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HERMENEUTICS AND LITERATURE

31 | 120-121 | June 2022

PHAINOMENA
Revija za fenomenologijo in hermenevtiko
Journal of Phenomenology and Hermeneutics

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Andrzej Wierciński & Andrej Božič (*Eds.*)

HERMENEUTICS AND LITERATURE

Inštitut Nove revije, zavod za humanistiko
*
Fenomenološko društvo v Ljubljani
*
In collaboration with:

IIH
International Institute for Hermeneutics
Institut international d'herméneutique

Ljubljana 2022

UDC: 1

p-ISSN: 1318-3362
e-ISSN: 2232-6650

PHAINOMENA
Revija za fenomenologijo in hermenevtiko
Journal of Phenomenology and Hermeneutics

Lektoriranje: | Proof Reading: Andrej Božič
Oblikovna zasnova: | Design Outline: Gašper Demšar
Prelom: | Layout: Žiga Stopar
Tisk: | Printed by: Primitus, d. o. o.

Uredništvo in založništvo: | Editorial Offices and Publishers' Addresses:

Inštitut Nove revije, zavod za humanistiko
Institute Nova Revija for the Humanities

Vodovodna cesta 101
1000 Ljubljana
Slovenija

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Phenomenological Society of Ljubljana

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Revija *Phainomena* objavlja članke s področja fenomenologije, hermenevtike, zgodovine filozofije, filozofije kulture, filozofije umetnosti in teorije znanosti. Recenzentske izvode knjig pošiljajte na naslov uredništva. Revija izhaja štirikrat letno. Za informacije glede naročil in avtorskih pravic skrbi *Inštitut Nove revije, zavod za humanistiko*.

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The journal *Phainomena* covers the fields of phenomenology, hermeneutics, history of philosophy, philosophy of culture, philosophy of art, and phenomenological theory of science. Books for review should be addressed to the Editorial Office. It is published quarterly. For information regarding subscriptions and copyrights please contact the *Institute Nova Revija for the Humanities*.

Finančna podpora: | Financially Supported by:
Javna agencija za raziskovalno dejavnost Republike Slovenije | Slovenian Research Agency

Članki v reviji so objavljeni v okviru: | Papers in the journal are published within the framework of:

- Raziskovalni program P6-0341 | Research program P6-0341;
- Infrastrukturni program I0-0036 | Infrastructure program I0-0036.

Revija *Phainomena* je vključena v naslednje podatkovne baze: | The journal *Phainomena* is indexed in:

Digitalna knjižnica Slovenije; DOAJ; EBSCO; Emerging Sources Citation Index (Web of Science); ERIH PLUS; Humanities International Index; Internationale Bibliographie der geistes- und sozialwissenschaftlichen Zeitschriftenliteratur; Internationale Bibliographie der Rezensionen geistes- und sozialwissenschaftlicher Literatur; Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts; ProQuest; Revije.si (JAK); Scopus; Social Science Information Gateway; Social Services Abstracts; Sociological Abstracts; The Philosopher's Index; Ulrich's Periodicals Directory; Worldwide Political Science Abstracts.

Enojna številka: | Single Issue: 10 €
Dvojna števila: | Double Issue: 16 €

Spletna stran: | Website:
phainomena.com

PHAINOMENA 31 | 120-121 | JUNE 2022

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Original scientific paper
Izvirni znanstveni članek

DOI: 10.32022/PHI31.2022.120-121.11
UDC: 141:801.73

The Interweaving of Life and Text

Authorial Inscription and Readerly Self-Understanding Exemplified in *Les Fleurs du mal*

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Abstract

The present article attempts to make explicit the existential dimension of a canonical literary text: Baudelaire's *The Flowers of Evil*. This work is chosen because it transmits a series of disturbing existential assertions; that is, it is used, in the present context, to investigate Gadamer's thesis of the reader achieving a new self-understanding through the text. By taking both the author's as well as the reader's positions into account in the interpretation, the intention is furthermore to explore the dialogical situation that

Gadamer highlights in the understanding process. In order to achieve this, focus is put on the notion of subjectivity in the context of Romanticism and Kierkegaard's existential philosophy. The contribution is structured as follows: first, an overview is provided with respect to the development of the notion of subjectivity from Kant to Kierkegaard. After this, the existential aspects of *Les Fleurs du mal* are analyzed.

Keywords: hermeneutics, literature and philosophy, author, Gadamer, Baudelaire.

Prepletanje življenja in besedila. Avtorska inskripcija in bralsko samorazumevanje, kakor ju ponazarjajo *Les Fleurs du mal*

Povzetek

Pričujoči članek skuša razgrniti eksistencialno razsežnost kanoničnega literarnega besedila: Baudelairovih *Rož zla*. Delo je bilo izbrano, ker predoča niz vznemirljivih eksistencialnih trditev; tj. v pričujočem kontekstu ga uporabljamo z namenom raziskave Gadamerjeve teze, da bralec s pomočjo besedila lahko doseže novo samorazumevanje. Pri interpretaciji upoštevamo tako avtorjevo kot bralčevo pozicijo, s čimer želimo raziskati dialoško situacijo, kakor jo znotraj procesa razumevanja osvetljuje Gadamer. Za takšen namen se osredotočimo na pojmovanje subjektivitete v kontekstu romantike in Kierkegaardove eksistencialne filozofije. Prispevek je strukturiran na naslednji način: najprej podamo pregled razvoja pojmovanja subjektivitete od Kanta do Kierkegaarda. Potem analiziramo eksistencialne vidike *Les Fleurs du mal*.

Ključne besede: hermenevtika, literatura in filozofija, avtor, Gadamer, Baudelaire.

Qu'est-ce que l'art pur suivant la conception moderne ? C'est créer une magie suggestive contenant à la fois l'objet et le sujet, le monde extérieur à l'artiste et l'artiste lui-même.

Charles Baudelaire: « L'Art philosophique »

But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes indeed
You're gonna have to serve somebody
Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord
But you're gonna have to serve somebody

Bob Dylan: "Gotta Serve Somebody"

Textual interpretation allows for a focus on different aspects. It can aim at determining the author's intention, it can aim at analyzing the text as an autonomous linguistic artefact, or it can aim at working out an understanding in a historical perspective. These three aims correspond to the elements of the most basic model of communication: sender—message—receiver. Today, if an interpretation is to claim validity, the reading must include an awareness of the work's historical context. Furthermore, and very much due to Hans-Georg Gadamer's influential work, it is not only necessary to put the text in a historical perspective, the interpreter must also be conscious of the historical situatedness of any reading. The historicity of understanding—the fact that we are embedded in a tradition that forms our prejudices as regards the reading of any given text—is an unavoidable condition for interpretation. Furthermore, Gadamer's emphasis on tradition leads him to understand interpretation as a process that, in a certain way, is like a dialogue:

> In this sense understanding is certainly not concerned with "understanding historically"—i.e., reconstructing the way the text came into being. Rather, one intends to *understand the text itself*. But this means that the interpreter's own thoughts too have gone into re-awakening the text's meaning. In this the interpreter's own horizon is decisive, yet not as a personal standpoint that he maintains or enforces,

> but more as an opinion and a possibility that one brings into play and puts at risk, and that helps one truly to make one's own what the text says. I have described this above as a "fusion of horizons." We can now see that this is what takes place in conversation, in which something is expressed that is not only mine or my author's, but common. (Gadamer 2004, 390.)

On the one hand, interpretation takes place as an interaction between the text and the interpreter, but, on the other hand, understanding eventually crystallizes in the receiving I:

> For the interpreting word is the word of the interpreter; it is not the language and the dictionary of the interpreted text. This means that assimilation is no mere reproduction or repetition of the traditionary text; it is a new creation of understanding. If emphasis has been—rightly—placed on the fact that all meaning is related to the I, this means, as far as the hermeneutical experience is concerned, that all the meaning of what is handed down to us finds its concretion (i.e., is understood) in its relation to the understanding I—and not in reconstructing the originally intending I. (Gadamer 2004, 468.)

Consequently, Gadamer regards interpretation as an encounter that concerns the reader because it, in one way or another, addresses the reader's self-understanding. Interpretation is, as Gadamer asserts, an *occurrence* of meaning that causes a self-questioning and self-understanding activity on the part of the receiver:

> Seen from the point of view of the interpreter, "occurrence" means that he is not a knower seeking an object, "discovering" by methodological means what was really meant and what the situation actually was, though slightly hindered and affected by his own prejudices. This is only an external aspect of the actual hermeneutical occurrence. It motivates the indispensible methodological discipline one has toward oneself. But the actual occurrence is made possible only because the word that

> has come down to us as tradition and to which we are to listen really encounters us and does so as if it addressed us and is concerned with us. I have elaborated this aspect of the situation above as the hermeneutical logic of the question and shown how the questioner becomes the one who is questioned and how the hermeneutical occurrence is realized in the dialectic of the question. (Gadamer 2004, 457.)

This self-reflection, however, grows out of another person's utterance, and, for this reason, it can be a necessary part of the interpretation to consider the author's inscription in the text. Even if Gadamer insists on the fact that understanding cannot attempt to recuperate the author's intention, some literary texts include the authorial perspective to such an extent that it must be taken into account as part of what is to be interpreted. In the field of literary studies, however, this is a controversial stance.

As regards literary scholarship, the relation between the author's biography and the interpretation of the text is an old problem. Historically, a considerable change of attitude has taken place with respect to the relevance of biographical information for the understanding of the literary work. If the nineteenth century saw the golden age of biographical studies,[1] most of the theoretical approaches of the twentieth century rejected the use of information about the author for the interpretation of the literary text. The ideal for the most influential twentieth-century literary theories, such as the New Criticism and Structuralism, was the autonomous reading, according to which biography is at best superfluous and at worst misleading for the interpretation. Subsequent theoretical currents continued this methodological principle initiated by the New Criticism. Even if biographical information is used in contemporary race/class/gender studies, the intention there is to clarify the author's position as regards possible stereotyped otherings, not to use the writer's individuality in the readings. None of the wide

1 On the one hand appears Sainte-Beuve's biographical method; on the other, Dilthey's emphasis on the notion of experience (*Erlebnis*) as the epistemological basis for the human sciences. In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer criticizes the idea that the aim of interpretation is to reach the *Erlebnis* behind the specific work. Also, one of the main theoreticians of the New Criticism, René Wellek, dismissed the notion of *Erlebnis* and its use for literary studies in a famous article (Wellek 1970).

variety of literary theories that have appeared since the New Criticism have made a serious effort to include biographical information about the author into the analysis. This contrasts with the large contemporary literary output which contains explicit autobiographical elements. In the literary genre called *autofiction* (a condensation of the terms "autobiography" and "fiction"), the author appears as a character in the text identified as the actually existing individual, with the same name and biographical features as in reality. In contrast to autobiography, however, there is no "pledge of allegiance" to veracity; that is, what is told in such a text might be true or might be fiction. The appearance of this genre should be taken as a symptom of our departure from a paradigm that understands the literary work as an autonomous entity; that is, the aesthetic sphere is no longer perceived as radically separated from the life-world and its moral, social, and political dilemmas.

In a philosophical perspective, the question of the author is related to that of the subject in the tradition from Descartes to Kant and Kierkegaard. During this period, thinking builds upon an epistemologically self-positing and world-generating subjectivity (Habermas). Romanticism produced a hyperbolic image, so to speak, of this powerful subject in the creator genius. As regards the development of the philosophy of the subject, the exhaustion of Idealism entailed that the situatedness and finitude of subjectivity became highlighted. Kierkegaard's philosophy is a clear example of this development. In the following, this development of the notion of subjectivity will be sketched out and afterwards it will be put in relation to Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal.* This historical framework will in turn be related to the hermeneutical possibilities of including the sender's position in the interpretation of the literary text. Establishing the relation back to the inscribed author may be necessary if Gadamer's idea—that the text concerns the reader and compels him/her to a self-understanding at an existential level—is to be consistently followed.[2] If the author is explicitly inscribed in the text, then his/her—possibly

2 "Since we meet the artwork in the world and encounter a world in the individual artwork, the work of art is not some alien universe into which we are magically transported for a time. Rather, we learn to understand ourselves in and through it, and this means that we sublate (aufheben) the discontinuity and atomism of isolated experiences in the continuity of our own existence." (Gadamer 2004, 83.)

autobiographical, possibly autofictional—I is relevant in order to assess the existential questions that a given text might address to the reader.

Subjectivity from Kant to Kierkegaard

Kant operates with the distinction between empirical and transcendental subject, according to which the empirical subject is the specific, individual I with its physical and psychological characteristics, while the transcendental I—the unifying condition, under which all experience takes place—is empirically and psychologically blank. This latter subjectivity organizes and gives unity to experience, but is empty of any content and cannot be identified with the existing, empirical individual. In other words, the concrete individual is uninteresting for Kant's epistemology. On the other hand, in his *Critique of Judgment*, Kant operates with the notion of the genius, who is characterized by being able to make a work of art appear as if it were a product of nature: "Genius is the inborn predisposition of the mind (ingenium) through which nature gives the rule to art." (KU AA 307.) The genius exhibits the free play of imagination and understanding in an exemplary way because the work of art appears as if determined by a rule, even if this rule is not based on any concept. This is explained when Kant assigns to the genius the capacity to discover aesthetic ideas: "by an aesthetic idea […] I mean that representation of the imagination that occasions much thinking though without it being possible for any determinate thought, i.e., concept, to be adequate to it, which, consequently, no language fully attains or can make intelligible" (KU AA 314). An aesthetic idea is the counterpart of a rational idea, which is a notion, produced by speculative reason, that cannot be verified empirically (God, the soul, or the world as a totality). By means of an aesthetic idea, a rational idea appears to the reader or beholder of the work of art, and, in this way, aesthetic ideas refer obliquely to spiritual and metaphysical notions. Something impossible to experience thus becomes accessible for the mind.

With respect to what is to follow, three points should be highlighted. In the first place, that from Kant onwards, imagination is considered an essentially free faculty of mind. Secondly, that the notion of the artist as a universal voice transmitting profound insights continues throughout the nineteenth and

twentieth centuries. Thirdly, the idea that art is a source of representation that challenges conceptual thinking. A work of art cannot be reduced to a series of notional phrases without losing its essence, but, at the same time, the aesthetic output has an epistemological world-opening function. In Kant's expression, it "occasions much thinking." Charles Taylor has condensed the post-Kantian notion of the artist in the following way:

> Thus a view has come down to us from the Romantics which portrays the artist as one who offers epiphanies where something of great moral or spiritual significance becomes manifest—and what is conveyed by this last disjunction is just the possibility that what is revealed lies beyond and against what we normally understand as morality. The artist is an exceptional being, open to a rare vision; the poet is a person of exceptional sensibility. (Taylor 1989, 423.)

At the same time, these artistic *epiphanies* are not expression of the person as such, because

> we can't understand what it is qua epiphany by pointing to some independently available object described or referent. What the work reveals has to be read in it. Nor can it be adequately explained in terms of the author's intentions, because even if we think of these as definitive of a work's meaning, they themselves are properly revealed only in the work. And that being so, the work must be understood independently of whatever intentions the author has formulated in relation to it. (Taylor 1989, 420.)

That is, with respect to the interpretation of the work of art, a profound ambivalence is the legacy of post-Kantian aesthetics. Even if the understanding of art as epiphany moves the focus away from the author, at the same time the idea of the genius as a privileged—divine—individual is an invitation to indulge in the biographical hermeneutics that characterized nineteenth-

century literary interpretation.[3] Should the understanding relate to the author's personality and experiences or are these factors irrelevant for the interpretation of the work? This ambivalence led to the polarity in the interpretative practices in literary scholarship, which was very briefly sketched out in the above: either the author becomes the cornerstone of the analysis, or he/she is expelled from what can be regarded as a valid interpretation. In addition, it is logical that metapoetic reflection appeared as a central motif in the literary output from Romanticism onwards. The poetic text is, on the one hand, epiphanic and thus extremely valuable; on the other hand, it is opaque even for its creator. Consequently, this led the poets to reflect upon their work and to write poetry on poetry. The poetic act became a theme in itself.

The notion of subjectivity reached a culmination with Hegel's absolute idealism. Hegel considers that the subject achieves being thanks to a world-spirit that carries out a self-revelation through the course of history. A world-historical system is constructed that, through the dialectical activity of thought itself, mediates and synthesizes the dualities of subjectivity and objectivity, thinking and being, theory and practice, individual and universal, etc. Through this self-conscious reason, Hegel argues, subject and Spirit are unified, and every alienation is overcome. In this way, then, Hegel considers that the subject is able to achieve fullness of being.

One critique of Hegel's idealism is that it takes place entirely in the domain of thought and leaves reality untouched. Kierkegaard wrote a famous comment on Hegel's system:

3 Abrams notes the hybrid character of the relation between author and work that appeared with Romanticism: "The total poem, hitherto an image of manners and life, has become 'a dangerous betrayer of its author.' But what was the source of the interesting and important romantic variant of this concept, that poetry is not a direct but an indirect and disguised expression of the author's temperament—and therefore, that the author is at the same time in, and not in his poem? It can be shown, I think, that this critical paradox, in its early appearance, was theological in its origin, and Kantian in the philosophical vocabulary by which it was justified." (Abrams 1971, 236.) The cause of the mentioned ambivalence, with respect to the role of biography in the interpretative practice until today, is to be found in this combination of Kantian notions and the analogy author/God—which is the theological aspect alluded to by Abrams.

> A thinker erects a huge building, a system, a system embracing the whole of existence, world history, etc., and if his personal life is considered, to our amazement the appalling and ludicrous discovery is made that he himself does not personally live in this huge, domed palace but in a shed alongside it, or in a doghouse, or at best in the janitor's quarters. (Kierkegaard 1980, 43–44.)

The image of the philosopher who constructs a palace of ideas, but lives in a doghouse means that Hegel has not thought life into his system. Life cannot be dissolved in abstract thinking. On the contrary, existence can only manifest itself from the inner perspective of the individual. One must turn to specific existence and forget the recourse to a pure thinking that in the end means a loss of self.[4] This will be the contribution of Existentialism by means of its insistence on the individual: the affirmation of the existing, concrete person. According to Kierkegaard, the individual must awaken from the slumber of living without an ideal guiding the acts and life-course, and must choose an *existential position* that endows meaning to existence. The function of the well-known Kierkegaardian stages—the aesthetical, the ethical, and the religious stages—is precisely to illustrate the life that each position leads to. The aesthete finds the meaning of existence in beauty and sensual pleasure, the ethical person finds sense in living a rightful life that can be useful for others, while the religious existential position is passionately devoted to the relationship with the infinite, with God.

4 With reference to Schleiermacher and Humboldt, but concerning also Hegel, Gadamer describes the relation between finite subject and infinite consciousness in these thinkers as follows: "However much they emphasize the individuality, the barrier of alienness, that our understanding has to overcome, understanding ultimately finds its fulfillment only in an infinite consciousness, just as the idea of individuality finds its ground there as well. The fact that all individuality is pantheistically embraced within the absolute is what makes possible the miracle of understanding. Thus here too being and knowledge interpenetrate each other in the absolute. Neither Schleiermacher's nor Humboldt's Kantianism, then, affirms an independent system distinct from the consummation of speculative idealism in the absolute dialectic of Hegel. The critique of reflective philosophy that applies to Hegel applies to them also." (Gadamer 2004, 337.)

A Kierkegaardian type that is relevant in the present context is that of the poet, which can be identified with the aesthete. In his doctoral dissertation, *The Concept of Irony, With Continual Reference to Socrates*, Kierkegaard, prefiguring his mature thinking, examines his own contemporary philosophical and literary tendencies. Among other topics, he discusses what he calls "to live poetically" (Kierkegaard 1989, 280), which is to let the imagination be the primary vital force. From Kierkegaard's viewpoint, this is, however, a mistake because he considers that the Romantics have transferred the Idealist epistemologically self-positing and world-generating I to subjectivity globally and uncritically, thus producing a notion of the subject able to create the world and itself at will.[5] In the following citation—where "ironist" means "Romanticist"—, Kierkegaard represents Romantic subjectivity in a parodical way:[6]

> Our God is in heaven and does whatever he pleases; the ironist is on earth and does whatever he desires. […] But we turn back to the earlier comment that it is one thing to let oneself be poetically composed and another thing to compose oneself poetically. An individual who lets himself be poetically composed does have a definite given context into which he has to fit and thus does not become a word without meaning because it is wrenched out of its associations. But for the ironist, this context, which he would call a demanding appendix, has no validity, and since it is not his concern to form himself in such a way that he fits into his environment, then the environment must be formed to fit him—in other words, he poetically composes not only himself but he poetically composes his environment also. (Kierkegaard 1989, 282–283.)

Kierkegaard is evidently himself ironical in this representation of the Romantic notion of poetic subjectivity as one that imitates God's being as a self-sufficient creator. This subjectivity was referred to above as a hyperbolic

5 Scholarship has shown how Kierkegaard in this way follows Hegel's critique of the Romantic assimilation of Fichtean subjectivity (cf. Stewart 2003, 172–173).

6 In a footnote, Kierkegaard explains: "Throughout this whole discussion I use the terms 'irony' and 'ironist'; I could just as well say 'romanticism' and 'romanticist'." (Kierkegaard 1989, 275.)

image of the world-generating consciousness of the philosophy of the subject. At the same time, in this citation, another, more positive understanding of poetic subjectivity appears: that of letting oneself be formed in keeping with one's circumstances. This latter understanding of poetic self-forming is a prefiguration of the demand that Kierkegaard will put forward in his later work. Life is a task to be undertaken, and an authentic existence can only be achieved by accepting this task, which—if accomplished—will elevate the individual from an empty life to a meaningful existence. Only when the individual finds something to live and die for, only by means of such a passionate engagement, does life achieve a density of meaning.

In the work *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, Kierkegaard elaborates on the question of the passionate relation to existence: "Objectively, the question is only about categories of thought; subjectively, about inwardness. At its maximum, this 'how' is the passion of the infinite, and the passion of the infinite is the very truth. But the passion of the infinite is precisely subjectivity, and thus subjectivity is truth." (Kierkegaard 2013, 203.) Since the human being is not a pure thinking consciousness, but a finite subject, the individual's interest is to transcend temporality in order to achieve a relationship with the infinite, that is, with God. Through a passionate inwardness can a momentary synthesis of finite and infinite be experienced, which in turn can support existence. This has to be understood as another Kierkegaardian critique as regards Hegelian thinking; namely, to underscore the philosophical importance of human finitude. By asserting an essential bond between subjectivity and finitude, Kierkegaard takes the step away from the ambition to unify thought and being, and turns instead to the specific individual's search for truth in subjectivity and the leap towards God. Later thinkers such as Nietzsche or Sartre would maintain that the human being should accept an ontological nihilism and engage passionately with life in spite of uncertainty and relativity. The three philosophers agree, however, on regarding subjectivity as a living reality that cannot fit into an exclusively rational system. If a genuine self-understanding is to be achieved, it must take the extra-rational aspects of existence into account.

The relevance of this facet of Kierkegaard's thinking in the present context is that, on the one hand, it shows the development of the philosophy of

the subject towards focusing on the concrete, finite individual, and, on the other, highlights the existential aspects of subjectivity. Existentialism and its emphasis on subjective finitude constitutes one important presupposition of hermeneutic philosophy.[7] In *Truth and Method*, tragedy appears as the literary genre that conveys the insight that finitude is an existential condition:

> The spectator recognizes himself and his own finiteness in the face of the power of fate. What happens to the great ones of the earth has an exemplary significance. Tragic pensiveness does not affirm the tragic course of events as such, or the justice of the fate that overtakes the hero but rather a metaphysical order of being that is true for all. To see that "this is how it is" is a kind of self-knowledge for the spectator, who emerges with new insight from the illusions in which he, like everyone else, lives. The tragic affirmation is an insight that the spectator has by virtue of the continuity of meaning in which he places himself. (Gadamer 2004, 128.)

Existential self-understanding is to take place through the canon of *Weltliteratur*, wherein a series of exemplary truths have crystallized. The subject can only understand itself through a reinterpretation of tradition, that is, by means of assimilation of the canon. According to Gadamer, then, the dialectic of finite and infinite consciousness is open-ended, because tradition will never crystallize in a closed, absolute knowledge, but is in permanent re-creation. This gives, at the same time, a specific frame for the individual to form itself: that of the historical present understood on the basis of tradition. This question will be explored in the following with Baudelaire's *The Flowers of Evil*.

Charles Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal*

One important thematic strand in *The Flowers of Evil* is metapoetic. The lyrical subject speaking in this work is a poet who often reflects upon

7 From a historical perspective, it can be asserted that "[e]xistentialism, which is the premise for a philosophy of interpretation, is born out of the radical dissolution of Hegelianism" (Ferraris 1996, 193).

the poetic activity itself. From a methodological perspective, it is certainly reasonable to consider the subject enunciating a poem as a *persona* who should not be identified directly with the historical author. A collection of poems is not under the rule of an *autobiographical pact* (Philippe Lejeune), which unequivocally identifies the author with the voice uttering the text. At the same time, as argued above, if the sender is inscribed in the text, this is part of the semantic totality and should thus be incorporated into the interpretation. With respect to *The Flowers of Evil*, given the references to mid-nineteenth-century Paris, just as to events and persons related to Baudelaire, it seems acceptable to identify the lyrical subject of this work as an autofictional representation of the empirical Baudelaire.[8] Consequently, in the following the lyrical subject of *The Flowers of Evil* will be called Baudelaire, just as this autofictional character will be referred to with the personal pronoun "he."

In his interpretation of this work, Rincé considers the travel a fitting metaphor of the book's structure, that is, *The Flowers of Evil* can be regarded as an itinerary, with a beginning and an end, through a world of poetic visions (Rincé 1984, 29–33). This voyage is organized in six parts. The first section of the book has the title "Spleen and the Ideal," after which appear "Parisian Scenes," "Wine," "Flowers of Evil," "Revolt," and "Death." The itinerary can furthermore be regarded as produced by an initial state of tension between desire for purity and the spleen, caused by the sense of belonging to a fallen reality. At the beginning, the poet hopes to reach the ideal by means of poetry, but as the book progresses the impossibility of this striving becomes clear. Consequently, given the impossibility of achieving purity, in the four central sections the reader encounters the perverse "artificial paradises" that take over the scene. The last part of the book, "Death," closes it in an ambiguous way, both giving in to "Death, old captain," but at the same time representing this

8 Laura Scarano (Scarano 2014) has applied the term *autofiction* to the poetic genre as a whole, an equation to which I adhere. Similarly, in his book on Baudelaire, Jean-Paul Sartre dwells upon the poet's imposture since Sartre too considers that Baudelaire consciously performed a selfhood that unified his life and his poetry (Sartre 1964, 145–53 and 183–85). This ambivalence between the autobiographical I and its *persona* is encompassed by the term autofiction.

surrender as an opening towards "the Unknown" and "the *new*." This appears in the last lines of the work, which envisage an expedition to the abyss ("au fond du gouffre") and to the unknown in order to reach something new:[9]

Ô Mort, vieux capitaine, il est temps ! levons [l'ancre !	O Death, old captain, time to make our trip!
Ce pays nous ennuie, ô Mort! Appareillons !	This country bores us, Death! Let's get away!
Si le ciel et la mer sont noirs comme de l'encre,	Even if sky and sea are black as pitch
Nos coeurs que tu connais sont remplis de [rayons !	You know our hearts are full of sunny rays!
Verse-nous ton poison pour qu'il nous [reconforte !	Serve us your poison, sir, to treat us well!
Nous voulons, tant ce feu nous brûle le [cerveau,	Minds burning, we know what we have to do,
Plonger au fond du gouffre, Enfer ou Ciel, [qu'importe ?	And plunge to depths of Heaven or of Hell,
Au fond de l'Inconnu pour trouver du [nouveau !	To fathom the Unknown, and find the new!
(Baudelaire 1993, 292.)	(Baudelaire 1993, 293.)

If the split between spleen and desire for purity triggered the poetic creation, then the work's closure can be understood as an opening towards the infinite continuation of the imaginative activity.[10] This ending is in keeping

9 *The Flowers of Evil* was first published in 1857. A trial that same year condemned six poems for offending public morals. Most of the first edition was confiscated, and for this reason Baudelaire published a second edition in 1861 without the condemned texts, but with new poems added. In both the 1857 and the 1861 editions, the lines quoted in what follows finish the section "Death" and the entire work. *The Flowers of Evil* that appeared in 1868, one year after Baudelaire's death, was edited by his friends Charles Asselineau and Théodore de Banville. They added two more sections after "Death," one with the title "The Waifs" (which was a book that Baudelaire published in Belgium in 1866), and the section "Additional Poems from the Third Edition of *The Flowers of Evil*." The 1868 edition can, in consequence, not be considered the work that Baudelaire envisaged, but a publication that, with a philological attitude, aims to recuperate as much material as possible. In sum, the work as a finished totality must be considered as ending with the lines quoted in what follows.

10 Jean-Pierre Richard considers the tension between opposites—in a wider sense

with the book's metapoetic thematic strand, given that the poet is unable to free himself from a corrupt reality, and the only solution is to continue creating new imaginary worlds. In keeping with this interpretation, the abyss can be regarded as a metaphor for the depths of the imagination, the only capacity that in a reality devoid of meaning and beauty can provide moments of plenitude.

In this way, a subjectivity very similar to Kierkegaard's aesthete emerges from the pages of *The Flowers of Evil*: a passionate individual who lets the imagination create a poetic world pervaded by his emotional disposition. The poet thus constructs fantastic universes without connection to reality, or, rather, with the aim of escaping the real. The following poem describes the vocation to poetry and underscores the aforementioned understanding of poetic creation:

LA VOIX	THE VOICE
Mon berceau s'adossait à la bibliothèque,	My cradle rocked below the stacks of books—
Babel sombre, où roman, science, fabliau,	That Babel of instructions, novels, verse
Tout, la cendre latine et la poussière grecque,	Where Roman rubbish mixed with Grecian [dust.
Se mêlaient. J'étais haut comme un in-folio.	I was no taller than a folio,
Deux voix me parlaient. L'une, insidieuse et [ferme,	But heard two voices. One, beguiling, bold
Disait : « La Terre est un gâteau plein de douceur;	Proclaimed, 'The world is just a sweetened cake!
Je puis (et ton plaisir serait alors sans terme !)	And I, to give you endless joy, offer
Te faire un appétit d'une égale grosseur. »	You appetite to take it in a bite!'
Et l'autre : « Viens ! oh ! viens voyager dans les [rêves,	But then the other: 'Come, dream-voyager,
Au-delà du possible, au-delà du connu ! »	Beyond the possible, beyond the known!'

than exclusively between spleen and desire for purity—to be the generator of poetry in *The Flowers of Evil*: "Ainsi voit-on l'homme baudelairien lui-même se partager toujours entre désir et nostalgie, espoir et souvenir, tâchant de les rejoindre l'un à l'autre, « aspirant sans cesse à *réchauffer ses espérances*, et à s'élever vers l'infini ». Qu'elle parvienne à faire circuler entre passé et avenir ces courants de chaleur, cette continuité d'existence, qu'elle puisse relier en profondeur l'ombre intérieure à l'obscurité des choses, qu'elle réussisse enfin à faire rejaillir de l'insondable la joie d'une réalité toute neuve, et l'imagination baudelairienne aura pleinement accompli sa tâche : elle aura démontré l'infinie *fécondité* du gouffre." (Richard 1955, 103–104; emphasis in original.)

Et celle-là chantait comme le vent des grèves,
Fantôme vagissant, on ne sait d'où venu,
Qui caresse l'oreille et cependant l'effraie.
Je te répondis : « Oui ! douce voix ! » C'est d'alors

Que date ce qu'on peut, hélas ! nommer ma plaie
Et ma fatalité. Derrière les décors
De l'existence immense, au plus noir de l'abîme,
Je vois distinctement des mondes singuliers,
Et, de ma clairvoyance extatique victime,
Je traîne des serpents qui mordent mes souliers.
Et c'est depuis ce temps que, pareil aux prophètes,
J'aime si tendrement le désert et la mer ;
Que je ris dans les deuils et pleure dans les fêtes,
Et trouve un goût suave au vin le plus amer ;
Que je prends très souvent les faits pour des [mensonges,
Et que, les yeux au ciel, je tombe dans des trous.
Mais la Voix me console et dit : « Garde tes [songes;
Les sages n'en ont pas d'aussi beaux que les [fous ! »

(Baudelaire 1993, 312.)

And that one chanted like the seaside wind,
A wailing phantom out of God knows where,
Caressing, yet still frightening the ear.
I answered, 'Yes, sweet voice!' And from that [time,

That date, my wound was named, my fate was sealed. Behind the scenery of this immense
Existence, through abysmal blackness, I
Distinctly see the wonder of new worlds,
And, fervid victim of my clairvoyance,
I walk with serpents striking at my shoes.
And it is since that time that, prophet-like,
I love so tenderly the desert wastes;
I laugh in pain and cry on holidays
And tempt my palate with the sourest wine;
I take for truth what others call a lie

And, eyes to heaven, trip into a ditch.
But then my voice says, 'Madman, keep your [dreams;
The wise have nothing beautiful as they!'

(Baudelaire 1993, 313.)

In this text, the previously mentioned dichotomy between spleen and ideal has been substituted by another one consisting of world and poetry. The poet asserts how he, at a very early age, heard two different seductive voices: one promising him "endless joy," the other offering him to reach "[b]eyond the possible, beyond the known." With the acceptance of the latter voice, Baudelaire sealed his fate and became the "fervid victim of my clairvoyance," that is, this text describes his seduction by the voice of poetry. In addition, the image of the cradle staying next to the library (which in the original is termed a "Babel sombre") indicates that the voice Baudelaire chooses to follow is that of literary tradition. This poem thus describes the initiation into the world of literature, the acceptance of becoming a poet and a seer. A closer examination of what the two voices offer sharpens the opposition between reality and poetry. The first voice promises him "appetite to take

it [the world] in a bite," that is, desire for the world, whereas the voice of poetry entices him to travel in the realm of dreams and "through abysmal blackness" to "[d]istinctly see the wonder of new worlds."[11] It is important to note that this voice is not associated with clarity, insight, or understanding, but is connected to dream and confusion: "I take for truth what others call a lie / And, eyes to heaven, trip into a ditch." In this way, reality is radically opposed to poetic creation, and the poet is for this reason doomed to be at odds, not only with the world as his dwelling place, but also with society. He prefers the loneliness of the sea and the desert; he cries when people enjoy themselves and he laughs when others are in sorrow. In keeping with this, it is even possible to read an element of damnation to being a poet, because of the allusion to Genesis 3:15, in the line: "I walk with serpents striking at my shoes." The only consolation is to be found in the splendor of the poetic visions since their beauty is unattainable for ordinary people. Relief, then, is only available by escaping from reality into the world of dreams.[12]

As mentioned in the above, this subjectivity fits well with Kierkegaard's aesthete as an individual who creates unsubstantial imaginary worlds. Also, the representation of this character is congenial with Kierkegaard's assessment since it is a desperate and damned individual. Such a character is related to what has been termed the *autonomy of art*; that is, the Kantian and post-Kantian idea that aesthetic production belongs to an entirely self-enclosed sphere because its main feature is freedom: "Where art rules, the laws of beauty are in force and the frontiers of reality are transcended. This 'ideal kingdom' is to be defended against all encroachment, even against the moralistic guardianship of state and society." (Gadamer 2004, 71.) Gadamer criticizes this aestheticism because it empties art of its existential load. The idea of art as exclusively referring to its own self-enclosed sphere necessarily opposes it to reality.[13]

11 The similarity between the wordings here and in the last verses of the book, quoted above, supports the interpretation that understands the ending of the work as an exit towards infinite imaginative activity.

12 The artist as an outcast of society and as a person doomed to suffer also appears in poems such as "Les Phares" and "Sur *Le Tasse en Prison* d'Eugène Delacroix." The poet is a victim because reality will never be able to match the visions that he is capable of producing. In other words, imagination is superior to reality.

13 "We have shown that it was a methodological abstraction corresponding to a quite

The reader of *The Flowers of Evil* who remains at this interpretive level can enjoy the texts and their imaginative, formal, and linguistic eminence. Such a reader can furthermore reflect upon Baudelaire's contribution to literary history and admire how he develops old *topoi* and establishes new ones. At the same time, it must be asked, how should this reader fulfill Gadamer's idea that a new self-understanding is carried out when interpreting the text? Only a poet would find it possible to identify with the lyrical subject and perhaps reap insights about the creative process. What is thematized at this level, is the self-reflective strand of modern poetry, but no existential lesson is at hand here. If I as reader, as a finite individual immersed in life, should relate the text to myself, it becomes complicated. However, Baudelaire seems to have foreseen this problem because the first poem of *The Flowers of Evil*, "To the Reader," is an explicit address to me. Here, the poet presents the work's perhaps most central thematic strand: our belonging to a morally corrupted world. In this programmatic poem, he asserts everybody's participation in a depraved reality, and he establishes, precisely on this basis, a common ground between author and reader:

AU LECTEUR	TO THE READER
La sottise, l'erreur, le péché, la lésine,	Folly and error, stinginess and sin
Occupent nos esprits et travaillent nos corps,	Possess our spirits and fatigue our flesh.
Et nous alimentons nos aimables remords,	And like a pet we feed our tame remorse
Comme les mendiants nourrissent leur [vermine.	As beggars take to nourishing their lice.

particular transcendental task of laying foundations which led Kant to relate aesthetic judgment entirely to the condition of the subject. If, however, this aesthetic abstraction was subsequently understood as a content and was changed into the demand that art be understood 'purely aesthetically,' we can now see how this demand for abstraction ran into indissoluble contradiction with the true experience of art." (Gadamer 2004, 84.)

Nos péchés sont têtus, nos repentirs sont [laches ;
Nous nous faisons payer grassement nos [aveux,
Et nous rentrons gaiement dans le chemin [bourbeux,
Croyant par de vils pleurs laver toutes nos [taches.

Our sins are stubborn, our contrition lax;
We offer lavishly our vows of faith
And turn back gladly to the path of filth,
Thinking mean tears will wash away our [stains.

Sur l'oreiller du mal c'est Satan Trismégiste
Qui berce longuement notre esprit enchanté,
Et le riche métal de notre volonté
Est tout vaporisé par ce savant chimiste.

On evil's pillow lies the alchemist
Satan Thrice-Great, who lulls our captive soul,
And all the richest metal of our will
Is vaporized by his hermetic arts.

C'est le Diable qui tient les fils qui nous [remuent !
Aux objets répugnants nous trouvons des [appas ;
Chaque jour vers l'Enfer nous descendons [d'un pas,
Sans horreur, à travers des ténèbres qui puent.

Truly the Devil pulls on all our strings!
In most repugnant objects we find charms;
Each day we're one step further into Hell,
Content to move across the stinking pit.

Ainsi qu'un débauché pauvre qui baise et [mange
Le sein martyrisé d'une antique catin,
Nous volons au passage un plaisir clandestin
Que nous pressons bien fort comme une [vieille orange.

As a poor libertine will suck and kiss
The sad, tormented tit of some old whore,
We steal a furtive pleasure as we pass,
A shrivelled orange that we squeeze and press.

Serré, fourmillant, comme un million [d'helminthes,
Dans nos cerveaux ribote un peuple de [Démons,
Et, quand nous respirons, la Mort dans nos [poumons
Descend, fleuve invisible, avec de sourdes [plaintes.

Close, swarming, like a million writhing [worms,
A demon nation riots in our brains,
And, when we breathe, death flows into our [lungs,
A secret stream of dull, lamenting cries.

Si le viol, le poison, le poignard, l'incendie,
N'ont pas encor brodé de leurs plaisants [dessins
Le canevas banal de nos piteux destins,
C'est que notre âme, hélas ! n'est pas assez [hardie.

Mais parmi les chacals, les panthères, les lices,
Les singes, les scorpions, les vautours, les [serpents,
Les monstres glapissants, hurlants, grognants, [rampants,
Dans la ménagerie infâme de nos vices,

Il en est un plus laid, plus méchant, plus [immonde !
Quoiqu'il ne pousse ni grands gestes ni grands [cris,
Il ferait volontiers de la terre un débris
Et dans un bâillement avalerait le monde ;

C'est l'Ennui ! — l'oeil chargé d'un pleur [involontaire,
Il rêve d'échafauds en fumant son houka.
Tu le connais, lecteur, ce monstre délicat,
— Hypocrite lecteur, — mon semblable, — [mon frère !

(Baudelaire 1993, 4,6.)

If slaughter, or if arson, poison, rape
Have not as yet adorned our fine designs,
The banal canvas of our woeful fates,
It's only that our spirit lacks the nerve.

But there with all the jackals, panthers, [hounds,
The monkeys, scorpions, the vultures, snakes,
Those howling, yelping, grunting, crawling [brutes,
The infamous menagerie of vice,

One creature only is most foul and false!
Though making no grand gestures, nor great [cries,
He willingly would devastate the earth
And in one yawning swallow all the world;

He is Ennui!—with tear-filled eye he dreams
Of scaffolds, as he puffs his water-pipe.
Reader, you know this dainty monster too;
—Hypocrite reader,—fellowman,—my twin!

(Baudelaire 1993, 5,7.)

In this poem, Baudelaire asserts humanity's enjoyment of moral depravity, how people find a perverse pleasure in being witness to the misery and pain of others. But the human moral flaws lie not only in *Schadenfreude*: the individual even feels complacency with own sins and perversities. Only appearance conceals this wretched interiority, that is, hypocrisy is also a human feature. It is noteworthy how Baudelaire includes himself in this characterization of humanity and thus explicitly establishes the link with the reader. In other

words, the fusion of horizons that the reader must establish entails—at the existential level—the acknowledgment of one's own profound moral flaws. At first sight, Baudelaire's proposal is completely perverse because the common ground, on which author and reader can meet, is in the pleasure of watching moral corruption. What is more, in fact, he proposes to share self-complacency in sin. Consequently, poem after poem, the reader can indulge in a wide variety of vices and miseries, all exposed with exquisite refinement.

From this existential perspective, the ending of the work appears in a different light than from the metapoetic viewpoint because the apostrophe to Death (quoted above: "O Death, old captain, time to make our trip!") should now be read in a literal way. The last section of *The Flowers of Evil* is entitled "Death," and its last poem "Le Voyage"/"Voyaging" is divided into eight numbered parts. In no. III, the poet addresses some unidentified travelers in order to hear stories from afar, which might serve as a distraction against boredom. The voyagers engage in dialogue and answer the poet in IV and VI. The latter text sums up what the voyagers have seen:

« Ô cerveaux enfantins !
Pour ne pas oublier la chose capitale,

Nous avons vu partout, et sans l'avoir cherché,
Du haut jusques en bas de l'échelle fatale,

Le spectacle ennuyeux de l'immortel péché :

La femme, esclave vile, orgueilleuse et stupide,
Sans rire s'adorant et s'aimant sans dégoût ;
L'homme, tyran goulu, paillard, dur et cupide,
Esclave de l'esclave et ruisseau dans l'égout ;

[…]

'O childish dupes!
You want the truth? We'll tell you without [fail—
We never thought to search it out, but saw
From heights to depths, through all the mortal [scale
The numbing spectacle of human flaw.

Woman, vile slave, proud in stupidity,
Tasteless and humourless in self-conceit;
Man, greedy tyrant, lustful, slovenly,
Slave of the slave, a sewer in the street;

[…]

L'Humanité bavarde, ivre de son génie,
Et, folle maintenant comme elle était jadis,
Criant à Dieu, dans sa furibonde agonie :
« Ô mon semblable, ô mon maître, je te [maudis !

Et les moins sots, hardis amants de la [Démence,
Fuyant le grand troupeau parqué par le Destin,
Et se réfugiant dans l'opium immense !
— Tel est du globe entier l'éternel bulletin. »
(Baudelaire 1993, 288, 290.)

Drunk on her genius, Humanity,
Mad now as she has always been, or worse,
Cries to her God in raging agony:
"Master, my image, damn you with this curse!"

Not quite so foolish, bold demented ones

Flee from the feeding lot that holds the herd;
Their boundless shelter is in opium.
—From all the world, such always is the word.'
(Baudelaire 1993, 289, 291.)

The poet draws the conclusion from this answer that life is fatally tedious (as was already expressed in the collection's first poem), and addresses Death in no. VIII (cited above: "O Death, old captain") asking it to serve its poison. From an existential perspective, then, the most logical interpretation is that death is a desirable escape from this dreary world.

However, Baudelaire's text is ambiguous enough to allow both aforementioned interpretations of the work's closure. To understand the final lines of *The Flowers of Evil* as an opening towards the continuous creation of new imaginary worlds is in keeping with the text. But it is also plausible to read the end of the book as a literal embrace of death because of the *taedium vitae* that pervades the poems. What can a reader, however, extract from this book in order to reach a new self-understanding? What can we do with the perverse call to share and enjoy iniquity, not to speak of the invitation to inflict death upon oneself? It is clear that the author describes his existential position as one of perdition. The poet is convinced that evil is the main pervasive force in the world, and that sin and wickedness dominate humanity—including himself. The author does not show a reliable way out of this condition even if—as Sartre saw—Baudelaire in fact was subject to the idea of an absolute Good: "Baudelaire submitted to Good in order to violate it; and if he violated it, it was in order to feel its grip more powerfully; it was in order to be condemned in its name, labelled, transformed into a guilty thing." (Sartre 1964, 95.) *The Flowers of Evil* can only achieve a true perversity if its proposals are made on

the backdrop of a notion of Good, that is, in relation to a radically good Other against whom evil can emerge as such. This explains Baudelaire's Satanism, because the Luciferian revolt precisely takes place against an all-powerful and all-good God. The subjectivity that emerges from the work is thus a condemned I, and the extremely blasé attitude that runs through the poems represents its sarcastic acceptance of damnation.

It is noteworthy that the freedom of the imagination is used to present a condition that belongs to another faculty of mind, that of morality. It is furthermore clear that *The Flowers of Evil* maintains that the aesthetic imagination cannot provide an existential position that might lead beyond the transitory exaltation of fulfilled creativity. Gadamer has actually formulated the same insight with reference to Kierkegaard's thinking:

> By acknowledging the destructive consequences of subjectivism and describing the self-annihilation of aesthetic immediacy, Kierkegaard seems to me to have been the first to show the untenability of this position. […] Hence his criticism of aesthetic consciousness is of fundamental importance because he shows the inner contradictions of aesthetic existence, so that it is forced to go beyond itself. Since the aesthetic stage of existence proves itself untenable, we recognize that even the phenomenon of art imposes an ineluctable task on existence, namely to achieve that continuity of self-understanding which alone can support human existence, despite the demands of the absorbing presence of the momentary aesthetic impression. (Gadamer 2004, 82–83.)

From a Gadamerian perspective, subjectivity is always mediated by tradition. On the one hand, tradition carries the models that have proven to be exemplary of human existence. On the other hand, tradition possesses a potentiality that is to be infinitely actualized through the re-creation of the models in new interpretations. In sum, subjectivity must form itself in keeping with the models handed over by tradition. In this respect, Gadamer is close to Kierkegaard's formulation quoted above, "it is one thing to let oneself be poetically composed and another thing to compose oneself poetically. An individual who lets himself be poetically composed does have a definite given

context into which he has to fit and thus does not become a word without meaning." (Kierkegaard 1989, 283.) For Gadamer, this means that an existential position can only be meaningful if it is part of cultural tradition. Baudelaire's bohemian lifestyle—whether it was a performance or not—refers to the existential position of the aesthete, a person who lives in a "now" without basis on "that continuity of self-understanding which alone can support human existence" (Gadamer 2004, 83). At the same time, it must be acknowledged that the *bohème* has become a literary type, or, in other words, this character has become part of cultural tradition.

A literary historical perspective will clarify this question. It is significant that Baudelaire suffers of *taedium vitae* from beginning to end in *The Flowers of Evil*. He presents himself as guilty, but at the same time also as a victim. He has aspirations towards the ideal and pure, but a deceptive reality drags him again and again back to spleen. In this way, Baudelaire is a victim of worldly corruption while he at the same time also embraces it, because he is unable to—or perhaps lacks the will to—fight against it. This subjectivity thus appears as a burlesque Romantic hero because the defeatism that characterizes Baudelaire is in contrast with the tragic and vigorous subject that is usually identified with individuals such as Lord Byron. In the catalogue of subjective types, then, the bohemian can be regarded as an ironic re-interpretation of the Romantic hero.[14] From this perspective, the invitation to engage in a self-indulgent participation in sin must be understood as a parody of the Romantic self-sufficient individual who rejects God and morality. The hyperbolic Romantic subject able to create itself quasi-divinely is thus exposed to a subtle but corrosive critique. Furthermore, the autonomy of the aesthetic sphere is also subject to irony. Baudelaire shows that this idea leads to an art that cannot endow a positive existential position, precisely because it has cut the tie to life. The autonomy of art considers that freedom is the only acceptable value for aesthetic expression, but when this idea is transposed to life, it is revealed as insufficient. *Les Fleurs du mal* is, thus, the aesthete's epic poem, a mock

14 This interpretation is in line with a recent re-evaluation of Baudelaire as an ambiguous figure that on the one hand is a heir of the tradition preceding him, and, on the other, refigures it (Compagnon and Vernet 2015).

epopee of the Romantic metaphysical rebellion that elevates the subject to a god. Although the possibility exists that a reader might find his/her own life attitude well represented and thus confirmed in *The Flowers of Evil*, however, Baudelaire's exaltation of moral misery should perhaps rather make one consider whether it is possible to be morally and metaphysically self-sufficient. In this way, the reader is compelled to reflect at an existential level in a more productive way than if the moral and ontological nihilism of Baudelaire's work is taken literally.

Conclusion

In *The Rule of Metaphor*, Paul Ricoeur unfolds an argumentation that is useful in the present context. This work discusses—as the book's subtitle asserts—"the creation of meaning in language." He considers metaphor exemplary of how a novel linguistic expression can make us discover a hitherto unknown aspect of the world. In the book's seventh study, "Metaphor and Reference," he discusses whether a metaphorical expression carries out a reference to reality. This is not an easy question, given that many metaphors can be regarded as completely imaginary constructions, without any possible referentiality (to call a library a "Babel sombre" is apparently just as non-referential as the idea of a unicorn). Ricoeur considers, nonetheless, that an authentic metaphor always entails a reference in the sense that it expresses a "participation in things" that is prior to the "scientific" or "positivistic" subject-object dichotomy:

> The 'joyous ondulation of the waves' in Hölderlin's poem is neither an objective reality in the positivistic sense nor a mood in the emotivist sense. Such a contrast applies to a conception in which reality is first reduced to scientific objectivity. Poetic feeling in its metaphorical expressions bespeaks the lack of distinction between interior and exterior. The 'poetic textures' [Douglas Berggreen] of the world (joyous ondulation) and the 'poetic schemata' [id.] of interior life (lake of ice) mirroring one another, proclaim the reciprocity of the inner and the outer. (Ricoeur 1994, 246.)

A metaphor represents the pre-scientific relation to the world, which links subject and object in a profound cohesion. In this way, Ricoeur continues the phenomenological idea that all human experience of the world takes place on the basis of a subjectivity that is not *a priori* in opposition to external reality, but is co-emergent with the world. The world is always experienced from a subjective perspective just as the subject is essentially part of the world that it experiences. In other words, the phenomenological tradition builds upon the insight that we can never approach the world from an objective point of view, but, on the contrary, that the world always bears the marks of our perspective. We are embedded in reality to such a degree that world and subjectivity are essentially interweaved.

Continuing along this path, it seems not hazardous to extend the same idea to the duality art/life. In the case of Baudelaire, he developed a subjectivity that was both literary and existential. By means of the autobiographical allusions and references in *The Flowers of Evil*, just as by means of his bohemian existence, Baudelaire's life and work converge. The opposition between life and art that became a rule in post-Kantian aesthetics led him to the ambition of making a work of art out of his life. However, the consequence of this desire to let the aesthetic sphere absorb life was that it falsified the idea of the autonomy of art. In this way, Baudelaire appears as exemplary of the interweaving of life and cultural tradition. His self-authoring exhibits in a paradoxical way the existential load that is inherent to art.[15] Rather than giving primacy to either of the two, text and life might turn out to be mutually dependent. Just as Ricoeur considers the poetic refiguration of reality as exemplary of the subjective participation in the world, autofictionalization reveals our profound participation in the meaning-structures of cultural tradition. A surprising consubstantiality of *word* and *flesh* emerges in cases such as the one analyzed above, which calls for more studies in this direction.

15 In this context, the adequacy of the term *autofiction* is clear because it affirms the literary tradition by means of its reference to the fictional, and, at the same time, it refers to an existential reality. Accordingly, this term may fit into a Gadamerian perspective that regards subjectivity as essentially mediated by tradition.

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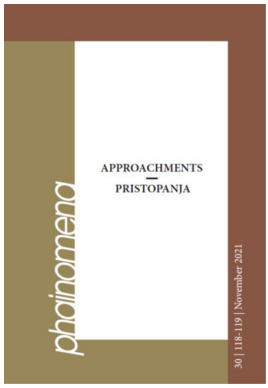

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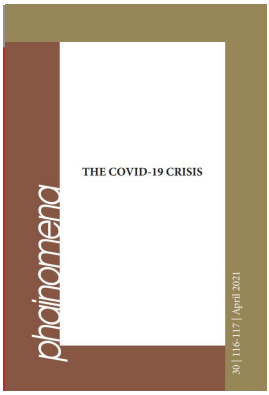

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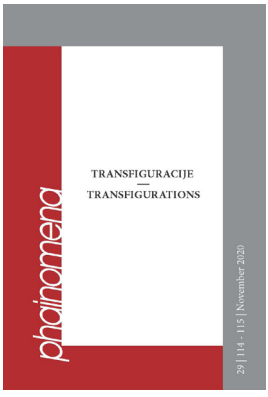

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