabic unit encompassing the cold of the non-human world: 'par une nuit bleue~~|~~ et froide de décembre' (17). The masculine *rime riche* between 'soir [night]' (15) and 's'asseoir [sit]' (16) even parodies the concept of night-time as a moment of welcome repose, since the spirit of the nursemaid cannot rest in her favourite chair at night.

Mariette's unending isolation and grief suffuse the concluding four lines of the poem. Alongside the identical syllabic division and repetition of 'de son [of her]' (19; 20) in the closing hemistich of both the nineteenth and twentieth lines, the opulent *rime léonine* between 'son lit éternel [her eternal bed]' (19) and 'son œil maternel [her maternal eye]' (20) emphasises the instinctive repetitiousness of the nursemaid's caring character that anchors her in the world of the living. The importance of Mariette in Baudelaire's development is evoked by the prominence of the supervisory infinitive at the beginning of the twentieth line: 'Couver [To watch over]' (20). Heightening the impression that the narrator's mother is a poor counterpart to the dead nursemaid, the ornithological implication of the verb draws attention to the importance of Mariette as a pre-urban character with nurturing instincts. The figuration

of the dead nursemaid as a brooding hen intensifies the sensation of the Paris-based narrator being disconnected from the kind of spontaneous care that was available during his childhood (especially because the compassionate character and close relation to nature of the non-familial female guardian provide a stark contrast to the uncaring and unnatural atmosphere of the surrounding 'Tableaux parisiens').

The poem ends with a twenty-four-syllable question that exemplifies the narrator's inability to offer comfort to the dead soul of his nursemaid, despite the debt of gratitude that he owes her: 'Que pourrais-je répondre à cette âme pieuse,/Voyant tomber des pleurs de sa paupière creuse? [What could I reply to this pious soul,/Seeing tears fall from her hollow eyelid?]' (21-22). Confirming the progressive collapse of human connections that the first part of the poem indicates, the plosive alliteration in /p/ of the final couplet creates a fivefold associative string that underscores the failure of the living to honour the memory of the dead: 'pourrais [could I]' (21); 'répondre [reply]' (21); 'pieuse [pious]' (21); 'pleurs [tears]' (22); 'paupière [eyelid]' (22). At the conclusion of the diptych of reminiscences, the ominous implications of Baudelaire's unanswered question leave a bitter residue in the wake of memories springing from a happier and more humble life in an extra-urban world.

Conclusion

The ecopoetic qualities of the descriptions and prosody of 'Je n'ai pas oublié' and 'La Servante au grand cœur' indicate the fundamental importance for Baudelaire of a world apart from the harsh realities of urban existence. In this regard, it is important to confront Jean-Paul Sartre's claim in *Baudelaire*: 'citadin, [Baudelaire] aime l'objet géométrique, soumis à la rationalisation humaine [as a city-dweller, [Baudelaire] loves the geometrical object, subjected to human rationalisation]' (Sartre 1947: 120). Founded on the poet's immersion in the processes and life of the city, there may be some substance in this identification of a Baudelairean predilection for the geometric rationality of manmade structures. It would be imprudent, however, to neglect the sensitivity to ecological concerns that is noticeable in 'Je n'ai pas oublié' and 'La Servante au grand cœur'. Baudelaire's poetry is not precluded from enmeshment in issues linked to the increasing complexity of the relationship between humanity and nature in the nineteenth century merely because the city-dwelling versifier is in awe of the sophisticated components of life in urbanised society.

As a way of further elucidating the implications of burgeoning metrocentrism at the time of Baudelaire's compositions, it is helpful to consider Lewis Mumford's proposal in *The City in History* that 'the new mark of the city is obvious: a change of scale, deliberately meant to awe and overpower the beholder' (Mumford 1961: 65). Immersed in an era of rapid technological advancement and increasing societal sophistication, it is understandable that Baudelaire is beholden to the trappings of civilisation. The hints of ecopoetic concerns in *Les Fleurs du mal* nonetheless demonstrate that Baudelaire is sensitive to alterations in his environment that are related to urbanisation (a process that estranges humanity from its natural origins).

Framed by the transitional thematic of 'Le Crépuscule du soir' ['Dusk'] ('le ciel/Se ferme lentement comme une grande alcôve,/Et l'homme impatient se change en bête fauve [the sky/closes slowly like a great alcove,/And impatient man changes into a wild beast]' (XCV.3-5)) and 'Le Crépuscule du matin' ['Dawn'] ('L'air est plein du frisson des choses qui s'enfuient [The air is filled with the shivers of fleeing things]' (CIII.10)), 'Je n'ai pas oublié' and 'La Servante au grand cœur' herald Baudelaire's eventual move towards the freedom of expression that prose poetry embodies. Chiming with the increasing fluidity of societal and temporal paradigms in the industrialised era, Baudelaire's prosodic manipulations function as more than a mere mechanism of accentuating certain terms or phrases: they tentatively begin

to experiment with the capacity of poetry to mimic environmental tumult. The memory of a pre-urban existence in the proto-ecological ruminations of 'Je n'ai pas oublié' and 'La Servante au grand cœur' augments the significance of Baudelaire's engagement with the insalubrious realities of nineteenth-century Paris, as he probes the potential of verse to render a mutating world. Rather than taking refuge in idyllic musings, Baudelaire ushers in a new era of freer verse that evokes the ecosystemic stakes of Haussmann's restructuring works.

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[i] The principles of nineteenth-century French prosody are outlined in Clive Scott's *A Question of Syllables* (Scott 1986: 198-205). For the purposes of the present analysis, it is helpful to elucidate two key aspects. First, the most common line of verse, the alexandrine, contains twelve syllables; it usually comprises a primary emphasis at the caesura that might be submerged due to elision or liaison. Second, a rhyme is either masculine or feminine, and might be *pauvre* [*poor*], *suffisante* [*sufficient*] or *riche* [*rich*], depending on the number of shared phonemes (a particularly rich rhyme is *léonine*); feminine rhyme is exclusively based on words containing a terminal *e caduc* [*mute e*], whereas other rhymes are masculine.