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Kristen Ballieu
Brigham Young University - Provo

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Decanting the Rabelaisian Casks: Democratizing Neoplatonic Poetic Fury

in Baudelaire's "L'âme du vin"

Kristen Ballieu

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Robert J. Hudson, Chair
Daryl P. Lee
Anca M. Sprenger

Department of French and Italian
Brigham Young University

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ABSTRACT

“Decanting the Rabelaisian Casks: Democratizing Neoplatonic Poetic Fury in Baudelaire’s “L’âme du vin”

Kristen Ballieu

Department of French and Italian, BYU

Master of Arts

The following document is a meta-commentary on the article “Decanting the Rabelaisian Casks: Democratizing Neoplatonic Poetic Fury in Baudelaire’s ‘L’âme du vin,’” co-authored by Dr. Robert J. Hudson and myself, which will soon be submitted for publication. It contains an annotated bibliography of all our primary and secondary sources and an account of the genesis of the argument and the writing of the article.

Our article is based upon an analysis of “L’âme du vin,” the threshold poem of “Le Vin,” the central section of Charles Baudelaire’s celebrated volume *Les Fleurs du Mal*. As we demonstrate, previous scholarship on this section is sparse and while certain poems within the section have received attention from distinguished scholars, the integral part that it plays in the larger work has been downplayed, if not entirely neglected. Our reading of the poem allows for an explanation of the structure of the entire collection, illuminates Baudelaire’s intended internal architecture, and elucidates his theory of poetic creation and aesthetic ideals more generally. As we demonstrate, the transition from the Parisian commoner in “Tableaux parisiens” to the transcendent poet in “Fleurs du mal” requires the transformation provided by the intoxication in “Le Vin” which lends itself to divine fury and attainment of transcendence in and ascension to the sonnets of the “Fleurs du mal.”

Our development of this conclusion comes through a study of Baudelaire’s employment of Neoplatonic theories and images and his adoption of Rabelais’ Gallic codification of these Neoplatonic tropes. “L’âme du vin” illustrates the essence of Baudelaire’s progressive populist thought previous to the Revolution of 1848, by rendering permanent the inversion of social order found in the Rabelaisian/Bakhtinian *carnavalesque*. The Neoplatonic ladder to transcendence, based on Plato’s four stages of divine fury, and systemized by Renaissance thinkers Marsilio Ficino and Pontus de Tyard, is tipped, or thrown, on its side in Baudelaire’s work, demonstrating not only the overthrow of the hierarchy of the Old Regime, but the solidification of the humanization of the common, working man, the *premier venu* or *homme de la rue*, and the ability of the least of society, rather than the members of the nobility or leisured class of centuries past, to access divine fury and poetic transcendence by imbibing, integrating, and appreciating the soul of wine.

Keywords: Charles Baudelaire, Wine, Poetic Fury, Neoplatonic, Populist, François Rabelais

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And I would of course like to express my appreciation to my husband, Paul, my amazing parents, and several of my peers, especially Laurel Cummins White, for their enduring support and willingness to listen to my endlessly fanciful ideas.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface.....	1
Introduction.....	3
Annotated Bibliography.....	5
Primary Sources	5
Secondary Sources	8
Sample of Changes	18
Conclusion	25
Bibliography	27

Preface

In accordance with the second thesis option offered by the Department of French and Italian graduate program, I co-authored the article “Decanting the Rabelaisian Casks: Democratizing Neoplatonic Poetic Fury in Baudelaire’s “L’âme du vin” with Dr. Robert Hudson, and prepared the annotated bibliography of our sources and the following meta-commentary on the process of the production of the article, which will be submitted to academic journals for publication shortly.

Dr. Hudson and I developed this project through our discussions across his desk. Dr. Hudson proposed a study of wine in Baudelaire, and we originally went back and forth between a closer reading of the threshold poem and a larger reading of the entire section, as our argument evolved. Under Dr. Hudson’s mentorship I read various sources and commentaries and developed ideas, which we would discuss and fine-tune, modify, or reject in our weekly meetings.

Dr. Hudson and I both worked on all aspects of the final article. The genesis of the project began in October 2013 at which point we began our discussion and discovery of “L’âme du vin” and Dr. Hudson recommended sources I should consult and I began my own research on recent scholarship on the subject of wine in Baudelaire and readings of this section in particular. Dr. Hudson and I both consulted, and returned to, sources to determine which direction to go with our argument and to find support and background. I prepared a preliminary annotated bibliography in December 2013, at which time we had solidified most of the finer points of our argument. In January 2014, we began drafting what was to become the article. Each week we would discuss ideas, which I would then work on, writing a section from our outline and sending it to Dr. Hudson for review and revision. We would discuss the changes and additions to be

made each week, and go over our ideas for the next section together, which I would then write and send to Dr. Hudson. This process continued through February 2014, until we were both satisfied with each section and the overall article. Through this process of writing and revision, the article was completed as a combination of both of our contributions of research, thought, and prose. When we had a revised draft of the completed article, I took it to the Research and Writing Center for revision and Dr. Hudson and I both reviewed it and discussed and completed our final changes before submitting it to the committee.

Introduction

Les Fleurs du Mal is quite possibly the most well known collection of poems in *La Francophonie*. Charles Baudelaire was a nineteenth-century poet, writer, and art critic whose works had a significant impact on late romantic, and especially modernist, poetry, thought, and theory, as well as on later generations and movements of poets and theorists. Baudelaire was raised in the very bourgeois household of his stepfather, General Jacques Aupick, though he fancied himself a dandy and identified himself with the nobility of the old regime, to which he felt profoundly and mystically linked through his late father, a defrocked priest, and beloved mother of mysterious aristocratic origins. He also fashioned himself an identity as a *flâneur* and populist, a paradoxically *mondain* advocate for the lowest members of society. His background had a lasting impact on his aesthetic theory and poetic production – as well as political inclinations – throughout his life.

Baudelaire was certainly caught up in the spirit of the age as he participated in the Revolution of 1848; and he did espouse certain progressive attitudes, which pushed him to production and participation, despite his intense nostalgia for his idealized image of the Old Regime. He lived in a time of extreme political and social change, in the wake of the several French Revolutions and leading to further revolutions, coups, and changes as the century progressed. Amidst these changes, Baudelaire rejected the bourgeois entirely, including and particularly his identity as a potential member of the new bourgeois nobility. He harshly criticized and satirized the bourgeois in several of his works, particularly his art criticism in which they are painted as ignorant, insensitive, and unappreciative, concerned only with conspicuous consumption, as in Baudelaire's well-known ironic statement "*Je connais mon musée,*" uttered to epitomize the bourgeois class upon completion of their brief stroll and briefer

glances at the most famous paintings of the Louvre. Baudelaire's aesthetic, social, and political views evidently influenced his poetic production, as evidenced and demonstrated in our article, in his adoption and modifications of the Neoplatonic ladder of Ficinian *Furore*, in which man can re-ascend and attain transcendence and poetic fury through sincere effort combined with the consumption and appreciation of the eternal soul of the wine, which is displaced from the nobility and shifted directly to the working class, skipping over the unappreciative, consumeristic bourgeois.

Baudelaire's re-appropriation of romantic ideals and themes from the previous generation, the "*Grand Cénacle*" of romantic poets, and of his predecessors in the larger French and Western literary tradition amidst and considering the intense changes of the Nineteenth Century assured him a place in the canon and a great legacy in modern aesthetic theory and production.

To the end of further study and propagation of a better understanding of that legacy and its origin in the person and work of Charles Baudelaire, an annotated bibliography of our sources follows. It contains Baudelaire's complete collected works, as well as works of Rabelais, Plato and Ficino in terms of Primary Sources, followed by Secondary Sources including commentaries and scholarly contributions to the literature surrounding Baudelaire, his influences, and the historical and socio-cultural context of nineteenth-century France.

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources

Baudelaire, Charles. *Œuvres complètes*. Ed. Claude Pichois. Paris: Gallimard, 1976.

“L’âme du vin,” the poem seuil of the section “Le Vin” of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, is the primary focus of our article, though we also draw from other poems of this collection and upon Baudelaire’s critical essays. “L’âme du vin” originally appeared in 1851 in *La République du Peuple, almanache démocratique*. *Les Fleurs du Mal* was originally published as an ensemble in 1857, though numerous versions have appeared with certain poems added and others removed (particularly for accusations of violating public decency under the Second Empire). The collection is divided into six sections: Spleen et Idéal, Tableaux parisiens, Le Vin, Fleurs du mal, Révolte, and La Mort. “Le Vin,” a section comprised of only five poems, centrally situated between “Tableaux parisiens” and “Fleurs du mal,” plays an interesting, though previously un- or under-recognized role in the development of the overall architecture of the collection. This canonical collection of Baudelaire’s works is also invaluable for Claude Pichois’ notes. The entire collected works proved to support our argument and cast light on Baudelaire’s thought outside his poetry, for which reason we also draw from Baudelaire’s art criticism, particularly the *Salon* of 1845 and 1846, which illustrate his ideas leading up to the Revolution of 1848. We also consult and cite several well known poems from Spleen et Idéal: “L’Albatros,” “L’élévation,” and “Corrélations” which also speak to the transcendence of the common man through poetry and effort, as well as certain journalistic collaborations published in *Le Tintamarre* in 1847.

Ficino, Marsilio. *Commentaries on Plato*. Vol. 1. Trans. Michael J.B. Allen. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2008.

Marsilio Ficino was an early Italian Renaissance humanist philosopher perhaps most influential for his commentaries on Plato, and for having translated Plato's complete works from Greek to Latin. Through this endeavor he revived Neoplatonism in the Renaissance, and his ideas and commentaries on Plato pervaded enlightenment Neoplatonism, even often mistaken as Plato's own ideas. Ficino thus played a role in the current of humanism manifest in Rabelais' works, all the way up into the Neoplatonic and humanist ideas Baudelaire was exposed to in the Nineteenth Century. Ficino's ideas on and interpretation of Plato's conception of poetic inspiration and *furore* or divine fury is particularly critical to our discussion, as he codified the larger platonic theories on beauty into the steps of divine fury that Pontus de Tyard would later christen "the ladder."

Plato. *Ion*. Trans. Benjamin Jowett. 1953. In *Critical Theory Since Plato*. Ed. Hazard Adams. Harcourt: New York, 1992. 12-18.

Plato's dialogue *Ion* is integral to our argument as the work in which Plato outlines the nature of poetic inspiration. It provides a discussion of the abilities of the poet either as a manifestation of his skill, knowledge, and effort or as an indication of divine possession, a state that Neoplatonists would term *furore*. The conclusion the personage of Socrates presents is that Ion's ability as a poet cannot be a developed skill, but is rather derived from divine inspiration. This dichotomy is exactly that to which Baudelaire returns in "L'âme du vin," to assert the place of work in his own theory of poetic inspiration. Additionally, Jowett's translation is particularly accessible and authoritative and lent to our use of Platonic terms in our article.

Rabelais, François. *Œuvres Complètes*. Ed. Mireille Huchon. Paris: Gallimard, 1994.

Rabelais' epic series *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, a collection of five books, began with the publication of *Pantagruel* in 1532 under the pseudonym Alcofribas Nasier, and concluded with the much-disputed and posthumously published *Cinquiesme Livre* in 1564. While perhaps best known for his Gallicisms and corporeal and base humor, Rabelais was one of the great Renaissance humanists and had a great impact on thought about education, the role of the Church, and the French language through his satirical and fantastical writings. The story of the two giants, father and son, concludes with Pantagruel and his companions interaction with the oracle of the *dive bouteille* and the revelation and frenzy the soul of the wine provides. Rabelais' works had a great impact on subsequent generations, particularly on Balzac and Baudelaire among others in the resurgence of nineteenth-century humanism.

Secondary Sources

Avni, Abraham. "A Revaluation of Baudelaire's "Le Vin": Its Originality and Significance for les Fleurs du mal." *The French Review* 44.2 (1970): 310-321.

Avni's contribution to scholarship on Baudelaire's "Le Vin" section is of great value to our discussion, especially when juxtaposed with Turnell's neglect of its importance, though he does not hone in on the section's nature as a transition and thus to the whole collection as a model of the ladder, in Ficino's Neoplatonic theory, to transcendence and poetic inspiration, nor to the importance of work in Baudelaire's aesthetic theory and the democratizing and humanizing nature of wine in the process of poetic fury and access to transcendence in modernity. Avni addresses the important association of wine with poetry and the Divine in his article, and even notes the personification of wine and the importance of the soul and the bottle, however he does not address the significance of these images. Avni situates Baudelaire's use of wine throughout his works in the larger history of wine poetry. He asserts the originality of and addressed the antique influences on Baudelaire's wine poems and its organic place in *Les Fleurs du Mal* because of its common theme of man's duality, in the duality of wine with its merits and demerits, raising man to his highest aspirations or plunging him to the lowest echelons of existence.

Bajorek, Jennifer. *Counterfeit Capital: Poetic Labor and Revolutionary Irony*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2009.

Bajorek's book provides an intricate and essential study in the place of irony and capital in the works of both Baudelaire and Marx. As we approached "L'âme du vin" from a position of Baudelaire's contemporary politics of progressive populism, or even socialism, a comparison and reading with Marx was particularly interesting and relevant.

Bajorek's study situates the aesthetic and cultural theories and innovations of Baudelaire and Marx in their political and social contexts. Bajorek also revisits Walter Benjamin's interpretations of both primary author's works, making all of their theoretical contributions relevant to contemporary discussion and particularly to our reading of Baudelaire's "Le Vin" which is so deeply inscribed with his politics and philosophies.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Hélène Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984.

Bakhtin's reading of Rabelais has become a classic in the realm of Renaissance studies for his original reading of *Gargantua and Pantagruel* and his analysis of the Renaissance social system. His study of what he terms the *carnavalesque* is particularly relevant to our discussion of the humanizing effects of wine, in a study of Baudelaire and the influence of Rabelaisian "philosophy." Carnival, as Bakhtin elucidates, is an exaltation of the lowest strata of society and an opportunity to be rejuvenated and experience liberty and unity as at no other moment in the hierarchical Renaissance society. Bakhtin's explanation of carnival as a social institution and of the interaction between the social and literary in a larger manner has clear and direct applications to our thesis, as Baudelaire employs Rabelais' image of the *dive bouteille* to the same ends as those of carnival, to exalt and humanize the lowest members of society, in a new, modern order.

Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project*. Trans. Rolf Tiedemann. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1999.

The Arcades Project, a posthumously published collection of Benjamin's unfinished reflections on nineteenth-century Parisian life marks a distinct connection between Benjamin and Baudelaire in the personage of the *flâneur*. Benjamin was clearly impacted and intrigued by Baudelaire's poetry and the place of Parisian street life and eventually

elevated the *flâneur* to his place as an emblem of modern, urban life. Benjamin's work, though fragmented, includes a category entitled "Baudelaire" and casts light on Baudelaire's poetry, including "Le Vin," particularly the thus-popularized "Le Vin des Chiffonniers" and "L'âme du vin" with regard to which he mentions the link between antiquity and modernity in the figure of the worker's son. Benjamin's study of Baudelaire's poetry combined with his theories on various phenomena in the shift to the modern age that Baudelaire witnessed provides an instrumental foothold in theory upon which we build our argument.

Berry, Alice Fiola. "Apollo versus Bacchus: The Dynamics of Inspiration (Rabelais's Prologues to *Gargantua* and to the *Tiers livre*)." *PMLA* 90.1 (1975): 88-95.

Berry's article discusses the importance of inspiration in production and the significance of its various forms through a study of Rabelais' prologues, or addresses to his readers, and proposes that these prologues are first and foremost treatises on creative writing. As such, she suggests, they provide insight into Rabelais' theory of inspiration, particularly his perception of Neoplatonic divine fury. Rabelais associates the writer with philosophers of antiquity and insists that the writer composes under the influence of divine fury. This irrational frenzy, or madness as Plato termed it, appears primarily as invoked by Bacchus or Apollo in Rabelais' works and Berry focuses on the conflict and juxtaposition of these two divine influences. She dissects Rabelais' prologues to determine which statements reflect the Apollonian and which the Bacchic, and concludes, as we might guess, that wine, the Bacchic, demonic influence, prevails in Rabelais' production and creative theory.

Castor, Grahame. *Pléiade Poetics: A Study in Sixteenth-Century Thought and Terminology*.

London: Cambridge UP, 1964.

Castor's study of the poetic theory of the Pléiade poets is useful to our study as a vital step in the evolution of the Neoplatonic theory of poetic creation and the continuance of Platonic ideas of poetic fury and the integral Dionysian aspect of inspiration and transcendence. Castor presents the complex and various ideas of the Pléiade in an approachable, linear matter, and clearly delineates the "Ficinian ladder" of the steps or types of divine frenzy, and provides excerpts from the writing of the Pléiade poets, who certainly influence the nineteenth-century romantic poets, on their much discussed creative theories, particularly Pontus de Tyard's codification of these phases into the steps of a ladder, serving for man to re-ascend to his original state of eternal bliss.

Chambers, Ross. "Recycling the Ragpicker: 'Le Vin des chiffonniers.'" *Understanding Les Fleurs du Mal*. Ed. William J. Thompson. Nashville: Vanderbilt UP, 1997.

This chapter is particularly useful because Chambers addresses the better-known poem "Le Vin des chiffonniers" which can be found in the same section, "Le Vin," as "L'âme du vin" and thus is working from the same theme of drunkenness and its relation to the working man. Chambers discusses several different interpretations of the thematic significance of "Le Vin des chiffonniers" before presenting his own conclusions, all the while drawing upon Baudelaire's perception of and involvement in politics, but particularly emphasizing his evolving relationship with revolutionaries and socialism. His conclusion that Baudelaire identified the intoxicated ragpicker as an emblematic figure of the uprising working class provides a very interesting political reading. It must be noted however that Baudelaire's politics changed significantly with the disillusionment

following the revolution of 1848 and coup of 1851, and that “L’âme du Vin” was written previous to these events, when Baudelaire still maintained a positive view of what Chamber’s terms “misleadingly utopian socialist rhetoric.” Chambers reading is nevertheless useful for his piercing analysis of Baudelaire’s political philosophy and its manifestations in his poetry.

Conio, Gérard. *Baudelaire: Étude de Les Fleurs du Mal, Analyses et commentaires*. Allier, Belgium: Marabout, 1992.

Conio’s commentary of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, while not a supremely scholarly source per se, is an excellent reference, and surprised us with its penetrating analysis, particularly of the internal architecture of the collection and his larger and interspersed commentary of the displacement of the vertical to the horizontal axis in various contexts and manifestations throughout Baudelaire’s poetry, from the inversion and duality of land and sky and to the relationship and conflict between the material and the spiritual, which proved very interesting and pertinent to our discussion of both bourgeois materialism and the vertical to horizontal progression of Divine Fury.

Covin, Michel. “*L’homme de la rue*”: *Essai sur la politique Baudelairienne*. Paris: L’Harmattan, 2001.

Michel Covin’s book on “*l’homme de la rue*” is interesting and somewhat relevant to our article for his excavation and explanation of the meaning and importance of this term and figure which figures dominantly in our discussion of Baudelaire’s democratization or socialization of wine, or access to divine fury. Aside from this contribution, and the importance of the figure he studies as the poet and common man, his work is not particularly pertinent or helpful in the advancement of our argument.

Eliade, Mircea. *Le sacré et le profane*. 1957. Paris: Gallimard, 1965.

Le sacré et le profane informs our discussion of the importance of Sunday, as evoked by “les refrains des dimanches” in the poem “L’âme du vin.” As we establish that the reference to Sunday here is to the Sunday of the common man, a day of rest from long hours of hard work, rather than to the religious Sunday of traditional Catholic worship, as in the Old Regime. In *Le sacré et le profane*, Eliade explains the differences in the experience of time between the religious man, whose calendar is marked with liturgical ruptures, and the non-religious man, whose homogenized and profane existence require him to create his own crypto-religious sacred spaces, in the same space previously occupied by religion, Sunday. These religious substitutes allow for the privileged place of the secular Sunday in the laic lives of the nineteenth-century working man.

Harline, Craig. *Sunday: A History of the First Day from Babylonia to the Super Bowl*. New York: Doubleday, 2007.

Craig Harline’s study of the evolution of the Sabbath from ancient to modern times is thorough and fascinating, and proved particularly useful in our understanding of the significance of Sunday in nineteenth-century France. Harline discusses the impact of industrialization and secularization in France on the way *dimanche* was viewed, not as a day of worship, but rather as a day of rest from long hours of hard work. His explanation of the Sunday phenomenon at the time is also particularly useful to our article in his comparison of the differences in the perception of Sunday between members of the bourgeois, new nobility and members of the proto-proletarian working class.

Hudson, Robert J. “The Priest, the soldier and the poet: Baudelaire’s poetics of (anti-)modernity.” MA thesis BYU, 2005.

Dr. Hudson's Masters Thesis was valuable reading for me to better understand Baudelaire and particularly catch up with regard to the importance of his father's background in his self-created identity and philosophies. He discusses Baudelaire's political and ideological affinity for the proletariat and his somewhat paradoxical nostalgia for the Old Regime past, which are synthesized in the figure of the dandy he embraces, and mediated by those of the priest, soldier, and finally poet that Dr. Hudson studies more precisely.

Hudson, Robert J. "Clément Marot and the "Invention" of the French Sonnet: Innovating the Lyrical Imperative in Renaissance France." *Anthropoetics* 14.2 (2009).

Dr. Hudson's article, adapted from some of the more salient points of his doctoral dissertation, establishes the Petrarchan sonnet as the ideal lyrical form as instituted by French Renaissance poets, which supports our suggestion that the use of the sonnet in "Fleurs du mal" following the ascension or forward progression in "Le Vin" shows, particularly when compounded with the change in subject matter, that the poet has thereby attained transcendence and accessed, and ultimately can produce, ultimate beauty, which appears in this ideal form of the sonnet.

Mayer-Robin, Carmen. "Alchemies of Modern Experimentation in Writing: Leopardi, Baudelaire, and the Distillation of Wine Symbolism." *Romance Notes* 48.2 (2008): 185-193.

Mayer-Robin's article discusses the influence of wine and traditional and antique alcohol mythologies in the works of Baudelaire and Leopardi. This direct thematic link in wine imagery drew me to the article, but Mayer-Robin proved a most valuable source for her discussion of the importance of social commentary and problems in *Les Fleurs du Mal*

and the role of a goal of progressive, social change was in Baudelaire's works more generally, and the way that Baudelaire employs the wine metaphor to reveal modern societal problems. She also delves into the vertical-horizontal schema often associated with Baudelaire in discussions of duality in his works, particularly that of the sensory, terrestrial experience as opposed with and yet linked to the extra-sensory, celestial experience.

Pichois, Claude. *Baudelaire*. Trans. Graham Robb. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1989.

Claude Pichois was a key contributor to our work and all Baudelaire scholarship for this biographical and analytical portrait and his notes in the Pléiade edition of Baudelaire's complete works. Graham Robb's translation of Pichois collection of myriad sources provides an accessible and enthralling portrait of the poet. This source provided the basis for the arguments found in our second, history section and supported our research into Baudelaire's political leanings and ideological roots, which was an integral part of our work of developing our thesis of the inversion of the Ficinian ladder and the "decanting" of the soul of wine for the common man. Pichois' definitive discussion of Baudelaire's life allowed me to better understand the poet and the historical and socio-cultural moment in which he lived and wrote, and thereby to situate our reading of "L'âme du vin."

Ragon, Michel. *Gustave Courbet: Peintre de la liberté*. Paris: Fayard, 2004.

Ragon's portrait of Courbet is relevant to our study because of Baudelaire's friendship with the painter. Ragon describes scenes from the Brasserie Andler, a working class tavern, that Baudelaire frequented with fellow populists Courbet and Champfleury. This habitual departure from locales more conducive to his identity as something of a dandy marked his affinity for and involvement with the working class, even outside of the

ideological, aesthetic realm, and provides evidence to support our depiction of Baudelaire as a champion of the working class and advocate of the humanization of the *premier venu*.

Rigolot, Francois. *Poésie et Renaissance*. Paris: Seuil, 2002.

Rigolot's sweeping study of Renaissance poetry, drawn from a career of publications on the subject, provided excellent background and analysis for an understanding of the progression of Neoplatonic ideas and Renaissance theories of poetic creation and a larger appreciation of the principal issues and ideas of Renaissance poetry. This ideological evolution is important in establishing and understanding the French literary heritage from which Baudelaire drew.

Robb, Graham. *Baudelaire, Lecteur de Balzac*. Paris: Corti, 1988.

This work is important, not only because of Robb's place as a leading scholar in the field, but because of the link we are trying to build between Baudelaire and Rabelais, and the intermediary Balzac played in the transmission of these ideas. Though the articles of 28 mars au 3 avril 1847 in *Le Tintamarre* indicate that Baudelaire was directly aware of the *dive bouteille* and humanist themes in the works of Rabelais, Balzac has been established as a reader of Rabelais, so we will lean on the intermediary role he played in the identification of Rabelaisian and Baudelarian images and themes, especially with the short stories from *La comédie humaine* with direct bearings to Neoplatonism (i.e. *Gambara*).

Turnell, Martin. *Baudelaire: A Study of his Poetry*. New York: New Directions, 1954.

Turnell's commentary is a valuable contribution to Baudelaire scholarship on *Les Fleurs du mal*, though it is particularly telling that he is not only neglectful, but also negative towards the place "Le Vin" fills in the collection of Baudelaire's poetry. This work

served as a sort of impetus into our exploration of “Le Vin,” as well as providing valuable insights into other sections and *Les Fleurs du Mal* more generally.

Zimmermann, Laurent. *La littérature et l'ivresse: Rabelais, Baudelaire, Apollinaire*. Paris: Hermann, 2009.

Zimmermann’s study is most relevant to our article in name, and for its overall thematic, though the specific arguments do not bring much to bear on our thesis. Zimmermann’s work includes analyses of canonical excerpts of Rabelais, Baudelaire, and Apollinaire’s *œuvres* in light of the theme of drunkenness and develops an argument of the intoxicating influence of literature on literary production, aligning literature with and as *ivresse*.

Zimmermann’s contribution to the literature on *ivresse* is perhaps most notable for his effort to link Rabelais, Baudelaire, and Apollinaire, along an intriguing line of literary ancestry and influence in modern and early-modern wine poetry.

Sample of Changes

Dr. Hudson and I wrote our article through email correspondence between regular weekly and sometimes bi-weekly meetings. I would write one section from the outline, and send it to him for review, revision, and improvement from his wealth of experience and knowledge. He would annotate each section draft with syntactic improvements as well as comments on larger ideas that needed to be addressed using the “Track Changes” function of Microsoft Word. We would then review our progress and discuss concepts that needed to be solidified to support our arguments. We would meet for these discussions when he would give me his feedback and changes and I would then rework the section before continuing to the next. This process was infinitely helpful to me in improving my ability to write lucid, concise prose. I learned many things, from the procedure of writing an article and what is valuable in the text rather than in footnotes or vice versa to the connotations and charge of certain words and the importance of choosing the right word for every context. I feel I was able to improve my own research, thinking, and writing with Dr. Hudson’s guidance. Every week I could see in his comments what I had done well and where I needed to put more effort and attention, both in regard to the content and form of the article and to my own style of research and writing and formulating and expressing my ideas. Through this process I had the opportunity to recognize and improve upon my weaknesses through repeated rounds of practice.

Throughout the writing process, there were certain sections with which I struggled most. I tried to begin at the beginning and work first on the introduction. However, I had a fair bit of difficulty introducing every important part of our argument before I had really worked through what they would be. We had general ideas and a clear outline, but the finer points and nuances that really brought it together as a whole were still lacking, as was its clear organization in my

mind. Consequently, I started writing where I was most comfortable: at the end, or almost. The first section I wrote was the analysis of the poem “L’âme du vin,” a close reading of the symbols, images, and other stylistic figures, which forms the last section of the main body of the article. From that point I had a better understanding of the poem and the concepts that we needed to clearly introduce earlier in the article so that our analysis would be most meaningful. Next, I worked on the history section for which I returned and read Baudelaire’s own writing and Pichois’ biography of Baudelaire, now with our argument in mind, to better understand the poet and his context. Next, I worked on the theory section, introducing key concepts in previous Neoplatonic thought, and finally, I wrote the conclusion. The introduction evolved throughout the process, based on what I had written for the prospectus, as we added and refined the points of our argument, into its final form.

Dr. Hudson and I, on Dr. Sprenger’s advice, had reworked the introduction as it existed in my Prospectus in December to present the larger importance of our argument, rather than situating it uniquely as a reply to Martin Turnell’s disparaging and neglectful remarks on the section in his commentary on *Les Fleurs du Mal*. The introduction was originally the paragraph below:

In a seminal text analyzing *Les Fleurs du Mal*, *Baudelaire: A Study of his Poetry*, Martin Turnell devotes a mere six lines to the central section of the volume, entitled “Le Vin,” bookended by ninety two pages on “Tableaux Parisiens” and twenty pages on “Fleurs du Mal,” in which he states, as if in passing, “I have shown that the present placing of this chapter effectively neutralizes its effect in the architecture of the *Fleurs du Mal*. The intrinsic value of the five poems that it contains is *not* great” (Turnell 199, emphasis added). My proposed study would

add to the present scholarship in the field by filling this void in many analyses of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, because of the lack of analysis of this particular poem, and of the importance of this section as a whole. Since Turnell's work (1954), Abraham Avni published an article re-evaluating "Le Vin" in which he asserts its importance and its place in the collection, but did not situate it as we will, nor does he hone in on the section's nature as a transition and thus to the whole work as a model of the ladder, in Ficino's Platonic theory, to transcendence and poetic inspiration, nor to the important democratizing nature of wine in poetic fury. The section "Le vin" as demonstrated through our reading of the poem itself, "L'âme du vin" plays an important role in the progression and development as the collection as a whole. Despite constant assertions of Baudelaire's humanism, there are few concrete links drawn between his works and the neo-Platonic theory of Marsilio Ficino, and none that draw "L'âme du vin" into this discussion. This poem in particular plays an important part in the transformation of poetry in this recueil and we attempt to recognize it as such.

Which evolved into the following, which is evidently much more appropriate and provides a clearer presentation of our main argument:

Despite excellent albeit limited scholarship by the likes of Abraham Avni, Ross Chambers, Richard Burton, Carmen Mayer-Robin and even Walter Benjamin, the central section of Charles Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* entitled "Le Vin" (which includes the five poems numbered CIV-CVIII in the 1861 edition) remains one of the volume's lesser-studied sections. Some scholars, like Martin Turnell, have even gone so far as to question its importance to the architecture of *Les*

Fleurs du Mal, almost to the point of reducing it to mere filler. However, a closer examination of “Le Vin,” analyzed beneath the lens of Ficinian Neoplatonism and filtered through François Rabelais’ Gallic codification of Neoplatonic tropes, reveals that not only is the central positioning of this section crucial to the evolution of the volume as a whole, it also casts new light on Baudelaire’s sociopolitical ideals relating to work and inspiration within modernity. In other words, an understanding of the underlying theories of intoxication and inspiration at the heart of *Les Fleurs du Mal* demonstrate a necessary step in Baudelairean poetics that allows the passage from the terrestrial *gouffres amers* of the “Tableaux Parisiens” to the transcendent *libre essor* of the “Fleurs du Mal.” Chambers and Burton, following the lead of Benjamin, recognize the allegorical potency and historical relevance of Baudelaire’s ragpicker in the second poem of the section, “Le Vin des chiffonniers.” In the present study, however, we aim to analyze the section’s threshold poem “L’âme du vin,” in which we locate the theoretical underpinnings of Baudelairean *ivresse* and recognize a mature philosophy, evolved from the musings of early modern thinkers and adapted to both the modern palate and social reality.

This consideration early on helped me to understand what was most pertinent and should be showcased in an academic article, and also to know what was more irrelevant and superfluous. I struggled with sorting through these details throughout the process, and have definitely gained a greater capacity to clearly support my arguments and refine my research and prose.

Despite my self-proclaimed progress, Dr. Hudson played an integral part, both in improving the prose and indicating to me how best to improve it myself, throughout the process.

An excerpt from the analysis section that I wrote in an early draft is below:

Only the union of the working man, the “toi” to whom the soul of the wine addressed, with the wine permits the creation of true prophetic poetry and the advancement to the final rung of the Ficinian ladder and ultimate transcendence, which she cites as the reason for her consumption, for “de notre amour naissse la poésie / Qui jaillira vers Dieu.”

Dr. Hudson was evidently always better able to express the essence of the argument, and his example helped me to learn to express myself more clearly. The final version of this section, after multiple rounds of revisions on both our parts, reads:

Wine has become the antidote by which the laborer, who through his own toil and efforts, may offer himself a momentary reprieve from his condition of institutionalized injustice. Finally, in the last two verses, we realize the ultimate goal of the union between man and wine: “Pour que de notre amour naisse la poésie, / qui jaillira vers Dieu comme une rare fleur” (vv. 23-24). Poetic fury, a Platonic form of transcendence that allows mankind the ability to usher forth verse to reach God, is the objective of wine that Baudelaire holds in reserve for the conclusion of his own *rare fleur*.

This version is substantially more eloquent and pleasing to those with poetic sensibilities, as well as presenting the steps and objectives of consumption and production in a significantly more logical manner.

Along the way I successfully improved my writing and ability to express myself clearly. As I researched and worked on the analysis for the final section of the article, I came across the allusion to ambrosia, one of very few in Baudelaire's works, and its resonance with the letters of Marsilio Ficino, who outlined divine fury as the re-ascent to the knowledge of ambrosia, or the eternal bliss of the gods, which was necessary because man had forgotten when he drank of the Lethe, which I added to the draft.

Baudelaire refers to this theory of antiquity, not only in the obvious reference to Dionysius in the very mention of wine, but in his comparison of wine to ambrosia, which Ficino calls the source of the "perfect knowledge and bliss of God" (Ficino 43). The consumption of ambrosia, which the soul of the wine claims to be, allows the poet, and the working man, to regain the wisdom and divine nature they lost by drinking from the Lethe.

This idea and some of my original prose appears in the final article, with few modifications, largely to better integrate it into the larger analysis:

In the sixth and final stanza, she promises to be the organic Ambrosia of the Eternal Sower ("végétale ambrosie,/ Grain précieux jeté par l'éternel Semeur"). To unpack this rich pair of verses, the consumption of mythical Ambrosia, which Ficino calls the source of the "perfect knowledge and bliss of God" (Ficino 43), is that which allows the poet, in this case the working man for whom he acts as modern intercessor, to regain the wisdom and divine nature they lost by drinking from the Lethe.

I learned innumerable lessons through the even greater number of changes we made throughout the process, particularly through the experience of revising my own writing, and co-authoring as

a team. One important lesson I learned was how to employ footnotes in MLA and in an academic article. I had previously used footnotes in Chicago format and had never used footnotes to add important notes that contributed to the argument but simply did not have a place in the text. For example, through the writing process we went back and forth deciding if a some-what lengthy discussion of Baudelaire's better-known and later politics along with a substantial nod to Ross Chamber's work on "Le Vin des Chiffonniers" belonged in the body of the article, or would be more suitable as a footnote, since the socialist ideas within were valuable, but we were focusing on another poem from another moment. A slightly shortened version, though still including a quotation from Chamber's comments, appears in the main body of the completed article. While most changes were of such a conceptual nature as the example above, Dr. Hudson's revisions often included additions to clarify meaning and improve prose as in the simple statement:

The soul of the wine indicates in the poem that it prefers the working man, who cultivated the grape and *earned* the right to transcendence.

which had previously appeared in my draft simply as:

The soul of the wine indicates in the poem that it prefers the working man.

While this example may seem inconsequential, this sort of elaboration, to clarify but more importantly to make the connections between various points more explicitly clear, was an important skill I learned and tried to apply, in order to make the various sections of our article work together as a fluid, complete entity, rather than focusing only on being concise and neglecting to make clear transitions and draw unambiguous links between important assertions, to finally achieve a united, well supported, thesis.

Conclusion

This meta-commentary on our article, “Decanting the Rabelaisian Casks: Democratizing Neoplatonic Poetic Fury in Baudelaire’s ‘L’âme du vin’,” should prove useful to anyone wishing to gain a greater understanding of the person of the poet, Charles Baudelaire, particularly as a contributor to modernity and the French literary tradition, and as a bridge between the Old Regime and New Regime and between modernity and antiquity. While our focus has been on the political and social problems and his contribution as a political entity, though clearly a poet, commenting on the situation, not a political philosopher proposing a concrete means to improve the situation and do away with the institutionalized injustice against the working class and the repulsive, at least to the progressive aesthete, consumerism of the bourgeois new nobility. It should also provide a glimpse of the thesis of our article, and indications of the supports of our arguments, and direction to find further information in notable sources. Our article, of course, offers greater analysis of “L’âme du vin,” Baudelaire’s modern re-appropriation of Neoplatonic humanism and theories of divine fury and poetic inspiration, and its importance as a commentary and criticism of the contemporary social problems, through the soul of the wine, removed from the nobility of the Old Regime and their vertical hierarchy, and displaced to allow communal access to individuals of the working class, humanizing the members of the lowest, and most hard-working, class, skipping over the bourgeois altogether.

Our research and study has suggested multiple interesting directions for further research. A study could certainly be undertaken of the continued influence of wine imagery and Baudelaire’s contributions to the French literary tradition going forward, by analyzing twentieth-century poets who were certainly affected by his work, like Apollinaire, whose knowledge of wine imagery and mythology is evident even in the title of his *Alcools*. This examination of “Le

Vin” could certainly be extended, as we had originally considered, to a much lengthier reading of each of the poems in the section, to demonstrate in more detail the progression from the terrestrial to the celestial, and the various consequences of imbibing, as mentioned in the many studies of duality in Baudelaire’s poetry. As we concluded the writing of the article, I was fascinated by the implications of Baudelaire’s commentary on the detrimental, and even potentially fatal consequences of consumerism and modern, urban society on poetic creation and artistic and aesthetic appreciation, though this query hardly provides a concrete, or humanities-centered, research opportunity.

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