

A genetic study on Baudelaire's "Bénédiction"

Syncretism of Christianity and paganism

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"Bénédiction", the opening poem of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, is based on the Biblical leitmotiv, especially Jesus Christ's Passion. On the other hand, however, there is obviously a heathen motif, idolatry, in the middle strophes of this poem. Therefore, these contradictory themes coexist in "Bénédiction". In this article, the following points have been elucidated: due to the influence of Joseph de Maistre's doctrine of "réversibilité", Baudelaire could introduce into this piece the subject of a martyr to sensuality, in addition, synthesize the contradictory problem between Christianity and paganism. In consequence, it seems that the significance of "Bénédiction" in literary history consists in the fact that Baudelaire, influenced by Joseph de Maistre whom most Romanticists could not understand, ventured to publish in 1857 *Les Fleurs du Mal* which contained considerable Romantic fragrance in spite of the era of Realism.

Key words : *L'École païenne*, idolatry, Joseph de Maistre, réversibilité, immolation, sensuality

Introduction

Except the prefatory poem "Au Lecteur", "Bénédiction" is the opening poem of *Les Fleurs du Mal* in both the first (1857) and the second (1861) editions, in which Baudelaire, as well as most French Romanticists, presents the theme of *dolorisme*¹⁾. They lament their solitude but glorify it, regard themselves as persons selected by God like prophets²⁾. In case of "Bénédiction", Baudelaire, in addition to these Romantic themes, presents the leitmotiv of the Passion in order to emphasize the essentials of Christianity in *dolorisme*. It seems that this Christian viewpoint in Baudelaire is symbolized by its length³⁾.

"Bénédiction" is composed of seventy-six verses. As compared with the Romantic authors, for example, Victor Hugo or Alfred de Vigny, although the length of verses is considerably short, Baudelaire expends on composition no less than seventy-six verses that should be relatively classified as one of some long pieces in *Les Fleurs du Mal*. Thus, it would be necessary to divide this somewhat long poem from the thematic viewpoints in order to make clear not only the significance of the Biblical leitmotiv but also the reason why Baudelaire needs so many verses.

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It could be said that “ Bénédiction ” is composed of three parts (besides, because of space limitations, whole seventy - six verses could not be cited)

1) Part 1 (v.1 - 36) in this part, there are two speakers; one is a narrator who relates the birth of “ le Poète ” of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, the other is the poet’s mother⁴⁾. And it could be easily found that the whole narrations are based on the Biblical descriptions, especially the Nativity, the Immaculate Conception and the Passion. However, in regard to the Annunciation, contrary to the Blessed Virgin, the poet’s mother blasphemes God, in a word, professes the words of Malediction which is opposite to the title “ Bénédiction ”. In short, from a different point of view, the poet’s suffering in “ Bénédiction ” becomes doubly sacred by his mother’s Malediction. Thus, the narrator relates the poet’s unreasonable suffering since his birth and his way to the Cross, where a crowd of people surround the poet and persecute him.

2) Part 2 (v.37 - 52) situated nearly in the middle, this part composed of four strophes could be named “ the middle strophes ”. In the middle strophes, except the first verse that is assigned to the narrator who relates the amazing and unimaginable appearance of the poet’s wife, rest of all verses exclusively belongs to her tyrannical and terrifying narration. Expending fifteen verses on her narration, she insists that her husband [poet] should idolize her and that his heart should be dug out of breast. It goes without saying that her cruel acts are nothing less than metaphorical representations. Although the importance of this metaphorical construction was already analyzed minutely, it is not needless to say again that the principal theme in the middle strophes is Baudelaire’s aesthetical poetics named by himself “ la contre - religion ”⁵⁾. The poetics of the “ contre - religion ” seems to be closely connected with the genetic problem of “ Bénédiction ”, its importance will be considered in the last part of this article.

3) Part 3 (v.53 - 76) presented in the first strophe of this part by the narrator who describes the poet’s posture quite analogous to Jesus Christ on the Cross, the poet himself, expending five strophes on his narration, professes the gratitude to God who gave him suffering. Thus, it could be concluded that the place represented metaphorically in the middle strophes must be Calvary for the poet of “ Bénédiction ”, after all, of *Les Fleurs du Mal*.

Besides, on the one hand, as we summarized the composition of this piece, it is obvious that “ Bénédiction ” is based on the Biblical leitmotiv. On the other hand, however, it seems that the Cross for the poet himself is not so much on Calvary as in the region of paganism where his wife forces him to idolize her, maltreats him and digs his heart out of breast. Why does this enigmatic and brutal woman suddenly appear in the Christian context of “ Bénédiction ”? In other words, how should we consider the abrupt intrusion of this heathen figure into the context of Christianity in the poem? This is the first question.

In addition, it would be quite natural to wonder why Baudelaire ventured to publish his first poetical works, in the 1850’s, in a word, in the era of Realism, *Les Fleurs du Mal* in which remained

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enough the fragrance of Romanticism or Post - Romanticism. This is another question. It seems that these questions would be connected closely with each other.

Moreover, "Bénédiction" had never been made public until June in 1857 when Baudelaire published the first edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal*; far from it, up to now, it is quite impossible to determine when Baudelaire, unifying seventy - six verses, accomplished this piece. Thus, it is indispensable for us to consider the genesis of "Bénédiction" in order to elucidate those above two problems. This genetic approach would also make clear how and when Baudelaire could synthesize the paganism and the Christianity⁶⁾.

(1) Testimony of Baudelaire's contemporaries

Owing to several precedent studies, to say nothing of the day of publication, the period of composition and even genesis of some poems, especially so - called "love poetry" sent by letters to Madame Sabatier, one of the women who inspired Baudelaire, have been elucidated to a certain degree⁷⁾. In regard to the first edition (for, "Bénédiction" already appeared in 1857) composed of 101 pieces, including the prefatory poem "Au Lecteur", the fact that 54 poems had been made public by some way is known at the recent day. In addition, the genesis of some pieces among those 54 poems has been made clear in recent years. This fact means in the opposite way that, in regard to the other 47 pieces, there are relatively not a few poems of which the genetic process has not been elucidated yet. And "Bénédiction" is one of those 47 pieces. In short, except the day of publication and a few of variants between the first and the second editions, nothing is made clear concerning "Bénédiction". In that case, how in the world the genetic problem in this piece could be solved? To begin with, the testimony of Baudelaire's contemporaries should be considered.

It is needless to say that there was a well - known artistic custom that poets or novelists used to recite their own literary works in the presence of their close friends even in the 19th century. Baudelaire is not exceptional in the era of Post - Romanticism in the 1840's. Ernest Prarond (1821 - 1909) one of Baudelaire's comrades in literature in his young days who heard him recite his some verses, testifies in his letter written in 1886 to Eugène Crépet (1827 - 92), biographer of Baudelaire, that the poet of *Les Fleurs du Mal* had already written "a great number of his verses" in 1843, and that, as far as he remembered in 1886, he could enumerate the titles of 15 verses⁸⁾. In addition to that, another Baudelaire's lifelong friend, Charles Asselineau (1820 - 74) also testifies that "a great number of poems which could be printed for the first volume of *Les Fleurs du Mal* had already been accomplished in this period (1843 - 44)". However, apart from Asselineau's testimony, it should never be failed to notice that Prarond made the following additional remarks: swearing that he would be sincere witness to both Baudelaire and Eugène Crépet and citing the fact that Baudelaire continued rewriting without

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cease, Prarond affirmed that therefore he did not remember the piece “ Bénédiction ”⁹⁾. In brief, Prarond would say that he could not remember hearing Baudelaire recite “ Bénédiction ”.

But, this utterance seems to be quite curious at all points. First of all, Prarond should have remembered “ Bénédiction ” which is a very long opening poem in *Les Fleurs du Mal* in both the first (1857) and the second (1861) editions; in addition, since the order of “ Bénédiction ” was the same in the posthumous edition (1868) that naturally excluded the author from its editing, Prarond should not have forgotten this piece. Secondly, from the viewpoint of literary history, the fact that he didn't have in his memory Baudelaire's reciting “ Bénédiction ”, which was too full of Romantic fragrance to forget in the 1840's, is much more curious than the above first point. If this impressive piece in a sense had already been accomplished and Baudelaire had recited it, Prarond must have remembered this one, even a few verses. In fact, he suggested in the letter to Eugène Crépet that he might have remembered only a few verses of “ Bénédiction ” recited by Baudelaire. At any rate, in regard to the utterance concerning “ Bénédiction ”, it is impossible for us to accept Prarond's ambiguous words as it is. Thus, this means oppositely, and in addition, very clearly that Baudelaire had not yet accomplished, at least in the 1840's, “ Bénédiction ” which is composed of seventy - six verses, namely, the same text as one reads at the present days.

On the other hand, there is a possibility that “ Bénédiction ” might have been written in the second half of the 1840's. But, due to the fact that Baudelaire was discontinuously making public only five poems since 25 May 1845 until 9 April 1851 when he, as a selection titled *Les Limbes*, published collectively for the first time eleven pieces in which “ Bénédiction ” was not included, it is quite impossible that Baudelaire had finished writing “ Bénédiction ” and maintained the plan of presenting this piece as an opening poem of his poetical works in the second half of the 1840's. Thus, after 1845, it seems at least that Baudelaire, far from publishing “ Bénédiction ”, was, in a sense, too negative to make public his poetry¹⁰⁾.

At any rate, since Prarond's testimony is not to be relied upon, other researching ways should be selected in order to elucidate the genesis of “ Bénédiction ”; there is no better way than to make reference to the text itself.

(2) Baudelaire and the crowd

As indicated in the Introduction of this article, “ Bénédiction ” is based on the Biblical descriptions. For example, there are two strophes in which a crowd of hypocrites torment the poet in the same manner as Pharisee persecuted Jesus Christ:

Tous ceux qu'il veut aimer l'observent avec crainte,
Ou bien, s'enhardissant de sa tranquillité,
Cherchent à qui saura lui tirer une plainte,

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Et font sur lui l'essai de leur férocité.

Dans le pain et le vin destinés à sa bouche
Ils mêlent de la cendre avec d'impurs crachats ;
Avec hypocrisie ils jettent ce qu'il touche,
Et s'accusent d'avoir mis leurs pieds dans ses pas.

("Bénédiction", ed., 1857, v.29 - 36.)

Most Romanticists introduce into their poems the theme of solitude, namely, isolation from the society, including their family. They wished to be alone. They didn't want to love others, much less the society, at least in their literary works¹¹⁾. However, contrary to the Romanticists, the poet in "Bénédiction" sincerely wants to love the crowd; nevertheless, the crowd who cannot understand his tranquility ("sa tranquillité") persecutes the poet. In brief, the gap between the crowd and the poet / Jesus Christ could never be filled. Thus, in point of this Biblical motif, it seems that the theme of relation between the poet and the crowd in "Bénédiction" has come to doubly acquire the important significances. One is the theme of solitude in the society, the other is solitude itself, namely, the absolute solitude. Therefore, concerning the genesis of "Bénédiction" and the situation of Baudelaire in the 1840's, especially after 1845, the problem of relation between crowd and himself should be taken into account.

In the 19th century, the crowd means in general the "bourgeois" or the public who acquired new power or civic rights under the Monarchy of July. Baudelaire began to openly despise the public or humanity in the 1860's, in short, in his later life. However, it is said that he was favorable to the crowd in the 1840's. In fact, Baudelaire was involved in the activity of enlightening the public by means of two artistic criticisms written and published under the titles of *Salon de 1845* and *Salon de 1846*. Baudelaire expressed there his principle of insisting on the necessity of union between the artists and the bourgeois. According to several commentators, this Baudelaire's principle was influenced by the socialistic philosophers or the Illuminists, for example, Saint-Simon, Fourier, Lamennais, Proudhon, Pierre Leroux, and so on¹²⁾. Thus, it should not be natural that Baudelaire might have introduced the theme of absolute solitude in the 1840's.

Moreover, around 1848, Baudelaire, who had been influenced by those philosophers, was so interested in politico-socialistic movement that he threw himself into the February Revolution and participated in the laborers' uprisings in June against the conservative turn of new legislature created after the success of the February Revolution. Under these circumstances, it doesn't seem that he could have enough time to elaborate his poetical works including "Bénédiction"¹³⁾. In addition to that, he was collaborating on journalistic activity with his comrades during the year of 1848 and was maintaining political interest until 2 December 1851, namely, Coup d'État by Napoleon III, by which he became "physiquement dépolitiqué" (physically nonpolitical)¹⁴⁾. This means that Baudelaire became aware of

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the contradictory reality between politico - socialism and literature. However, until 2 December 1851, Baudelaire was managing to collaborate with the public, in brief, the crowd. Thus, it would be quite difficult to think that the theme of being persecuted by the crowd in “ Bénédiction ” and even this piece itself could have already been written in the 1840 s.

(3) Baudelaire and the mythology

Since there is little possibility that Baudelaire had already brought to completion seventy - six verses of “ Bénédiction ” in the 1840 s, his literary activity in the 1850 s and other thematic viewpoints in regard to this piece should be taken into account.

To begin with, it is necessary to remember the following comment in the note 2 of this article: “ Contrary to Vigny, Baudelaire follows almost faithfully the Biblical outlines and the basic stories in the Gospels ”. The reason why the adverbial phrase “ almost faithfully ” is added to this note is that there are some mythological descriptions, especially those of Greek myths that should be distinguished from the Biblical motifs in “ Bénédiction ” (ed., 1857, v.23 - 24)

Et dans tout ce qu'il boit et dans tout ce qu'il mange
Retrouve l'ambrosie et le nectar vermeil.

According to the Greek myths, the ambrosia (“ ambrosie ”) is the food of gods, and the nectar is the drink of gods. The ancient Greeks believed that by eating and drinking them, they could keep eternal youth and immortality. It is true that the fact that there is mythological motif other than Biblical context is considerably curious, but it seems that the context of ancient Greek myths is extremely significant. It is because, due to the words of “ ambrosia ” and “ nectar ”, the lone poet (the original term in v.22 is “ l'Enfant déshérité ”) could acquire “ the eternal life ” just like Jesus Christ did. At any rate, the fact that Baudelaire inserts into the Biblical context the above Greek mythological theme is very significant.

In addition, there is another motif of antique Greek myths that would be more remarkable in the middle strophes in question (ed., 1857, v.47 - 48)

Et mes ongles, pareils aux ongles des harpies,
Sauront jusqu'à son cœur se frayer un chemin.

It is necessary to remember again that the above verses are part of the middle strophes in which the tyrannical and terrifying woman insists that she is going to be idolized by her husband [poet] and that his heart should be dug out of breast. The meaning of idolatry and metaphorically brutal theme will be analyzed later in this article. Here, suffice it to say that in the antique Greek myths, Harpy is a horrible, cruel creature with a woman s head and body, and with a bird s wings, tail, legs and claws. Thus, this

mythological creature is nothing less than a kind of anthropophagous monster whose real meaning will be made clear later in this article. At least, it could be said that the appearance of the poet's wife who is similar to Harpy would determine the poet's destiny of being crucified much more tragically.

Besides, it is obvious that a lot of mythological motifs or descriptions can be seen here and there in *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857), however, was Baudelaire originally positive concerning the introduction of unchristian mythology into the Christian context? In truth, during the period of 1851 - 52, Baudelaire was too negative to introduce any mythological subject into his own poetry. Thus, it is indispensable to consider Baudelaire's conception in regard to the significance of mythology in order to elucidate the genesis of "Bénédiction". And there are two articles, which should be carefully observed, written by Baudelaire himself in this period.

According to F.W.Leahey, in the period of 1851 - 52, Baudelaire published in the review *Semaine théâtrale* two articles which are closely linked both in their publication and conception (they appeared within a few weeks of each other)¹⁵⁾. One is *Les drames et les romans honnêtes* (November 1851) in which Baudelaire criticized by name (for example, Émile Augier 1820 - 89 or Arnaud Berquin 1747 - 91) the literary tendency of attaching importance to the utility, morality or virtuous behavior represented by them. However, this is nothing but a prelude; another one, namely, *L'École païenne*, whose descriptions are very ironic and difficult to interpret, is by far the more important for the purpose of this present article.

In *L'École païenne* published in the review *Semaine théâtrale* (January 1852), Baudelaire criticized the literary tendency as being nothing less than the renaissance of mythological Hellenism produced by the neo-pagan Romanticists ("l'école païenne") and expressed his hostility to them. However, contrary to the manner in which he wrote *Les drames et les romans honnêtes*, he did not openly mention each name of authors who might compose "l'école païenne".

(...) Depuis quelques temps, j'ai tout l'Olympe à mes trousses, et j'en souffre beaucoup; je reçois des dieux sur la tête comme on reçoit des cheminées(...) / Impossible de faire un pas, de prononcer un mot, sans buter contre un fait païen. (*Pl*, II, p.46.)

Baudelaire, who had already been surrounded by the legion of gods and of pagans that seemed to him to be intolerable, cannot help but scream as follows:

La ville est sens dessus dessous(...) Que le diable vous [the neo-pagans] emporte ! Qu'Isis et Osiris fassent beaucoup d'enfants et qu'ils nous f.... la paix ! ["fichent la paix !" or "foutent la paix !"] (*Ibid.*)

It could be said at least that Baudelaire feels so much threatened by "l'école païenne" in 1852.

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Besides, it might be indispensable to identify by name some possible authors as neo - pagan Romanticists.

According to Yoshio Abe, who defines Baudelaire as “ one of the least pagan, the least Hellenic poets in the epoch, in that epoch so generally marked by infatuation with the Greek antiquity ”, so - called “ l'école païenne ”, namely the neo - pagan Romanticists, could be enumerated as follows¹⁶⁾:

- 1) Louis Ménard (1822 - 1901) He is known as an excellent Hellenist and wrote not a few Hellenistic epopees. Baudelaire had already severely criticized his *Prométhée délivré* (1843)
- 2) Victor de Laprade (1812 - 83) pious Catholic poet who wrote *Psyqué* published in 1841. Baudelaire criticized his pantheistic tendency around 1854.
- 3) Leconte de Lisle (1818 - 94) one of the Parnassians. His most important poetical works should be *Poèmes antiques* (1852) in which he praises thoroughly the Greek antiquity.
- 4) Théodore de Banville (1823 - 91) in regard to the antiquity, he wrote two important poetical works in the 1840 s: *Les Cariatides* (1843) and *Les Stalactites* (1846) in which he praises the Grecian spirit¹⁷⁾.

The following Baudelaire's remark in *L'École païenne* is one of the comprehensible passages that shows his conception of mythology around 1852.

Il y a quelques années, Daumier fit un ouvrage remarquable, l' *Histoire ancienne*, qui était pour ainsi dire la meilleure paraphrase du mot célèbre : *Qui nous délivrera des Grecs et des Romains?* Daumier s'est abattu brutalement sur l'antiquité et la mythologie, et a craché dessus.

(*Ibid.*, p.46. Italics by Baudelaire.)

Baudelaire praises much the caricaturist Honoré Daumier (1808 - 79) who dares to confront the above renaissance of mythological Hellenism in vogue.

This Baudelaire's praising passages appeared again five years later when he published his essay on *Quelques caricaturistes français* in October 1857, the same year of publishing *Les Fleurs du Mal*. It is necessary to notice that there are very important variants. [In following citations, all underlines by the present writer, all italics by the authors.]

L' *Histoire ancienne* me paraît une chose importante, parce que c'est pour ainsi dire la meilleure paraphrase du vers célèbre : *Qui nous délivrera des Grecs et des Romains ?* Daumier s'est abattu brutalement sur l'antiquité, sur la fausse antiquité car nul ne sent mieux que lui les grandeurs anciennes, il a craché dessus. (*Ibid.*, pp.555 - 556.)

According to Yoshio Abe, “ Baudelaire not only affirms that Daumier didn't want to be contrary to the true antiquity, but in addition he eliminated the term of “ mythology ”¹⁸⁾. As Yoshio Abe comments, this

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Baudelaire's rewriting in 1857 means that he feels not so much threatened by "l'école païenne" acutely as in 1852. In other words, Baudelaire notices in 1857 that it should be urgent not so much to denounce the abuse of mythology as to reflect on the real nature of mythologies and religions¹⁹⁾. Taking account of Abe's perspicacious remarks, we conclude that it was around 1857 that Baudelaire became positive to introduce into "Bénédiction" the terms or motifs of antique Greek mythology. At least, it seems that Baudelaire could not bring "Bénédiction" to completion in the period of 1851 - 52. Thus, the point to be elucidated should be focussed on the period and the process of creating "Bénédiction", which would be after 1852 and before June 1857 when *Les Fleurs du Mal* was published.

With the exception of his hostile viewpoint toward the abuse of antique Greek mythology by the neo-pagan Romanticists, what is it that Baudelaire wants to criticize in the article titled *L'École païenne*? Although this article seems to be quite hard to interpret, it could be said that Baudelaire criticizes two artistic points that are connected very closely with each other. One is the criticism in regard to neo-pagans' infatuation with the plastic arts (including of course poesy) of which etymology implies for Greek all kinds of imitative art - activities of human body like sculpture or graphic arts²⁰⁾. The other critical target is neo-pagans' aesthetic tendency to rely only upon the materiality that they attach importance to no more than all sorts of visible things. And it would be needless to say that both of them should lead to the problem of idolatry that is nothing less than the essential of paganism.

(1) Tendency to plastic arts and materiality in the neo-pagan Romanticists

In *L'École païenne*, it is obvious that Baudelaire is consistent in criticizing the neo-pagan Romanticists' particular liking for plastic arts. In this critical article, Baudelaire makes a remark throughout on their pernicious and futile styles of producing poesy:

Au point de vue purement littéraire, ce [tendency to follow the antique imitatively as motif of works] n'est pas autre chose qu'un pastiche inutile et dégoûtant. S'est-on assez moqué des rapins [art students] naïfs qui s'évertuaient à copier le *Cimabue* ; des écrivains(...) à lame de Tolède²¹⁾ ? (*Ibid.*, p.47.)

As far as Baudelaire is concerned, the poetical works of the neo-pagan Romanticists are imitative pieces which are nothing but "pastiche inutile et dégoûtant". Since they are "pastiche", the style of the neo-pagan Romanticists should not allow of imagination that is indispensable for a poet like Baudelaire. For him, the imagination is nothing less than the spiritual and constructive power²²⁾.

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However, the neo - pagans are satisfied with the imitative activity. Thus, Baudelaire continues as follows:

Et vous, malheureux néo - païens, que faites - vous, si ce n'est la même besogne ? Pastiche ! Pastiche ! Vous avez sans doute perdu votre âme quelque part, dans quelque mauvais endroit, pour que vous couriez ainsi à travers le passé comme des corps vides pour en ramasser une de rencontre dans les détritiques anciens ? (*Ibid.*)

As Baudelaire ironically says, the true soul would not be accidentally found again among the ancient residuums; it would be quite difficult for the neo - pagans to regain the truly artistic soul unless they recognize the importance of imagination. Besides, it is true that there are some poets, the so - called “ engravers of verses ” as Leconte de Lisle, Gautier, Banville, who make verses which might be so beautiful and perfect in both form and structure. But, when Baudelaire reads their poetical works, he cannot but recognize quite clear difference between neo - pagans ' aesthetical tendency and his own poetics. Thus, citing a person [original text “ son âme ”] who cannot help seeing everything only under the aspect of materiality, Baudelaire clearly defines “ plastic ” as the limit of neo - pagans ' aestheticism:

Son âme, (...) s'en va à travers le monde, le monde occupé et laborieux ; elle s'en va, dis - je, comme une prostituée, criant : Plastique ! Plastique ! La plastique, c'est affreux mot me donne la chair de poule, la plastique l'a empoisonné, et cependant il ne peut vivre que par ce poison²³).

(*Ibid.*, p.48.)

It should be remembered that the etymology of “ plastic ” was indicated in the introductory part of this chapter as follows: this term means for Greek all kinds of imitative art - activities of human body like sculpture or graphic arts. Since the neo - pagans follow these kinds of arts, including poesy, it could be said that the beauty which they seek should be considered not so much imaginative as plastic, namely, imitative and material. Baudelaire clearly and ironically presents this conception in *L'École païenne*:

(...) S'environner exclusivement des séductions de l'art physique, c'est créer de grandes chances de perdition. Pendant longtemps, bien longtemps, vous [the neo - pagans] ne pourrez voir, aimer, sentir que le beau, rien que le beau. Je prends le mot dans un sens restreint. Le monde ne vous apparaîtra que sous sa forme matérielle. (*Ibid.*, p.47.)

It goes without saying that the term “ l'art physique ” is synonym of “ plastic art ” which represents the material form (“ sa forme matérielle ”). Thus, the term “ le beau ” that Baudelaire intentionally uses

here is nothing but formative beauty.

Thus, by means of the above consideration, the fact that the neo - pagan Romanticists seek both plastic arts and materiality has been made clear. If there are any unsolved problems concerning the textual significance of *L'École païenne*, it would be necessary to minutely read this text again in order to elucidate Baudelaire's own aesthetical viewpoint around 1852 and its development until 1857.

(2) Dialogic dispute concerning the paganism in *L'École païenne*

It should not be forgotten the true reason why Baudelaire severely criticizes " the neo - pagans " is nothing less than the fact that they don't seem to be Christians at all, or, properly speaking, that, at least concerning artistic activities, they appear to be unchristian poets. In the beginning of *L'École païenne*, by selecting theatrical technique, Baudelaire introduces somewhat curious conversation by three young men (however, the third person appears later). In this conversation, as a matter of course, it becomes clear that one of these young men is " pagan ". And this pagan is asked some questions by the other young man who could be identified with Baudelaire himself; he develops as a narrator several points of conversational dispute into the various problems that we have already considered in the above citations. Besides, in the following citation, this pagan's utterance is to be indicated by bold letters in order to easily distinguish the pagan from the other young man who raises an objection to the resurrection of Pan.

Dans un banquet commémoratif de la révolution de Février, un toast a été porté au dieu Pan, oui, au dieu Pan, par un de ces jeunes gens (...)

«Mais, lui disais - je, qu'est - ce que le dieu Pan a de commun avec la révolution ? /

Comment donc ? répondait - il ; **mais c'est le dieu Pan qui fait la révolution. Il est la révolution.** / D'ailleurs, n'est - il pas mort depuis longtemps ? Je croyais qu'on avait entendu planer une grande voix au - dessus de la Méditerranée, et que cette voix (...) avait dit au vieux monde : LE DIEU PAN EST MORT ! / **C'est un bruit qu'on fait courir. (...) Non, le dieu Pan n'est pas mort ! le dieu Pan vit encore,** reprit - il en levant les yeux au ciel avec un attendrissement fort bizarre... **Il va revenir. (...)** Eh, quoi, lui dis - je, seriez - vous donc païen ? /

Mais oui, sans doute [of course] ignorez - vous donc que le Paganisme bien compris, bien entendu, peut seul sauver le monde ? Il faut revenir aux vraies doctrines, obscurcies un instant par l'infâme Galiléen. (*Ibid.*, p.44.)

According to this " pagan " who insists on the resurrection of god of Pan, it is " l'infâme Galiléen ", namely, Jesus Christ, who had obscured " the true doctrines ". What is " the true doctrines " which had been obscured by Jesus Christ? In other words, what did the Christianity bring into Europe?

It is needless to say that the Nativity of Jesus Christ and the genesis of Christianity brought into the European context the idea of evil or of the original sin that could be expiated only by the redemption of

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Jesus Christ's suffering, namely, the Passion. But "l'école païenne" is willing to revolt, or properly speaking, to neglect those Christian doctrines because it would be obvious for "l'école païenne" that human beings could dispense with the idea of original sin or suffering. This antichristian thought would be "the true doctrines" for "l'école païenne". However, in the eyes of Baudelaire, this unchristian thought in "l'école païenne" is clearly contradictory to his essential conception of human existence. Baudelaire thinks that only the essence of Christianity, in a word, fatal condition of suffering, completely accords with fundamental state of human beings²⁴⁾. And he had already presented this Christian conception in *Salon de 1846* in which he praises the genius of Delacroix who could represent the human reality:

Delacroix seul sait faire de la religion, je ferai remarquer à l'observateur que (...) la tristesse sérieuse de son talent convient parfaitement à notre religion, religion profondément triste, religion de la douleur universelle (...) (*Ibid.*, p.436.)

It would be quite meaningless to illustrate by other conversational passages in *L'École païenne* the pagan's refutation, for it is obvious that any pagan never feels the necessity of suffering. On the other hand, it is quite necessary for the other young man to maintain the doctrine of suffering. Thus, the religious gap between the pagan and the other young man who could be Christian would never be filled.

Moreover, the conversational part in *L'École païenne* contains another much more important problem. It is how to recognize beauty. It is true that Baudelaire had already remarked that the beauty the pagans seek was plastic and material. In addition, by means of carefully considering *L'École païenne*, it would be made clear that there is another kind of beauty which should be connected with physical beauty typically symbolized by the woman's body, no matter whether its beauty for the pagans is plastic or not. However, prior to this consideration, it should be necessary to elucidate Baudelaire's conception of beauty in order to comprehend the decisive difference between the neo-pagan Romanticists and the poet of *Les Fleurs du Mal*.

(3) Baudelaire's basic and self-contradictory aesthetics in the period of 1846 - 52

In the 18th chapter titled "De l'héroïsme de la vie moderne" of *Salon de 1846*, Baudelaire presents his own criterion of beauty which should be taken into account in the life of modern times as follows:

Toutes les beautés contiennent, comme tous les phénomènes possibles, quelque chose d'éternel et quelque chose de transitoire, d'absolu et de particulier. La beauté absolue et éternelle n'existe pas, ou plutôt elle n'est qu'une abstraction écrémée à la surface générale des beautés diverses. L'élément particulier de chaque beauté vient des passions, et comme nous avons

nos passions particulières, nous avons notre beauté. (*Ibid.*, p.493.)

Later in 1863, Baudelaire generically named this aesthetical manifesto the principle of "modernité"²⁵. Although Baudelaire had not attacked yet the neo - pagan Romanticists in 1846 except the stricture upon Louis Ménard, according to his criterion, it is obvious that it should be the pagans who were simply following "absolute and eternal beauty" which, in fact, could not exist anywhere. The most important thing is that beauty itself could not be concretely recognized without "particular element" of "absolute and eternal beauty". It would be possible to read there the aesthetical principle based on the theory of Plato's "Participation". But Plato was too ideologist to acknowledge human flesh as being prior to the "Idea". On the other hand, it could be said that Baudelaire's aesthetical viewpoint in 1846 would correspond to the theory of Balzac. In the Preface of *Comédie humaine*, Balzac manifests his grand project of writing real aspects of humanity as contemporary History. In brief, both Balzac and Baudelaire, the former using the expression "contemporary History", the latter employing the phrase "particular element of beauty", were of one accord in admitting that they need to consider the actually living reality. In that case, no other scenery is more realistic than the suffering of human beings.

However, one might need to doubt that there would be a contradiction in the period of 1846 - 52 regarding Baudelaire's critical view concerning "plastic" or "materiality", because the contemporary reality to which Baudelaire, like Balzac, attaches importance is nothing less than the visible world that is indispensable to the concrete and immediate recognition. In short, it is quite reasonable to question as follows: is it possible to recognize the particular element of beauty on which Baudelaire insists, in *Salon de 1846*, without seeing it under the aspects of materiality? If this question stands to reason in this case, Baudelaire's conception concerning "particular element of beauty" might be contradictive to his criticism in *L'École païenne*. As one reads *Les Fleurs du Mal*, there is obviously a theme of sensuality and this theme is represented by sensual beauty of woman's body. In fact, Baudelaire writes in a piece "matière vivante"²⁶. This term means none other than woman's physical beauty. In other words, in *Les Fleurs du Mal*, there are a lot of motifs of admiring woman's physical beauty, as one adores an idol. Thus, it is necessary to elucidate another more important and essential problem, "idolatry", than that of imitative and plastic arts in the neo - pagan Romanticists' poesy by Gautier or Banville. Therefore, it is necessary to consider more carefully *L'École païenne* and Baudelaire's chronological development concerning woman's beauty and idolatry should be taken into account in order to make clear how and when he succeeded in solving the above problem.

(1) Baudelaire's conception of idolatry around 1852

The introductory part of *L'École païenne* composed of theatrical conversation should be considered

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again. The young pagan declared that only the paganism rightly understood could save the world and he continues as follows [indicated by bold letters as well as in the above citation]

(...) **D'ailleurs, Junon m'a jeté un regard favorable, un regard qui m'a pénétré jusqu'à l'âme. J'étais triste et mélancolique au milieu de la foule, regardant le cortège et implorant avec des yeux amoureux cette belle divinité, quand un de ses regards, bienveillant et profond, est venu me relever et m'encourager.** / Junon vous a jeté un de ses regards de vache [Juno's big eyes symbolize her beauty] (...) Le malheureux est peut-être fou. / (*Ibid.*, pp.44 - 45.)

It is obvious that this young pagan insists on the fact that he was fascinated by the eyes of a woman in the disguise of one of the goddesses in the Roman myths. And the third person begins to utter his comments in order to suggest that the pagan was idolizing " Junon " who might be a prostitute:

Mais, ne voyez-vous pas, dit une troisième personne, qu'il s'agit de la cérémonie du bœuf gras. Il regardait toutes ces femmes roses avec des yeux païens, et Ernestine [name of an equestrienne who might have existed] qui (...) jouait le rôle de Junon, lui a fait un œil plein de souvenirs, un véritable œil de vache. (*Ibid.*, p.45.)

As this " third person " comments clearly, the idolatry is one of the symbolic acts of paganism. The above underlined part and the part already cited in page 468 (cf. n.23) remind us of the first part of middle strophes of " Bénédiction ":

Sa femme va criant sur les places publiques:
«Puisqu'il me trouve belle et qu'il veut m'adorer,
Je ferai le métier des idoles antiques
Que souvent il fallait repeindre et redorer ;
(" Bénédiction " , ed., 1857, v.37 - 40.)

Son âme, (...) s'en va à travers le monde, le monde occupé et laborieux ; elle s'en va, dis-je, comme une prostituée, criant : Plastique ! Plastique ! (...) (*L'École païenne*, Pl, II, p.48.)

It would be possible to suppose that the motif of idolatry in " Bénédiction " might have already been composed in 1852. It is true that Baudelaire might have had design to use the motif of idolatry and to insert into " Bénédiction " the passages of *L'École païenne*. However, when reading the article *Les Dramas et les romans honnêtes* written in the same period as *L'École païenne*, we cannot help but think that Baudelaire was too negative to introduce into " Bénédiction " the motif of idolatry:

(...), il y a une cohue de poètes abrutis par la volupté païenne, et qui emploient sans cesse les mots de *saint, sainte, extase, prière, etc.*, pour qualifier des choses et des êtres qui n'ont rien de saint ni d'extatique, bien au contraire, poussant ainsi l'adoration de la femme jusqu'à l'impiété la plus dégoûtante. (...) (*Ibid.*, p.40.)

At any rate, under the circumstances around 1852 when Baudelaire was extremely hostile to the literary tendency of the neo - pagan Romanticists and was so negative concerning the idolatry, it is quite impossible to think that Baudelaire had already brought "Bénédiction" to completion. Thus, it is necessary to elucidate how and when he succeeded in thematically synthesizing the Christianity and the paganism in "Bénédiction".

(2) Development of Baudelaire's conception of idolatry in the period of 1852 - 63

It would not be needless to remember the fact that Baudelaire, who was too negative to utilize the mythological motif or the antique mythology itself, became positive concerning mythology in general and neo - pagan Romanticists' artistic styles around 1857. In point of idolatry, it is true that this motif is clearly used in "Bénédiction" in 1857, but is it impossible to find out elsewhere any proofs that Baudelaire positively changed his mind in regard to the motif of idolatry? In truth, in the artistic essay written in 1863, or, in so - called *Journaux Intimes*²⁷⁾, which Baudelaire would have been writing since 1855 till his late life, there are several passages which should be possible to indicate his positive idea concerning the idolatry. In the 10th chapter clearly titled "La Femme" of *Le Peintre de la vie moderne* (1863), it is quite possible to read the equation between woman and idol:

L'être qui est, pour la plupart des hommes, la source des plus vives, (...), des plus durables jouissances ; (...) pour qui, mais surtout *par qui* les artistes et les poètes composent leurs plus délicats bijoux ; (...) la femme, en un mot, n'est pas seulement pour l'artiste en général, (...) la femelle de l'homme. (...) ; c'est l'objet de l'admiration et de la curiosité la plus vive que le tableau de la vie puisse offrir au contemplateur. C'est une espèce d'idole, (...) éblouissante, enchanteresse, qui tient les destinées et les volontés suspendues à ses regards. (*Ibid.*, p.713.)

In fact, this Baudelaire's artistic criticism contains the most important and the least disregarded passage in order to elucidate the reason why it is possible to concretely idolize the beauty of woman's body. The passage in question is in the 4th chapter titled "La Modernité" of which terminology had not been given yet to the criticism in *Salon de 1846*²⁸⁾. Baudelaire's aesthetical criterion in 1863 is much the same in 1846. However, there is a decisive variant, or, properly speaking, definitive addition:

La modernité, c'est le transitoire, le fugitif, le contingent, la moitié de l'art, dont l'autre moitié est

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l'éternel et l'immuable. (...) Cet élément transitoire, fugitif, (...) vous n'avez pas le droit de le mépriser ou de vous en passer. En le supprimant, vous tombez forcément dans le vide d'une beauté abstraite et indéfinissable, comme celle de l'unique femme avant le premier péché. (*Ibid.*, p.695.)

Although Baudelaire uses the term “ le premier péché ” rather than “ le péché originel ”, the intention of his words is invariable²⁹). According to his theory of “ modernité ”, it was not until Adam and Eve committed “ the original sin ” that mankind could recognize beauty as concretely and definitely. In other words, it should be impossible to idolatrously admire woman's physical beauty without the original sin. Thus, it is necessary to consider how and when Baudelaire came to realize the importance of the idea of original sin and was able to connect the original sin to the requisite for idolatry.

(3) Baudelaire and Joseph de Maistre

As far as one surveys Baudelaire's whole literary works and correspondence, it is after the middle of the 1850's that he began to use the term “ le péché originel ”. According to some precedent studies, it is Joseph de Maistre's philosophic works that decisively influenced Baudelaire. He also confesses that in his *Journaux Intimes*:

De Maistre et Edgar Poe m'ont appris à raisonner.

(*Hygiène II. Pl, I, p.669.*)

It is said that Baudelaire discovered Joseph de Maistre's works in June 1851³⁰). In addition, if one reads the letter (21 January 1856) to Alphonse Toussenel (1803 - 85, one of the most enthusiastic Fourierism propagators) cited below, it could be said that Baudelaire had completely and systematically comprehended the doctrine of Joseph de Maistre in January 1856. In this letter, expressing gratitude to Toussenel who gave his own book to Baudelaire and seemingly praising Toussenel's knowledge of Fourierism, he begins to criticize without reserve Toussenel's misunderstanding concerning his idea of nature and Joseph de Maistre:

Et un homme comme vous ! lâcher en passant, (...) des injures à de Maistre, le grand génie de notre temps, un voyant ! (...) / En somme, qu'est-ce que vous devez à Fourier ? (...). Sans Fourier, vous eussiez été ce que vous êtes. *L'homme raisonnable* n'a pas attendu que Fourier vînt sur la terre pour comprendre que la Nature est un verbe, une allégorie, (...) / Toutes les hérésies auxquelles je faisais allusion tout à l'heure ne sont, après tout, que la conséquence de la grande hérésie moderne, (...), je veux dire la suppression de l'idée du *péché originel*. / Votre livre réveille en moi bien des idées dormantes, et à propos de *péché originel*, et de *forme moulée sur l'idée*, j'ai pensé bien souvent que les bêtes malfaisantes et dégoûtantes n'étaient peut-être que la vivification, corporification, éclosion à

la vie matérielle, des *mauvaises pensées* de l'homme. Aussi la nature entière participe du péché originel. (*CPI*, I, p.337.)

It is possible to say that the reasoning in the precedent section of this present article in regard to the requisite for idolatry is not off the point. Moreover, it is possible to remark that Baudelaire's aesthetical poetics presented in 1863 had already appeared in January 1856. In addition to that, Baudelaire insists that due to the original sin, the divine Nature itself, in a sense, is obliged to transform into the profane nature, and what is worse, nature, or the whole universe, appears under the aspects of materiality.

At any rate, the following problems are made clear again: due to the original sin, whether fortunately or not, the woman's body inevitably becomes the object of admiring as an idol. And as one reads this letter to Toussenel, Baudelaire seems to be so confident in spite of his contradictory viewpoint concerning idolatry and paganism around 1852. In other words, Joseph de Maistre's philosophy was so influential that Baudelaire could not help but change his principle around 1852 and succeeded in synthesizing the Christianity and the paganism. In addition, the sentence "Votre livre réveille en moi bien des idées dormantes" suggests that it would be a few years before January 1856, at least around 1855, that Baudelaire had completely comprehended Joseph de Maistre's doctrine, especially the significance of the idea of original sin. Thus, it is necessary to consider how Baudelaire could synthesize these religiously aesthetical problems. And it is needless to say that Joseph de Maistre's doctrine should be taken into account in order to elucidate how Baudelaire could succeed in combining the Christian and pagan themes in "Bénédiction".

(4) The life of Joseph de Maistre and his basic doctrine

Joseph de Maistre (1753 - 1821), lawyer, diplomat, writer and philosopher, was born in Savoy. Grown up in the severe Christian family, he was educated by the Jesuits and later entered the magistracy in 1774, made a career of magistrate, followed in his father's footsteps by becoming a senator in 1787. However, the French Revolution all changed the state of Joseph and his family. They were obliged to pass the life of exiles in Switzerland for about four years. While he was in Switzerland, he wrote *Considérations sur la France* (1796) in which he considered the Revolution as a providential occurrence and insisted upon the restoration of hereditary Monarchy. In 1803, he was appointed as Sardinian diplomatic envoy to Russian Tsar's court in St. Petersburg. He stayed there for fourteen years and during this stay, from 1809, he began to write his most important philosophic work titled *Les Soirées de Saint - Pétersbourg* which would be published in 1821 after his death. In 1819, he wrote another important essay titled *Du Pape* in which he emphasized the supreme authority of the Pope in both religious and political matters.

To sum up, Joseph de Maistre is, first of all, religiously severe Catholic, politically counter - revolutionary and authoritarian conservative.

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Besides, to what degree did Joseph de Maistre influence the thematic formation of “ Bénédiction ”? In other words, what is the best one in Joseph de Maistre’s philosophic works in order to know whether Baudelaire’s poetics could correspond to Joseph de Maistre’s philosophy? It can be said that no work is more indispensable to elucidate the influential degree than *Les Soirées de Saint - Pétersbourg* (abbreviated *Soirées* in this present article)

The contents of the *Soirées* can be summarized as follows³¹ :

The *Soirées* is a theodicy in the form of a platonic dialogue in which there are three dialogists: count, senator and chevalier. Joseph de Maistre who could be identified with “ count ” presents his own solution to the problem of existence of evil. For him, the existence of evil, far from obscuring the designs of God, throws an activating light on them. According to Joseph de Maistre, since the moral world corresponds to the physical world, it is natural to think that the physical evil also corresponds to the moral evil. And there is nothing but the expiation by means of prayer and sacrifice, that is to say, shedding of blood in order to purify the evil. Taking account of the rite of sacrifice in the region of ancient paganism, especially, Aztec rite in which all creatures used to be immolated, including man whose heart was dug out of breast, Joseph de Maistre writes in the 9th dialogue of the *Soirées* as follows³² :

Je sens bien que (...) nous sommes continuellement assaillis par le tableau si fatigant des innocents qui périssent avec les coupables ; mais (...) on peut la [the question in the former sentence] considérer seulement dans son rapport avec le dogme universel et aussi ancien que le monde, *de la réversibilité des douleurs de l’innocence au profit des coupables*. / Ce fut de ce dogme, ce me semble, que les anciens firent dériver l’usage des sacrifices qu’ils pratiquèrent dans tout l’univers, et qu’ils jugeaient utiles, non - seulement aux vivants, mais encore aux morts ; (...)

Joseph de Maistre named, in a sense, this radical doctrine of expiation “ réversibilité ” (“ reversibility ”). The reason why he names this doctrine “ réversibilité ” is that a condemned man could be saved by a righteous person’s prayer or sacrifice, and the latter is more important than the former. In brief, the guilt can be “ reversible ” by the innocence. Joseph de Maistre insists over and over again that the correspondence between Adam and Jesus Christ is the most prototypal analogy of the “ réversibilité ”³³ because Jesus Christ is the most important and the greatest sacrifice immolated to all human beings on Calvary. Thus, the doctrine of “ réversibilité ” is mystically indispensable for Joseph de Maistre to purify the whole universe that had been depraved by Adam’s original sin and has been governed by the evil.

Except the idea of original sin, what is the most important conception that would have decisively influenced Baudelaire? It should be nothing but the doctrine of “ réversibilité ”. Thus, in connection with the doctrine of “ réversibilité ”, it is necessary to analyze the motif of immolation inserted into the

middle strophes in order to elucidate the genesis of "Bénédiction".

(5) The subject of martyr in "Bénédiction"

It should be necessary to remember the following point mentioned in the Introduction of this present article: "Bénédiction" could be regarded as a piece that is thematically composed of three parts. It would not be needless to combine on trial the last two verses of the first part with the first strophe of the third part:

Avec hypocrisie ils jettent ce qu'il touche,
Et s'accusent d'avoir mis leurs pieds dans ses pas. (ed., 1857, v.35 - 36.)

Vers le Ciel, où son œil voit un trône splendide,
Le Poète serein lève ses bras pieux,
Et les vastes éclairs de son esprit lucide
Lui dérobent l'aspect des peuples furieux : (ed., 1857, v.53 - 56.)

According to Yves Le Hir, it is very remarkable that there are a lot of terms connected with "light" or "clear-sightedness" in spite of the brevity of verses³⁴. It also seems to us that these usages signify the poet's tranquil state both spiritually and physically just like Jesus Christ is. In addition, the poet surrounded by "peuples furieux" is quite analogous to Jesus Christ crucified by a large crowd of people as Pharisee or Sadducee. Thus, it is completely possible to say that the poet is crucified like Jesus Christ. However, if those verses represent the Passion for "le Poète", why did Baudelaire directly connect those verses? Is it because the situation summarized by the metaphorical themes in the middle strophes is nothing less than Calvary for the poet of *Les Fleurs du Mal* that he inserted four strophes between the first part and the third part? It seems that it is necessary to analyze the middle strophes.

The middle strophes begin at four verses already cited in p.472 in which the poet's wife professes that she wants to be idolized:

Sa femme va criant sur les places publiques:
«Puisqu'il me trouve belle et qu'il veut m'adorer,
Je ferai le métier des idoles antiques
Que souvent il fallait repeindre et redorer ;
("Bénédiction", ed., 1857, v.37 - 40.)

What is "le métier des idoles antiques"? As critically indicated by Herodotus (*Histories*, I - 199) or Jeremiah's Epistle in the *Old Testament*, the heathendom, so-called "the cult prostitution", existed

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universally in the ancient pagan region. In the heathen areas, the prostitution used to be practiced, as an initiation or a conventional rite, in the temples where each goddess, Aphrodite (ancient Greece), Astarte (Phoenicia), Ishtar (Assyria) etc., symbolizing, first of all, beauty and then holy nature, governs the fertility of earth and the procreation. In brief, those goddesses and the practice of cult prostitution are inevitably connected with sensual pleasures. It is nothing less than the sexual *symposion*. If the poet's wife wants to take the role of ancient idols, in short, " sacred prostitute " in the context of heathendom, the poet who is obliged to adore his wife cannot help but indulge in sensual pleasures. Baudelaire himself names the essential outlines of this heathen sensual cult " la contre - religion ". And he wrote in *Mon Cœur mis à nu* one of the most famous religiously syncretic theses:

Analyse des contre - religions, exemple; la prostitution sacrée.

Qu'est - ce que la prostitution sacrée ?

Excitation nerveuse. / Mysticité du paganisme.

Le mysticisme, trait d'union entre le paganisme et le christianisme.

Le paganisme et le christianisme se prouvent réciproquement.

(*Pl*, I, p.678.)

The phrase " excitation nerveuse " means none other than the critical point, namely, ecstasy of sensual pleasures³⁶⁾. The meaning of underlined sentence " the paganism and the Christianity prove each other " will be made clear soon in this present article.

After the second strophe³⁶⁾ where she devours various things, of which most are Biblical, in order to know whether she can laughingly deprive the poet of his homage to the Lord, the second half of middle strophes in question continues:

《Et, quand je m'ennuierai de ces farces impies,

Je poserai sur lui ma frêle et forte main;

Et mes ongles, pareils aux ongles des harpies,

Sauront jusqu'à son cœur se frayer un chemin.

《Comme un tout jeune oiseau qui tremble et qui palpite,

J'arracherai ce cœur tout rouge de son sein,

Et, pour rassasier ma bête favorite,

Je le lui jetterai par terre avec dédain !》(ed., 1857, v.45 - 52.)

In point of grammar, the poet's wife uses the future tense that represents the will of speaker. The more she uses the future tense, the more her will increases its strength. And the rite of immolation becomes all the more cruel because her intention is firm. The poet's Passion ends with a terrifying act of his wife

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who succeeds in digging his heart out of breast. At any rate, is it possible to read here the thematic correspondence to the doctrine of Joseph de Maistre? In other words, is this poet a martyr to his wife's physically fascinating beauty just like Jesus Christ was martyr to the evil of the whole world introduced by the original sin? When the poet admires the woman's physical beauty and indulges in sensual pleasures and comes to the most ecstatic moment, he must have an experience analogous to death, synonym of suffering which is indispensable to the purification of evil governing the poet himself since he also committed the original sin³⁷). Thus, the poet immolates himself to his wife's sensual beauty through the rite of "la contre - religion".

The above theme of sensuality is one of the most famous subjects named "volupté" in *Les Fleurs du Mal*. The strophe cited below is nothing but an example:

Tout cela ne vaut pas le terrible prodige
De ta salive qui mord,
Qui plonge dans l'oubli mon âme sans remord,
Et, charriant le vertige,
La roule défaillante aux rives de la mort !

("Le Poison", ed., 1861, v.16 - 20.)

It is quite possible to notice that the poet comes to the ecstatic state that is analogous to death through the use of effective rhymes (mord / remord / mort). This is one of the excellent pieces that Baudelaire succeeded in presenting the theme of a martyr to sensuality. And "Bénédiction" is the poem in which Baudelaire, based on the leitmotiv of the Passion that consists of the "réversibilité" between the guilt and the innocence, prefatorily and metaphorically summarizes the theme of a martyr to sensuality in *Les Fleurs du Mal*. In addition, the most important thing is that the "réversibilité" can be realized even in the inside of the poet himself. Therefore, he expresses gratitude to God all the more sincerely because he knows the mystical divine design:

«Soyez béni, mon Dieu, qui donnez la souffrance
Comme un divin remède à nos impuretés
Et comme la meilleure et la plus pure essence
Qui prépare les forts aux saintes voluptés !

("Bénédiction", ed., 1857, v.57 - 60.)

Does it seem that the praise of suffering in the above citation is not so much mere sentimental *dolorisme* of most Romanticists as delightful prayer, in brief, literally "benedictory *dolorisme*" of a martyr in the "contre - religion" who takes up the cross in order to purify the evil by means of dying in the moment of "volupté"? Therefore, "le paganisme et le christianisme se prouvent réciproquement."

Thus, it was not until Baudelaire completely understood the doctrine of "réversibilité" of Joseph

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de Maistre that he could introduce the motif of idolatry into “ Bénédiction ” and synthesize the themes of Christianity and paganism³⁹⁾.

(6) The significance of publishing “ Bénédiction ” in the 1850 s

In the end of the year 1856, December 30, Baudelaire made a contract with Auguste Poulet - Malassis (1825 - 78) for the publication of *Les Fleurs du Mal*. And the first edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal* that contained 101 pieces including “ Au Lecteur ” was published in June 1857. There is an interesting fact that it was in June 1855 that Baudelaire named his poetical works *Les Fleurs du Mal* for the first time when he issued in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* eighteen pieces consisting of unpublished fifteen poems and of three pieces which had already been published in 1851, but “ Bénédiction ” was not included in these eighteen pieces. On the other hand, there is “ Au Lecteur ” which is invariably the prefatory poem in both 1857 and 1861 editions among these eighteen pieces. Does this mean that Baudelaire aimed at maintaining the unity containing something significant? In that case, why didn't Baudelaire include “ Bénédiction ” in *Les Fleurs du Mal* in 1855? If Baudelaire had already brought “ Bénédiction ” to completion in 1855, it should be quite curious why “ Bénédiction ” was excluded from these eighteen pieces, since this opening poem could have the prefatory significance as well as “ Au Lecteur ”. Or, due to the length (seventy - six verses), the editor of the *Revue des Deux Mondes* might have refused the publication of this piece. However, among these eighteen pieces, there is a poem titled “ Un Voyage à Cythère ” composed of sixty verses which could be said to be relatively long. Thus, it is not reasonable to think that the fact that there is not “ Bénédiction ” among these eighteen pieces should be attributed to the problem of mere length. It would be more natural to think that “ Bénédiction ” had not been accomplished yet in June 1855. Based on the letter to Alphonse Toussenel in January 1856, we cannot help but conclude that Baudelaire brought “ Bénédiction ” to completion between the summer of 1855 and spring of 1857, in brief, at least, it would be around 1856 that he finished writing “ Bénédiction ”³⁹⁾.

Moreover, most Romanticists could not understand Joseph de Maistre's doctrine of immolation, namely, dogma of “ réversibilité ”; far from it, like Vigny or Hugo, they were quite hostile to him and to his system of philosophy⁴⁰⁾. Contrary to them, it could be possible to say that Baudelaire even deifies Joseph de Maistre as well as Edgar A.Poe⁴¹⁾. In addition, it seems that Baudelaire became all the more ambitious to publish *Les Fleurs du Mal* because it was difficult to find the books of Joseph de Maistre in the 1850 s⁴²⁾. Does this mean that it was not until Baudelaire completely comprehended the philosophy of Joseph de Maistre that he could publish “ Bénédiction ” which contained a lot of Romantic themes, in a sense, out - of - date themes in 1857 when the era of Realism had already begun? As Baudelaire clearly wrote in the letter to his mother dated 30 August 1851, it is true that he was too negative and too pessimistic to publish his own poetical works around 1851 - 52⁴³⁾. However, due to Joseph de Maistre's philosophic works, especially, *Les Soirées de Saint - Pétersbourg*, Baudelaire was able to publish in

1857, not only "Bénédiction" but also *Les Fleurs du Mal*.

Conclusion

In this study, we minutely analyzed Baudelaire's critical article titled *L'École païenne* in order to elucidate the genesis of "Bénédiction". In consequence, it has been made clear that due to the discovery and profound comprehension of the doctrine of Joseph de Maistre, synthesizing the themes of Christianity and paganism, Baudelaire could bring "Bénédiction" to completion by means of utilizing the motif of a martyr to sensuality. The literary and philosophic influence by Joseph de Maistre seems to be so remarkable that Baudelaire was able to accomplish "Bénédiction" and that he ventured to publish *Les Fleurs du Mal* that contained considerable Romantic fragrance in the era of Realism. Thus, the significance of "Bénédiction" and of *Les Fleurs du Mal* in literary history consists in the following points: first of all, Baudelaire introduced into "Bénédiction" the leitmotiv of *dolorisme* influenced by Joseph de Maistre's doctrine of "réversibilité". Secondly, as most Romanticists could not understand the philosophy of Joseph de Maistre, he ventured to publish his poetical works written in verse in spite of the era of Realism, which is the era of the appearance of poetry in prose style⁴⁴).

Notes

This article is written on the authority of the original texts of Baudelaire that are presented and annotated by Claude Pichois.

Œuvres complètes I (abbreviation: *Pl*, I) Paris, Gallimard, "Bibliothèque de la Pléiade", 1975.

Œuvres complètes II (abbreviation: *Pl*, II) Paris, Gallimard, "Bibliothèque de la Pléiade", 1976.

Correspondance (abbreviation: *CPI*) 2vol., Paris, Gallimard, "Bibliothèque de la Pléiade", 1973.

- 1) *Dolorisme*: this French term means basically "principle of praising one's suffering" and this is one of the typically Romantic subjects. Lamartine's *Méditations poétiques* (1820), Vigny's *Stello* (1832) and Chatterton (1835), Hugo's *Odes* could be enumerated. Cf. Paul Bénichou, *Le Sacre de l'écrivain*, Paris, José Corti, 1985, 2nd ed., and the present writer's article, "La signification du dolorisme dans «Bénédiction» L'identité du «Poète» et le cadre de la Passion" in *GALLIA* XXXI, Osaka, 1991, pp.183 - 192.
- 2) Vigny's *Moïse* is representative one. However, according to Bénichou, Vigny subjoins not a few verses to the descriptions of the Bible. Cf. Bénichou, *op.cit.*, p.370. Contrary to Vigny, Baudelaire almost faithfully follows the Biblical outlines and the basic stories in the Gospels. The meaning of this adverbial phrase "almost faithfully" will be made clear later in this article.
- 3) Including the prefatory poem "Au Lecteur" and six condemned pieces, "Bénédiction" is the fourth in length among 133 pieces of *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1861).
- 4) "Bénédiction" begins at the following verses (v.1 - 6):
Lorsque, par un décret des puissances suprêmes,

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Le Poète apparaît en ce monde ennuyé,
Sa mère épouvantée et pleine de blasphèmes
Crispe ses poings vers Dieu, qui la prend en pitié :

《Ah ! que n'ai-je mis bas tout un nœud de vipères,

Plutôt que de nourrir cette dérision ! / (...)

In addition, in point of stylistics, it could be said that “ Bénédiction ” consists of each speaker’s verbal productive acts, element connected closely with the term “ diction ” included in the title. Therefore, it should be noticed that the term “ narration ” used in this article is nearly similar to Gérard Genette’s technical term “*narration*” as “*l’acte narratif producteur*”. Cf. G.Genette, *Figures III*, Paris, Seuil, 1972, p.72.

- 5) Cf. the present writer’s following articles (in Japanese) “ Le cadre poétique de la 《contre - religion》 chez Baudelaire ” in *GALLIA XXX*, Osaka, 1990, pp.27 - 34. And “ La signification thématique de la 《contre - religion》 dans 《Bénédiction》 Poétique de la 《réversibilité》 baudelairienne ” in *Bulletin of Osaka College of Foreign Trade*, vol.11, 1992, pp.19-29.
- 6) In the field of studying French literature, for example, the researches into the voluminous manuscripts of Marcel Proust, using the technical terms “ genèse ” or “ étude génétique ”, have been contributing to elucidate the actual process of Proust’s writing activity. It seems that the approach of determining the period and the process of composing “ Bénédiction ” would be nearly similar to that of studying Proust’s manuscripts. Thus, the terms “ genesis ” or “ genetic study ” in this article could correspond to “ genèse ” or “ étude génétique ”.
- 7) *Les Fleurs du Mal*, the critical edition by Jacques Crépet and Georges Blin, Paris, José Corti, 1950. Henk Nuiten, *Les Variantes des 《Fleurs du Mal》 et des 《Épaves》 de Charles Baudelaire*, Amsterdam, APA - Holland University Press, 1979. Raymond Poggenburg, *Charles Baudelaire. Une micro - histoire*, Paris, José Corti, 1987.
- 8) Cf. Claude Pichois, *Baudelaire et témoignages*, Neuchâtel, La Baconnière, 1967, pp.11 - 36, especially pp.24 - 26. In regard to Asselineau’s words, cf. Jacques Crépet and Claude Pichois, *Baudelaire et Asselineau*, Paris, Nizet, 1953, pp.64 - 65. With the exception of a few ones, several passages of texts or studies written in French concerning Baudelaire are translated into English by the present writer.
- 9) Cf. Pichois, *op.cit.*, p.25. In addition, the fact that Baudelaire didn’t easily let even his close friends see his manuscripts unless they were completed should be taken into account.
- 10) In point of this mental tendency, Baudelaire’s letter to his mother dated 30 August 1851 is a well - known one. Cf. *CPI*, I, pp.175 - 179.
- 11) At the same time, it is quite interesting that not a few of French Romanticists were eager to be distinguished and were ambitious to succeed in the society. In fact, among them, there are several poets such as Hugo and Lamartine who became statesmen or members of *l’Académie française*.
- 12) Cf. Pichois, *op.cit.*, p.101. Anne - Marie Amiot, *Baudelaire et l’illuminisme*, Paris, Nizet, 1982, p.28.
- 13) Concerning the situation of Baudelaire in 1848, cf. Jules Mouquet and W.T.Bandy, *Baudelaire en 1848*, Paris, Éditions Émile - Paul Frères, 1946.
- 14) Baudelaire’s letter to Narcisse Ancelle (1801 - 88, Baudelaire’s judicial guardian) dated 5 March 1852. Cf. *CPI*, I, p.188. It could be said that Baudelaire’s political and journalistic activity resulted in failure.
- 15) Cf. F.W.Leakey, *Baudelaire and Nature*, Manchester University Press, 1969, p.96.
- 16) Cf. Yoshio Abe, “ Baudelaire et la mythologie ”, in *French Studies XXV*, July, 1971, No 3, p.281. Cf. *PI*, II,

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p.1099.

- 17) Another important poet and novelist, Théophile Gautier (1811 - 72) should not be forgotten to enumerate one of the authors of " l' école païenne ". However, it seems that the reason why Baudelaire criticizes Gautier consists less in the context of mythology than in that of unchristian poetics, namely, " l' Art pour l' Art ". At any rate, since the problem of poetics " l' Art pour l' Art " would be closely connected with the fact that Baudelaire dedicated *Les Fleurs du Mal* to Gautier, it should be necessary to consider the ambivalent attitude toward Gautier in Baudelaire in another article.
- 18) Cf. Abe, *ibid.*, pp.283 - 284.
- 19) *Ibid.*, p.285.
- 20) In the 16th chapter titled " Pourquoi la sculpture est ennuyeuse? " (" Why is the sculpture boring? ") of *Salon de 1846*, Baudelaire writes the reason why the sculpture is much less attractive than pictorial art. According to him, the sculpture is an imitative art of nature and anyone who appreciates sculptural works is obliged to have plural visual points contrary to picture that needs only one visual point.
- 21) According to Claude Pichois, the passage " des écrivains (...) à lame de Tolède " suggests Théophile Gautier. Cf. *Pl*, II, p.51 and p.1106.
- 22) In regard to " the constructive imagination ", Baudelaire says in the 4th chapter of *Salon de 1859* that he completely accords with Madame Catherine Crowe who insists that constructive imagination is quite different from fancy. Besides, Baudelaire had already written the difference between the constructive imagination and fancy in *Notes nouvelles sur Edgar Poe* (1857).
- 23) This citation will be utilized later in this present article.
- 24) It is necessary to notice that Baudelaire's conception should be clearly distinguished from any theological argument. This would be obvious if one reads the next citation concerning Delacroix's religious motifs.
- 25) This term " modernité " is neologism. However, it is not Baudelaire who created this term. Several early examples could be found in the first half of the 19th century, for instance, in the text of Balzac, Heine, Chateaubriand, but all of them are pejorative. It is said that it is Gautier who gave the affirmative and practical meaning to this neologism in the 1850's. Cf. *Pl*, II, pp.1418 - 1419.
- 26) The 76th piece titled " Spleen " v.19, in *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1861).
- 27) The title of *Journaux Intimes* is not named by Baudelaire. It is Eugène Crépet who combined in 1887 some Baudelaire's original memorandums, *Fusées*, *Hygiène* and *Mon Cœur mis à nu*, etc. Besides, the date he began to write these memorandums is indefinite.
- 28) See this article p.471 and n.25.
- 29) Baudelaire directly uses the term " le péché originel " in the 11th chapter of *Le Peintre de la vie moderne* in order to explain the depravation of human beings.
- 30) It is *Lettres et opuscules inédites du comte Joseph de Maistre* (2 vol.) published by Vatou that Baudelaire discovered. Cf. Poggenburg, *op.cit.*, p.116. Baudelaire himself enumerates " *Lettres et Mélanges de Joseph de Maistre* " as one of the several works to be appreciated in February 1852. Cf. *Pl*, II, p.50.
- 31) Cf. Émile Dermenghem, *Joseph de Maistre mystique*, 2nd ed., Paris, La Colombe, 1946. Daniel Vouga, *Baudelaire et Joseph de Maistre*, Paris, José Corti, 1957. Robert Triomphe, *Joseph de Maistre*, Genève, Droz, 1968. Anne - Marie Amiot, *op.cit.* Henri de Maistre, *Joseph de Maistre*, Paris, Perrin, 1990.
- 32) Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint - Pétersbourg*, IX^e Entretien, in *Œuvres complètes*, Lyon, Vitte, 1884, t.V, p.122 (Reprinted edition by Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim, Zürich, New York, 1984).

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- 33) Joseph de Maistre illustrates the importance of the doctrine of “réversibilité” by the Biblical phrases or the ethnologic examples throughout the *Soirées*. Moreover, he insists that the original sin momentarily intervenes without cease.
- 34) Cf. Yves Le Hir, *Analyses stylistiques*, Paris, Colin, 1965, p.186.
- 35) The similar expressions are found in the 3rd chapter of *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*. Cf. *Pl*, II, p.690. Besides, in regard to this point, see Michel Butor § *Histoire extraordinaire. Essai sur un rêve de Baudelaire*, Paris, Gallimard, 1961, pp.63 - 64.
- 36) The second strophe (v.41 - 44.) as follows:
- 《Et je me soulerai de nard, d'encens, de myrrhe,
De génuflexions, de viandes et de vins,
Pour savoir si je puis dans un cœur qui m'admire
Usurper en riant les hommages divins !
- 37) See n.33 in this article.
- 38) Based on the following citation in which the subjects of dialogue closely connect with the dogma of “réversibilité”, we cannot help but conclude that Baudelaire owes to Joseph de Maistre even the title “Bénédiction”:
- (...) Les acts de la puissance divine ou de ses agents dans l'univers s'appellent des *bénédictions*, et les peines infligées aux coupables, des *pâtiments* [sufferings] (...)
- (*Soirées*, XI^e Entretien, *op.cit.*, t.V, p.248. Italics by de Maistre.)
- 39) Baudelaire might have already written, at least, the first part (v.1 - 36) and the third part (v.53 - 76), however incompletely, in the 1840's, because the themes in these parts are too Romantic. However, as it has been made clear in this article, it seems that it is not until Baudelaire inserted the second part (v.37 - 52) into this poem that “Bénédiction” has its literary significance. Thus, the period of completion of “Bénédiction” can be confined between 1855 and 1857.
- 40) Vigny clearly refutes Joseph de Maistre's doctrine of sacrifice in his *Stello*. Hugo also is completely against the doctrine of immolation.
- 41) It is true that there are many artists or literary men, as Delacroix, Balzac, Gautier, Sainte - Beuve who much influenced Baudelaire. However, Baudelaire often criticizes them whether directly or indirectly. Contrary to this fact, he never speaks ill of either Joseph de Maistre or Edgar A.Poe.
- 42) Cf. Poggenburg, *op.cit.*, p.117.
- 43) Cf. n.10 in this article.
- 44) It is needless to say that this is one of the most important points that connect closely with Baudelaire's motive of writing the poems in prose, namely, *Le Spleen de Paris*. Thus, it would be necessary to consider this problem in another article.